

water. and the house is the world, by Carlos Nogueira

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A way of repeating without being repetitive

I had the pleasure and happiness of having early access to Carlos Nogueira's *water. and home is the world* catalog. It consists of two parts, photography and writing. It is an object whose materiality is at the service of the content – from graphics to binding – without competition. It was designed with attention, care and the elegance that the artist has accustomed us to. As always, a collection object. However, to write this text, I would not need to have seen it, as it is not for its form that it stands out.

It is intended here, in a necessarily brief way, the following: to identify and describe the *modus operandi* applied by Carlos Nogueira in his graphic production (which has been transfiguring his objects from space to the sheet of paper since the 1980s); to understand how the same formula was used for the first time by the artist, in the homonymous exhibition at Palácio dos Anjos, to revive "repeated" objects in the same format in which they were created, the space; and, most importantly, to understand how – as a consequence of what has been described above – this catalogue can mark a turning point in the graphic production – and in the general work – of the artist.

Fully aware that more questions are raised here than there are answers, let us take it in parts:

I

Carlos Nogueira's studio is home to finished, pre-existing, rejected and outdated objects. It is in this same place that the artist formally intervenes on them and, between resins and pigments, makes matter rise beyond its own physical reality, placing them – the objects – back in the present moment. At the risk of oversimplifying such a widely discussed topic, here is where his raw material is born, or reborn.

At this stage, the artist proposes to show the pieces, often only once, distributing and choreographing them with immense attention to the particularities of the space chosen to receive them. This "transformation operated by the assembly in the exhibition space"¹ was perhaps the last stage in the artistic legitimization of his work and inscribed each piece not only anew in a time, but in a context.

As a way of giving back to his works – no longer mere objects – their timelessness and freeing them from the ties that legitimize them – a consequence of the desire for continuity that characterizes his work – the artist finds a final place where they do not age and become indestructible. A place situated between an archival dimension and the strength of a new work, being perhaps "the supreme moment of conceptual realization"². And that place is the catalog.

II

In 1983, on the occasion of the cycle "Panorama of Danish Cinema", Carlos Nogueira – without ever having done anything related – was invited by the Portuguese Cinemateque to create the graphics for a homonymous catalogue. The result was one of the most original publications carried out by the institution so far. In a sealed package, as a gift addressed to the spectator – and this experience of opening is personal and non-transferable, challenging the very logic of cinema as a collective practice – there are three volumes made up of photographs of the films that were shown in the cycle. All the photographs are detachable, rearrangeable, not paginated, and nothing – apart from the *a priori* knowledge of the spectator who has followed the cycle – suggests an order. Once this desire to find a truth is overcome, the possibilities are as extensive as the combinations.

Carlos Nogueira identifies the essential characteristic of cinema, its temporality and defined narrative, and, using the possibilities offered by the host format of the transfiguration (the book), he offers it to the spectator, questioning it, and continues to speak of cinema outside its original means of presentation. This is perhaps an extreme example of what the artist will do when the raw material ceases to be the frame and becomes exhibition view.

The narrative – which, despite being present, is not the protagonist – is replaced by space. Objects cannot be touched or encircled; their presence is merely artificial, and it is in this impossibility that their creative potential lies.

The lack of authorial ambition of exhibition photography, which characterizes its own tradition, gives it an aesthetic comparable to that of the objects that rest in the studio before Carlos Nogueira intervened on them. All this allows the artist to distance himself from his own body of work in order to rewrite and reorganize it, looking at it as "a foreigner who is 'over there'"³, not forgetting its archival component 'because he is here. Here, in this case, meaning 'there'"⁴. And, once this experience of *Unheimlich is overcome*, it offers it to the spectator as an autonomous work, but linked to another (the exhibition).

III

It is certainly possible to find crossovers between the two "phases" described (both accentuate the qualities of the formats in which they exist) and to define the role of Carlos Nogueira as a tutelary figure in charge of rewriting and reorganizing a collection that varies. However, until now, these sets were specific projects for various spaces, which were later transfigured into the pages, isolated practices. But what if this ensemble were to rise, faced itself and – in a sign of maturity – and defined itself as all of the artist's work since the early 1980s? This is where we get back to *water. and home is the world*.

In a text to be published in the homonymous catalogue, Marta Sequeira continued this idea, adding that what is truly surprising about this exhibition – or so it may seem – is that the artist's raw material included not only these rejected objects – which start from a level from which everything they hold is potential because everything ends with their nature – but also his own works, which have already been presented.

However, due to the production conditions mentioned above, this exercise meant a retrogression or annulment of the "transformation operated by the assembly in the exhibition space"⁵, which "relegated" the pieces to the category of "ready-made objects" (pre-arranged), to their "youth" or the beginning of their time, which paradoxically, by means of this new way of proceeding, made them timeless. This reorganization resulted in a resurrection of living objects, because they have never disappeared and their past was not omitted, but rather belonged to an archival logic. In this exhibition they were reinserted – spatially – into the internal logic of Carlos Nogueira's work⁶.

The question now is: if the existence of the catalogue responds to the need for Carlos Nogueira's objects to become timeless, even after being legitimized as works of art, what is the need for the catalogue? One might suppose that the archival dimension would assume its totality; however, I believe that, freed from its utilitarian function, the catalogue could be on an equal footing with the exhibition – perhaps to an extent that will exceed its identity as a catalogue – and one day gets its own statute. Perhaps the catalogue of *water, and home is the world* is a first step of something yet to come⁷. We will have to wait and see.

water, and home is the world, curated by Catarina Rosendo, was on display at Palácio dos Anjos until December 29, 2023. The exhibition catalogue featured a photographic record by António Jorge Silva and contains texts by Catarina Rosendo, Marta Sequeira and Isaltino Morais.

¹ GUERREIRO, António – “*o atelier invisível*” in *atelier carlos nogueira*. Os Livros de Oeiras, 2024.

² Idem.

³ NANCY, Jean-Luc – *Corpus*. Lisboa: Veja, 2000.

⁴ Idem.

⁵ GUERREIRO, António – “*o atelier invisível*” in *atelier carlos nogueira*. Os Livros de Oeiras, 2024.

⁶ This rescription has its literal embodiment in the exhibition's entrance piece, a clear return to that of the exhibition *beyond the very edge of the earth* in London, where the artist changed what was previously written for the title of this exhibition.

⁷ The *atelier carlos nogueira* catalogue is already a first symptom of change.