

Carla Zaccagnini

**Pelas bordas**

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## **PREFACE AND EPILOGUE**

When I shot *Walking distance*, I had gone to the beach to make another film. I wanted to tape a scene that I had witnessed and lost, as had happened so many times before. I don't have quick reactions, I prefer pool and bocce to ping-pong or foosball. I often lose track of time (the exact time, I mean) watching how things I could record pass by, speculating about a title for a photo which meanwhile I don't take, or thinking about other yet unseen images that could make it part of a series and thereby lend it meaning. I went out with the camera to look for the repetition of an image I had seen a few days before: a seagull (or some other seabird that we amateurs peg as seagulls) flying in place. It flapped its wings as effectively as it could and made no headway. A perfect balance between the force of the strong sea breeze and the flying ability of the bird that struggled to move against it, toward the water. Perfect. Clearly, something like that does not repeat itself, at least not in a span of a few days or in front of the same witness, at least not this time. I was on the beach for what seemed a long time with the wind (the wind at least was the same), waiting with the camera ready as though I had to make sure that it was impossible, as though I could free myself from the regret of not having filmed the scene when it appeared to me as a gift.

I recorded my walk from one end of the beach to the other, so as not to waste the trip. Perhaps also because walking warms one up. Or to transpose a summer habit – walking from stone to stone – into that distant landscape. But now I understand that the relation between the wind and the seagull (let us agree that it was a seagull) shares something in common with the relation between the size of the steps and the size of the beach, in an expression that qualifies a distance as walkable, defining it as such, and we all understand it. *Walking distance* serves here as a prologue not because it shows the sea – this exhibition is not about bodies of salt water. Rather, it has to do with the need to measure space with the body, to construct maps on a life-size scale, where the dimensions are sensed in the steps and the passage of time, to thus redefine the distances and re-dimension the world. Water is actually good for that. Maybe because it is fluid, maybe because there's a lot of it, maybe because it is dark and deep. Maybe because it is always the same: an incalculable level mass, connected by channels, branches, straits, streams and rivers that always run to the sea; to the oceans where they once drew monsters. And another world map keeps being constructed, from the edges, like one drinks a bowl of hot soup, like one prepares or savors revenge. The text gets mired down at this point, of course. What can be said after talking about monsters and revenge? The next part would have to be a frame-by-frame description, tracing links in spatial or chronological order, explaining aims, confessing desires, narrating processes, guiding the viewpoints. But that part is a sort of mistake I don't like, it's distressing for the writer and comforting for the reader, leaving little space for misunderstandings and other sorts of mistakes that I prefer.

I was looking at the stalled text, the screen open, the table bare (except for the ruler, which helps me to better imagine thicknesses that arrive by writing); when it seemed that I saw the seagull again. Not the same one, and not in the wind. This time it was an ant dragging a listless mosquito, probably the victim of electrocution. The ant was forging onward, lugging a weight much larger than itself, climbing up and down the ruler, crossing the numbers from one side of the table to the other. The mosquito would wake up once in a while, as it was jostled over the uneven wood, and beat its wings trying to take off. The ant would stop and brace itself until the mosquito settled back down, then start dragging it again. This time I was quicker, maybe because it had already taken ten years; maybe because I stole the title readymade from an unfinished work: sometimes, not knowing that we can't is like knowing that we can.

Carla Zaccagnini, São Paulo, February 2013