

If God had gone mad

With Hedonist Genetics, Barcellos defends to a certain extent what would have happened if, at the time of creation, God had consumed opiates or had been distracted.

The small clay animals created by Ilca Barcellos invaded the House of Art and Culture of Brompton. When a biologist became an artist ...

Hedonist: moral doctrine that makes pleasure the principle or purpose of life. After observing from all angles, the enameled ceramic sculptures of Ilca Barcellos reunited under the title Hedonist Genetics, it is difficult to establish the pleasure in question. It is perhaps the pleasure of the critters (which is how she refers to them) that she has created in order for them to reproduce and take possession of the space. "These embryos have fun. They play on the skin of a matrix being and will invade the space of the room. They wander, they have fun," explains the artist.

Tentacles or polymorphs, the pieces of Barcellos, represent mostly identifiable living species. In exception to realism, her species are hybrids: a snake with a cat's head, a dinosaur and a seahorse merge, etc. As is the case with the mythological centaur, these critters make you smile, but at the same time bring a burden of anguish. The explorations of this sculptor, even though in some sense naïfs, also have something of Dali's hallucinatory creations or Bosch's frescoes, minus the mastery, more modestly.

The pleasure that evokes the title is perhaps also that of Ilca Barcellos herself. A trained biologist, the Brazilian has been dedicating herself body and soul to sculpture since her retirement from academia two years ago. After having taught, her whole life, the functioning and reproduction of living beings "as God conceived them," the artist assumes for herself the position of a demiurge modeling living beings according to her own desire. "My pleasure is to play with genetics, with the lyrical and the fantastic creating original creatures."

With Hedonist Genetics, her first international exposition, in a way, Barcellos speculates what would have happened if, at the time of creation, God had consumed opium or been distracted. And to re-emphasize its power, but also to add to the game, Barcellos appropriates the scientific nomenclature to name her works (a tree in phagocytosis with a butterfly is named Pappillyonida arboretum, for example). As such, the biologist cannot have been long forgotten by the artist.

Dominic Tardif
Voir Estrie – Canada: 11/09/2008