

The Poetics in Ilca Barcellos's Work

By Marina Martins Amaral

The unimaginable seems never to be exhausted in the work of Ilca Barcellos. The artist's production is marked by tradition and contemporaneity, art and science, and instigates the imagination, as her work presents the possible and the impossible. A native from Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Ilca was a professor of Biology for 27 years, and she has a master's degree in botany from the University of Pierre et Marie Curie (France). Nowadays, Ilca dedicates herself intensely to sculptural ceramics. She currently develops her work at the Art studio of Fundação Catarinense de Cultura (FCC) with Betânia Silveira and at the ceramist Silvina Gallo's studio.

The Work of Ilca Barcellos evinces a scientific and poetic vision. She creates hybrid creatures, fossils and embryos that break with natural scientific rules. It is in her private universe that Ilca finds freedom to reveal all of her creative pleasure.

The artist has participated in numerous national and international exhibitions, collective and individual. Her first solo exhibition "Ludo transgenia" presented bizarre and misshapen creatures invoking as a reference the nature and the Surrealist universe. This work was divided into three parts: Creation, Growth and Maturity. In each piece we can see the elegant precision of sculptural gestures that captivate the view, making the piece an aesthetic statement.



“Ludo transgenia” - 2007

Throughout 2007 and 2008, the exhibition "Echoes of the Skin" exposed a set of ceramic pieces that develop the theme of multiplication and genesis of fantastic beings derived from the surface of the skin of others. The theme closely relates to Ilca's process of creation, since the ceramic raw material comes into direct contact with the skin. From the clay sprouts overflowing echoes, beings dominated by fissures, alive in stretches, invaded by grooves and scars. In its folds and circumvolution a mutant identity of this coating organ takes place. Tissues are made, unmade and remade in a continuous process.

Ilca uses volumes and recesses, creating waves that come to the viewer as aesthetic convulsions that scream for attention. "The skin appears as an archipelago of possibilities that continuously changes its plasticity whose result is the distinction among islands of life, or beings, that differentiate, relate and move from the maternal body to the recognition of their habitat" (Ilca barcellos's Blog).

By assigning the skin as her object of research Ilca, triggers a deep reflection on identity and memory. Fayga Ostrower, referring to this theme, has emphasized that our memory is not factual but rather a lived memory, with new interconnections and constant configurations, open to associations. The skin, in turn, being a porous surface, expands to the collective imaginary, also taking the dimensions of a collective memory. The "Echoes from the Skin" series by Ilca Barcellos is what I call expanded poetry, in which mysteries materialized in veins invite the viewer to approach and unravel the work.



"Echoes from the Skin" - 2008

With the exhibition "La génétique hedoniste", also in 2008, in Canada, Ilca Barcellos received great prestige. Her work is associated with metafiction and is drawn to the idea of South American Fantastic Realism, although the latter is recognized, for the most part, as a literary movement. Ilca's work embodies the fantastic within the real. Art

history professor Adson Bozzi Lima affirms that "If Garcia Marques created a fictional city, Macondo, in which many of his stories were set, Barcellos, in turn, has her own city, entirely inhabited by provoking creatures that bend and twist as if they were not made out of burnt clay, but of a strange, malleable and flexible matter".

Ilca's Work can be related with Walmor Corrêa's work, who creates fictitious species, also combining science and art. In both artists we can see that the work can present beauty, justice and truth in the plane of ideas, of aesthetics. Everything is possible when we refer to visual experience; truths become symbolic, and imagination is driven by postmodern simulacrum. Ilca and Walmor make us taste the real through the imaginary, presenting us a beautiful and perverse nature. The work keeps us engaged by its strange and seductive nature, which at the same time seems to us so absurd and so natural.

The artist constructs a parallel universe that obeys its own logic. Ilca's realistic language and technical knowledge reflect the contemporary moment, in which objects can be real and imaginary at the same time. Shooting the senses in a search for visual references, does this exist? Or does it not exist? Is this real or not?



“La génétique hedoniste” - 2008

The series "Concrescentes", which was exhibited in 2011, has 120 pieces that address the theme of the pulse of life. Seeking inspiration in vital structures linked to the manifestation of life, Ilca composes pieces that seemingly appear to be fragile and small but that carry the mission of modifying themselves. In this work we can see embryos, ovoid, concretions and fossils that according to the artist engender the idea of life and precipitation in their different temporalities.

According to Ilca, the work "Concretions" of 2009 refers indirectly to fossil bio-concretions: "Concretions, therefore, take the very organic matter that I use in my sculptures as a starting point. This would be, within my imagination, able to sprout by itself, to give origin to new forms; it would be another receptacle of life. Through 'evolutionary waves' the clay would give rise to mutant polymorphous, amoeboid, tentacles, which I name concretions. They appear as beings from ancient times, whose shape is determined by the subtle movement of amoeboid projections "(Ilca Barcelos).

Ilca in the works named "Fossils" treats the theme of predicting life on a stand. The fossil itself contains the idea of memory, of permanence and at the same time of transition, opposing definitions that end up giving the object an uncertain and doubtful character. Thus, using the forms of the embryos, ovoid, concretions and fossils [that] the artist reproduces different temporal cycles of life.

The creation of inventories that rescue the loss of memory, be it through individual fables or through natural records that tend to forget their origin, is accepted by art as experienced in everyday life, when, of course, willing to comply with the demands of contemporaneity. Ilca Barcellos mixes art, science and myth, using past references to plot an evolutionary game. She transforms scientific knowledge into fiction, creating a particular and no less true fauna. Clay is made in boldness. Improbable and organic forms become a seductive fantasy, leading us to an evolutionary journey as real as her works, which whisper covertly that everything has a beginning, a middle and an end.