

The fantastic and surreal art of Ilca Barcellos

Her work cries out for life. It is not held back by the force that binds it to the ground, it twists, it moves, it rises and springs from the clay in a gesture of nervous lines, roots and twisted trunks of trees in the form of hands that project themselves into the space seeking sunlight in a call for help. It is once again art in favor of life, as in the works of the Polish and naturalized Brazilian artist Franz Krajcberg who used calcined traces of Amazonian trees to protest and alert the world to the devastation of the Brazilian forests and their biodiversity by the force of ambition and cruelty of the powerful. His irrepressible cry is present in the vigorous work of Ilca Barcellos. In the sculpture "The cry of Krajcberg", Ilca surprises us when, in using another foundation, clay, she speaks the same language. The artist boldly advances to the surreal by distorting the trunks and roots and transforming them into hands, using the plastic possibilities of the clay's malleability as expression, exploring forms, giving movements, organizing volumes that balance and are paradoxically delicate and vigorous, leading the observer to contemplate her work from all angles, generating different interpretations that refer to vital issues or to the awakening of a new perception, a new state of sensitivity with regard to planetary consciousness.

Evident in Ilca's work is a bit of her autobiography: the biologist who accustomed her retinas to the microscopic forms of beings. By uniting science with art, an imaginary world is unveiled and revealed, which goes from the embryonic to the marine, touching also on plant life, inhabited by fantastic, biomorphic beings that emerge from the earth or the sea in protuberant, spindly, textured, delicate forms, molded in the creative act with extreme care and dedication, and which suggest a constant movement and evolution. They bring with them life. Life in its genesis, in its cycles, starting from ancient times and projecting itself into the future, making us reflect and focus on the prehistoric beginnings, searching for the roots, the essence of all living beings, in a great and pulsating vital symphony, where all rise from the ground-earth towards the sun-force generator of life.

Complex beings that contract, twist and stretch. The movement is the striking characteristic of her work which seems to seek something, much like plants which seek the light of the sun to survive.

"The theme that permeates my work as a whole is the pulse of life, the biological world. As such, I seek inspiration in vital structures linked to the germination of life, as it springs forth. They are apparently fragile and tenuous structures, but which concentrate in themselves the capacity of becoming, of turning into something, of transforming. "

With these words, Ilca describes her work, as well as the artist's very function, in one swift movement, in a restlessness that leads her to an infinite quest to express herself, to come to be. This movement which is the pulse, which marks the rhythm and cycles of life, repeated and transformed, is that which is present in her works and leads her to experiment and to mold beings, imaginary or not, in clay -- surreal, fantastic -- fruits of a happy contemporary fusion of science and art.

A connection can also be made of Ilca's work with that of the sculptor Maria Martins, who advanced from the figurative to the surreal-expressionist and abstract to

bring to light biomorphic beings, hybrids, principal elements in her works in the series "Amazon." Her sculptures, like those of Ilca, deal with timeless subjects, involve autobiographical questions and reflect on human existence. Maria Martins represents these signs formally through hybridism between the human and the vegetable, between reason and instinct, between the conscious and the unconscious. And Ilca represents them with scientific foundations, seeking the genesis and the multiplication of new beings, imaginary, mutant. Her skillful hands explore the possibilities. With full freedom to dare and create, she gives them shapes, textures and movement. They spring from the ground and pulse, allowing us to approach. Endowed with life, they create a new dialogue between the real and the imaginary, between the secular and the contemporary.

Ana Maria de Andrade Neri,
Visual Artist