

Tiny Little Stone is the Big Stone of Our Sensibility

To visit Rodrigo Bueno's studio, Mata Adentro, is to embark on a ritualistic journey in an enchanted garden, right in the middle of the urban and supposedly rational city of São Paulo.

There, visitors are welcomed by this shaman/artist (and visa-versa) who, with his gentle but precise speech, well-chosen words, kind eyes, and good thoughts, will do your soul a world of good. Because, in the end, what is art if not a common good, a value so republican and so often forgotten or underappreciated?

Mata Adentro is a place full of history, records, and potentialities — and, as such, it is about art. An art that speaks of experience, immersion, visual beauty. Coming from a family of antique dealers — the ancient art and science that, in the perspective of philosopher Hannah Arendt, bears some witness to those who remain to be remembered — Rodrigo has certainly reinvented himself, carrying the baggage of that universe with him, made from so many pieces of history. Histories that are subordinated and often erased.

Rodrigo once told me that he is a “street scavenger.” With his car and his dumpster, he collects art. He collects what the city scorns and spits out in this society of rapid consumption. The artist gives it all back by making his art and in it, layers of meaning settle and intensify.

Mata Adentro is like a huge installation made of these records of life. A twisted branch, a discarded door, a doorframe that has lost its nobility, a little stone, lots of little stones, a fountain, a newspaper clipping lost in time ... everything together and combined in this vast creation in its pure state, with a feeling of a greater state of introspection.

The studio also echoes the artist's own history. In the 1990s, Rodrigo moved to New York where he did a Master's in Visual Arts at the School of Visual Arts. During his time there, he took the opportunity to study comparative religion and became interested in Asian culture.

But his art did not reside in New York. So much so that, before finishing his Master's, Rodrigo spent some time in India and moved to San Francisco. His world turned. So did his center.

In that context, he resumed his research and started a Master's in Art and Consciousness at JFK University. His studies focussed on the holistic universe and self-knowledge, leading him to reflect on the potential of art as a cure, as a critical framework and affirmation of identity.

In 2000, Rodrigo returned to Brazil. He brought everything with him.

What results is an art that awakens an appreciation of our history, of the cultures of our country, of its people, and most particularly and movingly, of the bridges that unite humanity as a part of nature. Because the artist thinks of ecology broadly, as a philosophy, as an artistic cosmology.

His many ancestries are also present in his aesthetic universe, with an emphasis on indigenous and Black traditions. The *caboclos* (people of indigenous Brazilian and European descent), as Rodrigo says.

It was at this time that the artist created and opened Mata Adentro, where the artist's home and studio and the forms of expression of this great creator are brought together in one space, as well as presenting an open invitation to encounters.

The house/studio quickly became a *mocambo*, an artistic residence, a true hub for reflection and experimentation of integrated arts. A laboratory of creativity where elements such as music, words, food, the body, and spirituality, also used in his paintings and sculptures, turn into artwork, performance, a retreat. As the bard sings, "The unexpected makes a surprise."

It is in this space of encounters of the marginalized, between young people and ancestral figures of all art forms, that the artist — immense, and with enormous humanity — can be found. And it is in Rodrigo Bueno's studio that we discover the mixed compositions of city residue: paper, wood, plants, and paintings, always in dialog and juxtaposed on the basis of harmony.

Yes, because immersed in this jungle we find the artist's canvases and paintings. Not occupying a separated place. But integrated into this great canvas.

And so, Mata Adentro [Inside Forest] was the name Rodrigo chose to expand the work of a single artist into collective actions and processes, and collaborative environments. Everything there is individual because it is collective. Of the collective.

Pedrinha miúda

It is this magical environment that we now see reproduced and re-read in the exhibition "Pedrinha miúda [Little Stone]", which opens on the 26th of August at Galeria Marília Razuk.

Rodrigo asks permission from the ancestors of a place as part of his creative process. The Tupi word *Itahy* becomes *Itaim*, translated as "little stone." *Pedra miúda* is also an Umbanda term, as the ritual song goes: "little stone of Aruanda, eh..." In the ritual song in homage to the *linha dos Boiadeiros*, the term is contrasted with a huge *lajedo*, an extensive area of flat stone. As such, "little stone" has, at this point, become public domain. An encounter traversed by different, but congruent interpretations.

"The *lajedo* is huge, but it is the little stone that gives it light." Its meaning also has to do with simplicity. Yet, simplicity makes room for the matter that illuminates. It is, in this way, a concise and essential form, but one that is revealed through the parts that make up the whole.

Bibi, in turn, was the nickname for the slave master who subdivided the place the natives called *Itaim*, a region of rocks and streams. João Cachoeira, a son of slaves, who has a street named after him today, had a reputation as a storyteller, fitting with the myths of the guardian of the gate, faithful to the retreat of the waters. Thus, our little stone

resonates with, and in a certain way redeems, a violent time, that is being embellished and cleaned with the continuous work of the waters.

What then, finally, is “Pedrinha Miúda”? It is a sensory experience in the form of an exhibition. Everything is separated and together. Everything at the same time and in its own time. Bamboo, intertwined branches, ropes, roots, and hanging paintings; all suspended.

The exhibition in Itaim is born simultaneously at Instituto Çarê, with the activation of “Território Emboaçava [Emboaçava Territory]” (a place for passing through in Tupi), which, in searching for the primordial waters of the land, breaks down walls and opens the ground for planting and to heal the soil. It celebrates the encounter and welcoming of ancestral voices with the surrounding communities, in a great ramified installation called “Corre um rio em mim [A River Runs in Me].” In both exhibitions, Rodrigo proposes a set of fluid actions. An aerial river, made from a dialog between land and water, but also with air and fire. A dialog with the past and history. The past of the present.

A sound from a calabash evokes the hum of “pedra pequena.” In the same way, the sound of the water produces a soothing effect, a sense of time suspended that escapes the precise rhythm of clocks and calendars. The incense also does its art, inviting contemplation. Introspection.

Rodrigo thus revolutionizes the defined space of a gallery. He dynamizes the restricted territory of the white cube and fills it with telluric memory with this great installation of works that seems to float in mid-air. Between the cracks in the floor and walls, there is a constant sprouting. It is a retelling of the *ítan* (tale in Yoruba) of the partnership of Nanã and Oxalá, where the clay, the ancient wisdom, gives shape to what we are, and the breath of the creator gives life. They leave the earth to gain new life in the air.

The effect is totally different from that of a regular exhibition. There is no getting away from the spectacle Rodrigo has prepared for us.

And as such, here, the external is internal, and the internal becomes external. Borders and frontiers are broken down, becoming porous and flexible.

The result is a strong sense of belonging, as though the exhibition performs its own internal magic in each one of us.

Time, in the end, and as Tomas Mann wrote, is a wizard, a past tense that becomes an adjective. Indefinite article.

“Pedrinha miúda” is the new exhibition by Rodrigo Bueno, but it is much more than that. It is a ritual for entering into worlds made with care, subjectivity, and an aesthetic that considers the whole but welcomes the details. Through the details.

Rodrigo is an affectionate person. As such, he does not allow any of us to leave the exhibition space without feeling profoundly affected. Affected by Rodrigo’s sensitive universes, which are now ours, too. For we are invited to enter them and make our own home.

As the artist always says, long live the caboclos!

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