

João Fernandes, 1998

THROUGH THE...

TRANSPARENCY AND OPACITY IN THE WORK OF ANA VIEIRA

“In the work of Ana Vieira, the house becomes a place for the passage of the look and sensorial perception. In this sense, it is a nomadic house, passed through by the crossover of continuities and discontinuities which confuse that which could be understood by its “inside” and its “outside”, which either distinguishes or makes the domains of the private and the public, of intimacy and revelation indistinct. The house thus becomes the territory of a shared complicity with whoever sees it, a secret where knowing does not diminish its mystery but rather accentuates a subtle play of approximation and distancing that localises and marks the path of the visitor within it.

The works of Ana Vieira have, since the very beginning, been “crossable” by the eye. The contours of the figures and objects that she presented in 1968 did not only dematerialise their referents by outlining their absence in white wood, but also similarly revealed the space that can be glimpsed behind them, configured by the memory of the figure or the object on which they are based. The figure or object is thus the starting point for the space, as if curtains, screens or windows became thresholds of another dimension we were promised.

The environments in which Ana Vieira presents and represents the sites of a possible domesticity dramatise the intimacy without stealing their secrets. Their walls (when materialised) are turned into points of passage from opacity to transparency, through the fabrics, nets and veils that filter, centre or decentre the look of the viewer. The concept of fabric mixes with the concept of house, awakening the textual possibilities (both tactile and textile) of their domestic interweaving.

The theatre curtain is suggested in the result of a scenographed intimacy, only to be shared based on the complicity and curiosity of whoever is laced with it. The paradigms of fabric and house evoke Penelope in their narrative possibilities, intuitable yet forever untold. There is neither “inside” nor “outside” in this furnishing of the space. The furniture, the clouds or other objects are just as relative as their painted shadows: they are constituted as settings of their compositional and semantic associations, turning the viewer into the subject and object of his own memory, locating him as a projected character of himself. For this reason, the windows and doors that many of Ana Vieira’s works present do not define spaces but configure the crossing of the look. They are spaces “between”, as if there was not a before and an after in the time and place of their remains.

Hiding and un hiding reciprocally imply a tension in each project between what is revealed and what is hidden, like the interstices of the desire that convert it into the principle of a world architecture. All Ana Vieira’s work transfers the plane of architecture into the plane of intimacy, distancing itself from what in the first is monument, the narrative of the exterior and ideology, to centre on the second, a labyrinth of sensations and perceptions where desire is intuited as a complicitly shared secret.

To gather, reconstitute and present a vast group of Ana Vieira’s works in a house, as has happened with this exhibition at Serralves, goes beyond the risk of possible redundancy to prompt the discovery of a meta-architecture of the intimate, emerging as a subtle irony on the modernist pretensions of the original outline. The exhibition not only occupies as it envelopes a house: the opening of the house onto the garden

gives place to the discovery of the garden inside the house. The windows are turned into walls of these other windows and landscapes that rediscover the other side of the mirror on this side so there is no necessity to leave it. Between being and travelling, the course of the visitor reflects itself and is reflected, in an exercise of immense laziness revealing as much wisdom.

“Here I will know how to discover” - is written on the floor of the plan of a house. Between skin and fabric, the floor and the carpet, the wall and the screen, the camouflaging of a place is extended, a game of hide and seek, a door ajar. The visitor will never arrive, never depart. Walking forever, along the corridor, through walls, objects and figures, at times hesitating between its opacity and transparency, walking forever. Through the”.

Catalogue *Ana Vieira*. Porto: Fundação da Serralves, 1998, p.165

Catalogue *Ana Vieira: Muros de Abrigo / Shelter Walls*; Ponta Delgada [Azores], Museu Carlos Machado, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2010, pp. 235 (org. Paulo Pires do Vale)