

## **USEFUL LANDSCAPES?**

by Rodrigo Naves

Maria Andrade's landscapes do not suppose days suffused in sunlight. The light on the canvases speaks of cloudy days, perfect for working in the fields. The four or five palm trees in the foreground are projected to avoid being confused with the bushes and the nearby shrubbery.

They are surrounded by a vegetation verging on undergrowth, and the strong dark green does not reflect a dry, arid land, nor the lack of water. The palm trees stand out due to a paradoxical verticalness: the trunks are a little thin for the greenness and the strength of the leaves and the coconuts. Above all, the trees have no contours, nor the light and shade to suggest an idea of a cylindrical shape, and the irregularity of the brush strokes emphasizes the small diameter.

The lightest canvas that opens onto the last plane reveals a reedier vegetation. To the left, there is a more closed grove, aimed at drawing attention to a channel carved by the water which is gaining speed due to the descent. Paradoxically, the excellent quality of Maria Andrade's painting balances the damage caused to the land and the richness of the subtle greens, which take on a lighter blue-ish hue in the mountains.

The representation of the sun was painted uncountable times. It was the metaphor for the end of an era, for the beginning of a new world or for the hard work carried out under the scorching sun. In Maria's painting, the sun is not there. This characteristic gives her art an ambiguity full of observational alternatives. Leaves, stalks and fragile roots, for they have no support, take on a decorative and joyful appearance.

On the canvases, relative desolation and freshness live side by side. I believe it is there that the painter's sensitivity lies. And I think that the renewal of this genre – landscapes – resides within it; they have remained many centuries and have passed through the hands of great painters and academics, arriving in our times so poorly appreciated. Maria's intuition focused on these two moments of the rise and fall of landscapes, while at the same time bestowing on them a dignified and vital status. Could this be the statute of current landscape painting?

The artist is deeply interested in several types of natural layers. Over many centuries, these intertwining webs often stemmed from the stylization of branches, flowers and creepers, or even from the streets

of country towns, during the Corpus Christi procession. One only needs to pay attention to the paintings and Matisse's cut-outs – a great admirer of art from the Orient – to realize the possibility of incorporating, in landscapes, an ambiguity that projects a highly contemporary sense.

Sometimes, there is the impression that the old patterns for rugs, quilts, tiles and so many other rhythms that stand apart from banal objects – and drawing one's eye – are reborn in Maria Andrade's solid and complex colors, without letting us forget the risks that the dominant technique offers our current lives.