

A Marginal Order

Base hierárquica [Hierarchical Basis] (2011–) is a subtly site-specific work that André Komatsu has mounted in various countries, each time using common drinking glasses, wineglasses and construction materials readily available in that locale to set up an installation consisting of various concrete blocks stacked atop drinking glasses that are apparently cheap and yet strong enough to hold up under the weight, while splintered pieces of a wine glass bear witness to the fragility of its elegance. Many of the titles chosen by the artist are charged with Foucaultian resonances, and *Base hierárquica*, although it is not one of the most explicit ones in this sense, is certainly among those that best exemplify the way that Michel Foucault's theory of the microphysics of power is not only at play in the titles, but lies at the core of the artist's concerns and even, it could be said, underpins his worldview. The discourse on power and on latent or active social conflicts permeates the materials he uses, influences his choice, and in a certain way constitutes the true raw material of André Komatsu's installations. In this sense, the artist's recurrent use of cast-off fragments, leftovers, and scraps found in dumpsters, since at least the time of the action-performance *Projeto – Casa/entulho* [Project – House/Rubble] (2002), also reveals the desire to subvert the values conventionally attributed to the materials themselves and, more generally, to the elements of everyday life – thus instating, to cite the title of another of his artworks, a *Nova Ordem* [New Order] (2009).

The works of the series *Três vidros* [Three Panes of Glass] (2012), featured in this exhibition, emphasize the value of fragments, since they are the basis for constructing modernist architectures, isolated on absolutely flat lots, in perfect keeping with modernist precepts. The transformation of icons of the golden age of Brazilian architecture into conglomerations of debris and scraps can be interpreted as a denunciation of the violence implicit in the constructive process, or of the unique qualities of this architecture, whose democratic dreams were shipwrecked on the shoals of its progressive approximation with the social, political and economic elites, which it ultimately validates and preserves behind its clean and simple forms. These are not the only artworks in the exhibition that are born from the tension between natural, fragmented and apparently disordered elements on the one hand, and precise and rigorous forms on the other. But this opposition is in a certain way illusory, as demonstrated by the crooked, raw tree branch that nevertheless fits perfectly as a leg for a precisely square tabletop (*Cooperativa antagônica* [Antagonistic Cooperative], 2013), or even the image of a tree trunk printed on an anonymous, simple sheet of paper, which nearly seems to be part of the wooden beam that secures it against the

wall, at its top (*Campo aberto 4* [Open Field 4]). With this tension between opposite poles (natural and artificial / geometric and organic / raw and finished, etc.), André Komatsu's artworks constitute *open fields*, as though they were yet about to take place in front of the viewer, instead of being presented in an already finished state.

By directly or indirectly resorting to the technique of anamorphosis (*Anamorfose sistemática 3 e 4* [Systematic Anamorphosis 3 and 4]), the artist emphasizes the need for an interpretation which is political or in any case metaphoric for the exhibition as a whole. The key for the comprehension of an anamorphosis is almost always a change of vantage point, a displacement that allows us to look at things from another point of view, allowing us to see that what appeared obscure and abstract is in fact perfectly logical and understandable, and this is precisely what the works featured here require: a change in one's point of view, the condition of being open to a different reading, to be understood in another way. The bricks, the architectures and the clocks that converge on André Komatsu's artistic universe are, beyond all appearances, invitations to social resistance. A work such as *Time Out* (2013), for example, in which a stack of bond paper prevents the hands of a clock from following their course, is above all a social and political manifesto. The metaphorically charged act of stopping time would be impossible for a single sheet of paper, and the power of this artwork, beyond its poetic beauty, consists precisely in demonstrating the revolutionary power that springs from the union of individual forces, able to achieve otherwise impossible gestures.

And this same charge appears in the work which – due to how it escapes from the show's prevailing logic of tension – can be considered as the master key for understanding this exhibition: *Esquadria disciplinar / Ordem marginal* [Disciplinary Framework / Marginal Order] (2013). Apparently, the contraposition between different orders is absent here: the two groups of plates, the second one resulting from the “leftovers” of the first, both obey the same rigorous and deductive logic. But some plates are still left over, and return, like a kind of virus, infringing on the bidimensionality that seems to dominate the work, jutting out from the wall and proposing, in the words of the artist, “another model of coexistence.” In André Komatsu's open universe, the very concept of order is, one could say, marginal, rather than central. Order, as it is conventionally known, is just one of the possible ways in which the world can be manifested – and it is not necessarily the most easily understood way. It is enough to take a step, to look at things from another angle, and what at first sight appeared ordered can be revealed as disordered, what looked chaotic can, ultimately, be seen in its flawless logic.