

Time as action, intention and disintegration, by Cristina Tejo

In various parts of the world the measurement of time has been encapsulated in clocks, mechanical devices that succeeded the Sun, the tides and the sand as means of temporal orientation. Numbers have also replaced trees, rocks, mountains, and streams in the spatial location for the better part of humanity, especially with the digital era. In the social sphere, people themselves have become numbers in documents and digital identifications stored in clouds formed by crypto data, and their ideas are shared at the mercy of an algorithm. What is intriguing is that if we compare the age of the Earth and the temporality of nature, this mode of being in the world only really started a few minutes ago and can disappear in a fraction of a second. While the structure of life is digitally radicalized, making the exercise of power more immaterial, there is a strong calling towards an alternative way of viewing and acting in physical nature.

Confronted with recent works by Maria Laet, these questions of human and non-human time and perceptions of the natural world immediately caught my eye. I was faced with new ways of marking time and space from an individual scale, with a collective vocation. I also felt myself entering a kind of intergenerational artistic community made up of female artists, who did not necessarily know each other or share experiences, but who were and are attuned to identifications of issues, materials and gestures. I find it beautiful to think of Maria conversing with Lygia Clark and Amélia Toledo about the traces of the body in the world, and of the world on the body; of how to make visible these interrelationships; of how to make rocks, air and water express life and art; and of how to subtly delimit. I imagine this dialogue outdoors, amongst the rocks, in an environment of contentment for meeting common ground. They are in a circle, remembering the gatherings of ancestral women.

A series of images of stones, made into photogravures, seem to map territories. One of them is titled *Sem título (Casa) / Untitled (Home)* and is formed by a pebble and the empty space generated by its displacement. The size of the image brings us to the rock formations and lagoons that characterize Rio de Janeiro, the artist's homeland, her home. However, 'home' may also refer to the empty space which once housed the stone. In other pictures made into engravings, the light seems to be emerging from rocks, and in one of them a crack is displayed. Immediately I recall Lisbon's tectonic fault and how it could move at any moment, causing a new earthquake and tsunami. If we could look at it from above the stratosphere, it would possibly be very similar to this tear in the stone. To me, this geological feature is the

chronometer of this pebble-tiled city of light, and these photogravures have become its portrait. I can even hear a tick-tock when thinking of them (a clock or a bomb?). A life on hold.

Pedra do Real / Stone of the Real (2011-2019) places the question of confluent human and natural temporalities more directly. The fusion that comes from the juxtaposition of the creases of the hand with those of the stones signifies not only communion and intertwining of these existences, but traces of frictioned times and presences. Without the stone, the human fingerprint does not persist beyond the body that generated it. On the other hand, the stone remains without the human. This work is named after the Relational Objects used by Lygia Clark in the *Structuring the Self* sessions, including stones, shells, air, water, and plastics. If in Clark's investigation these elements are brought to generate bodily experiences in her patients, in Maria Laet's work, stone and air are agents of manifestation of phenomena and of her own existence. *Fôlego / Breath*, a balloon filled with all the air present in the artist's lung at the time of filling, could be a response to the question brought by Lygia Clark from *Nostalgia of the Body* (1966), in which she asked the participant to blow into a plastic bag, close it with a rubber band and place a stone on top. By manipulating it with one's hand, the stone would move, emulating breathing. Maria keeps the balloon filled with her breath in a glass box with its exact initial dimension. Over time, the breath dissipates and, consequently, the balloon decreases in size. The glass capsule remains a vestige of this extra-bodily breath measurement until its very last sigh.

Sobrecéu / Overhead presents another register of time. The photogram is exposed to light, for however long it takes to produce the image desired by the artist. In this case, the sun rays pass through the top of a tree, forming something that looks more like clouds. Maria Laet photographs the result to capture the moment, and this photograph is placed next to the photogram, which changes colour over time until the image eventually disappears. Another work with and about the cycle of life. Traces also inform *Daquilo que não se vê / That which we don't see*, a collection of papers that were used for packing, protecting, supporting and/or that were part of other works and processes. The gradation of shades of white concerns the specificities of the materials as well as their time of existence and form of use. This is another invitation to the observation and contemplation of the trail and the vestiges. The handling of these books allows for new residues and marks. Another mode of marking time and touch. Most likely these records will survive the informational data, the digital world, and us who are here right now.

Cristiana Tejo, Lisbon, 11.2019