Galaxies of invention

A rowdy inhabitant of the “great world of invention”¹, Montez Magno has continuously recreated cosmologies and cosmogonies for the universe. His freedom resides in blurring the boundaries between the logos (knowledge, science) and the gon, the territory of the imagination. In this invented (because inventive) cosmos, fields that might be seen as far-removed or contradictory run into each other boundlessly. Thus, his work explores apparently scientific concepts or methods – combinatorics, fragmentation, design, metric, synthesis – for predominantly anarchical purposes. Without wishing to delimit sets of truths, apart from enjoying the pleasure of suggesting them to then contradicting them, the artist will build endless series of galaxies of the world and for his work, in an investment in the chameleonic - transformative and unstable - character of life and art. “There is a trend among artists to be monolithic. I have always been chameleonic.”²

And so it was that in the early 1960s he experimented a kind of invention that every now and then he would vigorously revisit in his work: the entropic action of fragmenting, of dispersing, of deconstructing - "I was making a more formal abstraction using more compact shapes, so (...) I had the idea of fragmenting the shape - and that is when I began this fragmentation work. Essentially, it is as if I wanted to see what would happen inside matter, a kind of a tomization. (...)".³ This fragmentary impulse – an inventive gesture that in Montez Magno’s work reverberates in spatial and unique logical investigations of organization – would be based on diverse intentions and forms, constituting a galaxy of possibilities: of an evidently phenomenological connotation (as in some of his series, in which gesture and expressional character are protagonists) of the most blatant conceptual and linguistic implications (like in the musical scores “Notassons” (1970-1992) of the touching on urbanistic concerns – the “Cidades imaginaries” [Imaginary Cities] series (1972) and its offshoots – or even of the relative to the status quo of culture, like “Museu portátil” [Portable Museum] (2009), whose inconstant forms and arrangements poke fun at the museumification of ever-changing meanings and values.

Therefore, this exhibition brings a selection of Montez Magno works that developed this entropic impulse, broadly rooted in a sensitive and experimental dimension of spatiality. In the context of these spatial investigations – marked by the rearrangement of simple elements that are combined and, from their changing positions, configure varying rhythms and spatialities – emerges a silent musicality that, in the albums “Notassons” (1970-1992) of the touching on urbanistic concerns – the “Cidades imaginaries” [Imaginary Cities] series (1972) and its offshoots – or even of the relative to the status quo of culture, like “Museu portátil” [Portable Museum] (2009), whose inconstant forms and arrangements poke fun at the museumification of ever-changing meanings and values. Since 1970, with the series “Sonata para olho e ouvido” [Sonata for the eyes and ears], Montez faces the question of musical notation (of code) and, like a frustrated inventor, reconfigures habitual sign rules, freely drawing a musicality that he would subsequently call “random music”.

Thus, although already present in his early works - such as the collages of 1962, where the suavely geometric elements seem to occupy the surface with solitude or melancholy – it would be in the works intimately bound to musicality that the void, the pauses and the silences become primordial, constructive values in the artist’s work. “Fascinated by unfinished works”, Montez Magno makes from this void an inventive, constant impulse: “I don’t follow a manual, I open paths.”⁴

² Montez Magno in an interview with the author, 2009.
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In this galactic dimension of paths that multiply in a state of constant expansion, the inventor Magno has worked with simple, everyday materials that lend themselves to persistent rearrangements that barely adhere to the logical fetishists of the art market, like the notorious Lygia Pape said in 1968: “It is anti-art. A proposal from the almost-nothing. From that which is used and, now, is a new-act. [...] The material provokes creation, suggests invention, spontaneous, free of any particular connotation. It reassumes a new origin – not that used daily - but that of the colourful dream.” Thus, more interested in invention, in the force of creation not only as an act, but rather as a constant exercise, Montez Magno rearranges materials as diverse and ordinary as a bar of soap, a watercolour pen or screws, constituting a centrifugal, variable oeuvre open to the other that – unconcerned with "structuring the world" in a universal spatiality (whether cosmological or cosmonogical) – is inclined, in turn, to create small, ephemeral and punctual arrangements which, in response to all variety of political and sensitive contexts, nonetheless have the power to make inventors out of all of us.

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