

Art, Culture and Society: Territories of exploration and integration between the Self and the Other

Erica Kaminishi's exhibition "Garden" deals, among other subjects, with the relations between Art, Culture and Society, which should not be underestimated, even if Gadamer's hermeneutics are to be taken as the basic orientation for artistic creation. That is, Art should be regarded as a means of expression of emotions and creation of subjective world views, while accepting influences from contemporary technologies and ways of thinking—since we are both social and cultural beings.

The cultural differences between East and West are a recurring theme in Erica's artistic world view. Because she is both a Nikkei and a Brazilian, she questions her own cultural identity, which is in constant clash with the notion of territoriality. Until which point can we say that a Brazilian of Japanese origin is regarded as a true Brazilian, even in Brazil? In Japan, issues of race and identity depend, among other aspects, on where one is born, creating a situation in which Brazilian Nikkei are seen as foreigners in the land of their grandparents—a situation felt by Erica herself in her own *skinpoetry*. She thinks that, due to the process of formation and miscegenation of the Brazilian people, we cannot say that nowadays this is a pertinent issue in Brazil. In fact, it ends up turning into a side question—since we leave Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagic criticism in its historical context.

This reflection on the cultural identity is expressed in the concept of this "Garden", a territorial space culturally built and recreated under this cultural issue between Japan and the World, or between Me and the Other. In the context of this exhibition, the Other is the viewer, foreign to the artistic process, invited to express themselves through this artwork, in which the artist-creator, like a designer-gardener, becomes the facilitator of the viewer's expression (just like a composer, when publishing their musical score for execution, will have their work recreated by the musician-interpreter). It's as if, so doing, by opening her most subjective world, expressed by her artwork, Erica accepts the Other as an equal and collaborator in her creative territory. But, in the end, who does the artwork's authorship belong to? Is it to become a collaborative work or will it keep the anonymity? Even consented, the intervention is still a scribble, cave-inscriptions of fluxes of consciousness and subjective emotional expressions.

Playfulness and the Senses: Spaces and Silences in the Pathways of the Garden-Simulacrum

If we look at our recent past, we will notice that Lygia Clark and Helio Oiticica were pioneers in the exploration, by artistic means, of sensitivity and bodily integration between individuals and artworks, both through the manipulation of Lygia's "Bichos" or by dancing with Helio's "Parangolés"—a tradition continued in Erica's "Gardens". Such ludic, playful element, typical of Brazilian art from the 1960's on, together with the exploration of ingenuity and humor as conceptual elements that, like the Japanese stone garden, "hide-reveal" mental landscapes not always translatable into words. Gardens of *stoneflowerwords* that remind us of another garden: the kindergarten and its creative freedom.

Artificial, this garden made of resin and plastic grass articulates textures and plasticities expressed by different materials. Green and white, as natural neutral colors, might evoke a sense of Brazilianity also found in Burle Marx's gardens. In this case, where are the flowers? Maybe in the colorful explosion of

flowers-scribbles-yet-to-come, expressing latent sensations and meanings, resulting from the interaction of its plastic elements.

A garden of rugs that leads to pathways and fluxes of unconsciousness through green islands of stillness and introspection. Thus, also the Japanese stone garden is artificial in its essence—a plastic abstraction of real gardens. As a post-modern remark, not a simulacrum more real than reality, but a simulacrum more *ideal* than reality, for the concept of “ideal” establishes a standard of perfection.

For those who already know Erica’s artworks it is not hard to imagine words dispersed through Ma 「間」, a fundamental concept in Japanese aesthetics—the negative space that permeates the artwork, a silence not heard when in contact with our subconsciousness. That is, latent ideas and words-silence not spoken by Erica indwell this immaterial negative space—immaterial silence-space—to be filled with thoughts scribbled by the viewers in colors and inks. Apprehensible x Inapprehensible, Mental x Immaterial, Real x Ideal—such are some meaningful categories suggested by the analysis of this Garden, speaking to us of so many times, spaces and silences.

If the ancestral gardens evoke *Wabi* 「侘び」 and *Sabi* 「寂び」, the Japanese concepts of elegant simplicity contained in the stone’s rustic beauty, the Gardens that here we see sensitizes us with not so noble memories, like colorful plastic trays bought at Lojas Americanas, or Andy Warhol’s pink and yellow Marilyns. Plastic might have its space in Pop Art, but here, dislocated from its context, it acquires a somewhat contradictory and ambiguous signification, in contrast to the artwork’s semantic nobility.

Historically stones symbolize eternity and permanence, regarded as sacred for native cultures, especially in Asia. Meanings attributed to totems and piles, and veneration paid to stones create analogies with the older people in each community, symbols of longevity and perpetuators of oral wisdom... However, in this case, there is another kind of eternity in question: that inscribed in the slow degradation of these rocks-polymers, so ambiguous, strange and artificial.

In fact, this ambiguity is a fundamental aspect of Japanese culture and aesthetics, also present in the concept *Heta-Uma*, from the 1980’s art: the beauty that is at the same time strange, the imperfect beauty, or the perfect with a touch of imperfection—arousing in us a feeling of shock and strangeness, like Yoshitomo Nara’s paintings.

And may we, in the end, be able to see a garden blooming sakura-words, trumpetbush-thoughts and silence-thrushes, revealing landscapes-narratives composed by the authorship of so many different sensibilities—and may this contemplation stimulate the integration between body and mind, just like Kyoto’s gardens so delicately awake our consciousness to this sensitive being-in-the-world.

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