

GERALDO SOUZA DIAS

---

## **LASCAS**

### **[Scraps] Painting as {a foreign?} language**

#### **The mediation of Painting**

In the western tradition, the shape of the canvas is identified with a certain gender of Painting: Portraits are done in vertical canvases, while landscapes are painted in horizontal ones. The Installation "LASCAS – [Scraps]" presented with other works in "LASCAS [Scraps] – Painting as a (foreign) language" by Geraldo Souza Dias subverts such a convention by showing a simultaneity of perspectives.

It comprehends 50 vertical paintings done on planks of wood, placed side by side, displaying a type of cityscape of horizontal apprehension, which take over three walls of the exhibiting space. With that procedure, the artist dislocates the bird's eye view, which normally we have of the ground to a frontal look, reserved to the walls (and to the thereon hung paintings) and at the same time he divides that cityscape, supposedly continuous, into small pieces.

Here there is no longer any privileged view point for the total apprehension of the work. Each wood board is a fragment that constitutes at its own turn and according to the demand of the viewer a specific look. But taken altogether, they mimic the skyline of large cities, like São Paulo, out of which the taller skyscrapers stand out. The work invites us to an intense coming-and-going, a restless dislocation. Its encompassing demands movement from the viewer. Here, no doubt, we detect something of the very same kind of experience we have with the city: a kind of condemnation to a partial vision, upon which the totality imposes itself only in detriment of the understanding of each of its parts. Because each scrap or each fragment has a kind of autonomy, it shows itself as a complete entirety.

The 50 pieces are elaborated after the collage of several materials (magazines, newspapers, architectural plans, printed ads and comic books) which appear partially covered by a painting which mixes different paints, colors, techniques. As in a cubist collage, the representational space is interrupted by elements from the reality. Each painting shows a different universe, articulated around an image (painted or pasted on the wood), a phrase or a structure which organizes its inner visibility. We are faced with works that demonstrate an abrupt straightforwardness, successive plans that deny the three-dimensional perspective and refuse to accept our look. Like city walls, each painting lets see through it, what was previously behind, but not quite very clearly. In these works, the operation of Painting itself is revealing. Painting is what makes that all the presences have same weight: a sentence taken out of an advertisement, the work of a well-known artist, an illustration. Painting operates ambiguously: it hides details but let see through it its differentiated origin. To Painting is conferred a kind of power that pacifies dissonances yet without erasing them completely.

**Thais Rivitti**

GERALDO SOUZA DIAS

---

### **Tower of Babel**

Pinacoteca do Estado de Sao Paulo, July to September, 2007

Geraldo Souza Dias' work is characterized by a research around painting and word, image and concept, placing in jeopardy objects, names, meanings and by doing so, questioning the notions of imaginary, representation and language. Phrases, words in several languages, drawn or printed letters, calligraphic lines, writings, associate themselves to images of their fragments and are organized in geometric structures and patterns of abstraction. Word and image are placed in a dialectical relationship in the picture surface, where, as the artist says, "the text dilutes the bidimensional character of the image, trying to interpret it in a single dimension". This project seems to evolve in the always unstable space between perceiving and naming what is perceived. It is a sort of reflection on Art, its Nature and the artist's work, as well as about the codes that organize representation, perception and the systems of signifiers. Tower of Babel is a construction made of small painted canvases and wood stretchers, precariously arranged in a spiral that, although a recurrent theme of a certain period of Art History (from the end of the Middle Age to the beginning of the Baroque) brings immediately to memory the Monument to the 3rd International (1920) by the constructivist Russian artist V. Tatlin(1885-1953). The ensemble is part of the author's personal archive, a sort of a diary from his working studio, with notes on thoughts, facts of his personal life, project sketches. The images show landscapes, collages, human figures, objects, quoted texts, wordplays, abstractions, references to painting tradition and to Art History, with some ironic manipulations of other artists' works. The open spaces allow a sight of the interior of the tower and its building's process while at the same time confer it strategic transparency to its pertaining to the exhibition's space, a building also burden of historical meanings. The ascending spiral seems to describe a narrative, to indicate a way to be followed by the beholder. The basis of the tower display an accumulation of things that seem to want to say, that announce without a logical formulation and that order themselves in the funneling that lead to the canvases with the inscription "once upon a time" (in Portuguese and in English), the beginning of a open story, thrown in time and space, like a red moon against a darkened sky. Beyond the metaphor about the origin of the races and the different languages, setting up the notion of otherness among the human beings (the I and the other, in former works by Geraldo) says the legend, that the king order the construction of the Tower of Babel in ancient Babylon wanted to make him a name. Exactly here is the primordial finality of language, to name, what is here at play : what moves from the basis of the tower is what is still searching form, meaning, a murmuring language, but a powerful matter, which keeps being molded by the will, the demiurgic gesture of the artist. What comes from that is placed in the world, we call it art, its History is in the museum. Once upon a time...

**Ivo Mesquita**

GERALDO SOUZA DIAS

---

**Text for the Exhibition Modul/Actions on RPA, São Paulo, 2005**

Geraldo Souza Dias' trajectory in Painting points out apparently diverse thematic interests and procedures. It can dwell on the gestural abstraction or show itself mediated by the figure or the evocation of the word. We can however interpret this diversity in his production for several years as a position that maintains the painting practice far from its imprisonment in a certain gender or category, in a research whose consistency can be found inside the work itself.

The recent group of small paintings leads us to the approach, in its immediate physiognomy, to the constructive canon, notably due to its modular geometric structure. An understanding moved uniquely by this bias is proven to be inadequate for the correct assimilation of what is at play. By analyzing it more in detail, one notices a range of subtleties, peculiarities in the procedure adopted by the artist that undermine any restrictive interpretations.

Behind the structural rigor and a apparent will of order – in what at first sight seems to be embedded – we are stricken by certain hovering details which attenuate the eventual rigidity of its insinuating conformation.

Signs of the process of collage that determines and formalize the compositions are here and there concealed and revealed, from where escapes vestiges of words – element already present in Geraldo's former works. A handcraft plus to the elaboration of these pieces – either in the deliberately uncertain drawing of lines and contours or in the color that spreads itself and fulfills the fields irresistibly, signalizes to the affectivity compound (not to be taken as sentimentalism) that invests this enterprise. The ordering is shown counterbalanced by impulse and intuition, driving the work far from hermetic affiliations.

The not permeability to compartmented readings in this production is accentuated by the presence, even though localized, of the figurative element that emerges in the group of paintings organized at the manner of a mosaic – populated by the motives that surround the artist in his atelier: pieces of furniture, pots of paints, brushes and other fragments of this universe, presented in direct register.

This painting in small formats conforms so between the constructive matrixy and the liberation from the tradition, that the artist allows himself to visit freely. His pictorial collages present themselves unpretentious, pleasant to be looked at, sophisticated in their simplicity, indicating a systematic and passionate practice that rethinks and enlarges the possibilities of the expression of the pictorial language.

**Guy Amado**

GERALDO SOUZA DIAS

---

Text for the exhibition at Paço das Artes, São Paulo, 2004

Geraldo Souza Dias' recent works out of small canvases, are part of a personal archive, a diary in which the artist records several events and scenes of his everyday life. Small paintings represent portraits, self-portraits, art references, landscapes, letters, newspaper cutouts and unexpected images as a tiger or a clayfilter. However, one cannot say that all are exposed, the majority is not to contemplate. Its function in the ensemble is structural like that of a vertebra. The careful assembling in the shape of a house of cards, brings grouping of letters which, far from being mere graphic elements, forms words in German. In former works the artist – who lived almost ten years in Germany – used large canvases upon which he wrote sentences that dealt among other themes, migration and the difference between the I and the other.

In this work, the image also loses its prerogative not to the meaning of the words, but to the stretcher, the skeleton that sustains the house. It is as if the paintings that are in the inner part of the building renounced to their exteriority and superficiality in order to give shape to this pyramidal organism. They hide themselves and form a volume, a body in which each part must do its duty without vacillating, unless they may compromise the entirety. Sure about the fact that not all can be seen, not so much for question of privacy, but for elemental principles of construction, they accommodate themselves as if they were predestinated to be the foundations placed in unstable soil. The apparent instability in which they are gathered leads us to think about the situation of Painting itself and its task of maintaining a tradition. By dealing with fragments of everyday life of the artist, also the reference to the difficulty of creating a lasting painting oeuvre is not too far. On the other hand, the playful aspects of the assemblage alludes to an activity that aimed more to the pleasure (of assembling, of playing, of painting) more than any other finality

Overcome the old quarrel about the Death of the Painting, the artist, always faithful to his métier, can practice it without the need of brushes, canvas or paint. In *Kunstfarbe*, the only work presented at the exhibition realized still in Germany, colored stripes of fabric interlace a metallic grid under a open sky, shows that the field of Painting is vast and that it cannot be reduced to the traditional means of presentation.

Geraldo shows also works in larger supports, in them he, starting from the graphic structure of advertisings and announcements in newspaper supplements, creates a painting that converses with the constructive stream. But in this relationship so many dissonances are blatantly displayed. The formal cleanness and the search for rigor and objectivity that plus the valorization of empty spaces were the major contribution of some constructivist artists, also in the graphic design, are here contaminated by the vulgarity of the space of life. It is as if the artist, with refined historical consciousness, had as his premise, the fallacy of the modernist project, and, without ignoring it, keeps leading his painting. Little by little, it mixes itself with the world without fearing that its specificity disappears in the banality of everyday life.

**Cauê Alves**