

## JARBAS LOPES "COM PIADA" / MIGUEL PALMA "EXPOSIÇÃO SOLAR"

At first glance, this encounter may seem somewhat unusual. However, Brazilian artist Jarbas Lopes and Portuguese artist Miguel Palma both share an amazing capacity for creating projects that inspire a unique vision of the world in general and the artistic context in particular.

Both have played a key role in their respective national art scenes, in the transition from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and both are gaining rising and well-deserved international visibility.

In formal terms, they stand at polar opposites. Jarbas Lopes first became known for his re-contextualisation of simple materials used to create transportable works or flexible structures suitable for ritual or celebratory events aimed at inducing moments of conviviality, - mingling concepts of sharing, liberation and social awareness. He uses objects as "triggers" for situations rather than pieces anchored in some kind of aesthetic programme.

By contrast, Miguel Palma uses the intensity of an encounter with the object to engender an initial receptive shock. The artist repeatedly surprises the viewer, and presents more than he represents. Using models, scale models, miniaturized icons of modern technological culture, in actual or augmented scale, he achieves an immediate impact, due to its presentification.

However these objects, structures, or constructions are invariably subjected to more or less evident form of alteration - as their functionality is modified, thereby conjuring up metaphorical complexity.

The common ground between both authors - underlying these two exhibitions - is what I'd call "a critical revision of Modernity". This critique or questioning of specific aspects of modernity, is assumed via dialogue with two of its most paradigmatic utopias: the social and the technological.

For example, social utopia includes the productive corporativism of the first Russian avant-garde movements, the ethics of Joseph Beuys' social sculpture or the miscegenation of high and low culture found in Hélio Oiticica.

Jarbas Lopes swims in these waters. His proposal for *Cicloviaérea* - a project that dates back to 2001 - refers to the possibility of art being able to fuse with life in order to attain an ecological and socially integrating purpose. The *Ciclovias* projects can intervene in public spaces and also assume a more conceptual dimension, using models and drawings, as in this gallery.

Whether experienced physically or understood conceptually, the diverse modalities of the *Cicloviaérea* project underline the possible proximity to intervention in the social and natural space, through a change of scale and speed - in opposition to more advanced technological means - wherein the body is the key reference of volume and the engine that returns us to the essential.

As a socially homogenizing element, the bicycle also functions as a device enabling individual choices of value that reveal the manner in which we embrace our social responsibilities. The frequent approximation between art and life is thereby accomplished in a communitarian and festive way, such as prophesized and acclaimed by the artist's visionary forebears in the 20th century.

Miguel Palma, on the other hand, offers us an intriguing installation based on advanced technological imagery – using a solar energy installation, a Formula 1 Ford racing car and the capacity of energetic transformation of natural resources - thus deconstructing concepts such as velocity, efficiency and competition.

In this installation, a racing car is placed on a raised iron structure affixed to the ground – at viewer's height. The car has not been modified, except for the strange presence of two power drills attached to the car's rear wheels. Sixteen projectors in the gallery space illuminate this presence in a very assertive manner. Next to the car, there is a mobile structure with ten solar panels indicating the possibility of connection to an energy circuit. Indeed, the energy produced by the solar panels activates the power drills, which in turn drive the rear wheels.

As in previous projects, Miguel Palma shows a special interest in the disproportionate relationship between means and ends. He steps back from a possible scientific, experimental or demonstrative goal and thereby subverts what at first glance seems obvious. Faced by the immensity of the effort and the insignificance, or non-productivity, of the final result, the viewers encounter a pertinent comment about all situations within our everyday lives, where competitive waste and voracity poisons any model of balanced sustainability.

However, it is precisely in this context that both projects intersect: using different approaches to explore the contemporary art scene, both authors inject the right dose of humour, social conscience and aesthetic efficiency in their compulsive creativity. In other words: by valorising an immersion into reality, Jarbas Lopes and Miguel Palma make us think about the limits of artistic action and the role of the artist in a context where cynicism seems to anaesthetise everything.