

A Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes: Flávio Império's painting between the maximum theatrical and the neutral theatrical

A Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes: a pintura de Flávio Império entre o máximo e o neutro teatral

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Abstract

This article starts from the painting *A Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes*, done by Flávio Império in 1965, to examine how the artist criticizes the military dictatorship through his work. For this, it briefly returns to the term *Pintura Nova*, and its meanings within the partnership with Sérgio Ferro and Rodrigo Lefèvre, as an instrument of knowledge of reality, molded from its elements. Then, it raises the comments of Flávio Motta and Mário Schemberg at the critical reception of the artist's work. And, finally, based on texts by Flávio Império himself about his activity as a scenographer, he brings painting closer to the notions of a mobile, neutral and theatrical maximum system, influenced by Anatol Rosenfeld's reading of Bertold Brecht. The objective is to bring the artist's reflections to the time by understanding his painting to elaborate on these issues, such as architecture and scenography.

Resumo

Este artigo parte da pintura *A Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes*, realizada por Flávio Império em 1965, para perscrutar a maneira com que o artista elabora a crítica à ditadura militar por meio de seu trabalho. Para isso, retoma brevemente o termo *Pintura Nova*, e seus significados dentro da parceria com Sérgio Ferro e Rodrigo Lefèvre, como uma instrumento de conhecimento da realidade, moldado a partir de seus elementos. Depois, levanta os comentários de Flávio Motta e Mário Schemberg na recepção crítica da obra do artista. E, por fim, a partir de textos do próprio Flávio Império sobre sua atividade de cenógrafo, aproxima a pintura das noções de *sistema móvel*, *neutro e máximo teatral*, influenciadas pela leitura que Anatol Rosenfeld faz de Bertold Brecht. O objetivo é aproximar as reflexões do artista à época entendendo sua pintura também como uma forma de elaboração dessas questões, tal como a arquitetura e a cenografia.

A Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes¹: Flávio Império's painting between the maximum theatrical and the neutral theatrical

Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes, painted in 1965 by Flávio Império, and today it is preserved in the *Pinacoteca*² in São Paulo state (n Brazil). It is a wooden painting on which several small objects were applied. This is the caricature profile of an elderly woman. Her face is made with graphite, without mass. There is only the contour scratched by thin lines that exaggerate her characteristics on a white background.

The clothes, coat, and hat are also implications made by areas of black paint; it is possible to glimpse translucent letters on a newspaper page. The letters do not have colors or pigment in their composition. They are traces left by a decal possibly produced from a newspaper page and glue. The newspaper is used again in the composing of the background covered by white paint. This white layer, wood decal, has the pigment texture and maintains the characteristic transparency of white-washed surfaces.

Several industrial pieces and objects are added to the painting. Lead soldiers, applied to the woman's hat, form a march. The assembly of these toys alludes to that fertile, ideally epic moment, typical in paintings of historical episodes from the 19th century. The set looks like a metal relief. The toy march guides the entire painting surface, including the woman's profile - which is less substantial than what adorns it.

At the bottom of the painting, gears form her hair, suggesting mechanical curls, wondering; the machining that engages the *Marchadeira's*³ head. A drawer, cupboard, or window handle is applied at the bottom curve that indicates the woman's ear. It is an adornment, cast in iron, but without any specific or notable characteristics. It certainly is a product of a process in series production mode that uses the image of the ornament as a style disconnected from its historical context.

Together, these fragments that are integrated with the other parts of the painting are attributes that assemble the *Marchadeira*. A conservatism typical character

expression which refers to the Family's March with God for Freedom. This march took place in March 1964 and was seen as a civil society representation, supporting a democracy rupture in Brazil. ⁴

The painting is part of a 25 works set by Flávio Império, made between 1964-1966, immediately after the Civil-Military Coup. Many of those works are now missing. If we know about their existence it is due to photographic register.⁵ They are plaster reliefs and paintings with small objects applications that respond to the country's political and social context. As a result, the artworks formulate a criticism in relation to economic underdevelopment and submission to the United States through a language that investigates the *Pop Art* procedures.

This set was shown several times throughout the 1960s. This moment the artist became professional and did a large number of exhibitions, among them were some of the most important for the art history in Brazil; the collective *Opinião 65* (MAM-RJ⁶) and *Propostas 65* (FAAP⁷). *Marchadeira* was in both exhibitions. The label on its back proves the first exhibition, and the list of works in the exhibition catalog proves the second. At the Arena Theater Gallery⁸, he made an individual exhibition in 1966, maybe when he wrote the text *The New Painting has the everyday face*⁹, naming this the works he did. The term is also shared by the painter Sérgio Ferro.¹⁰

In this article, I intend to look at *Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes*, which is part of mentioned above set, and to examine the critic's meanings that Flávio Império formulates through his work in painting. For this, it is first necessary to redeem how the artist defines *Pintura Nova*¹¹. Then, we will analyze these paintings through comments by the critics Flávio Motta and Mário Schemberg. Finally, we

⁴For a detailed point of view Family's March with God for Freedom, see Sestini, 2008.

⁵There are two collections of photographs: the first probably from 1967 by Benedito Lima de Toledo. The second made by Cultural Society Flávio Império (*Sociedade Cultural Flávio Império - SCFI*) which engage the cataloging of the artist's collection, between 1994-2000. Both are part of the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of São Paulo (*Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros da Universidade de São Paulo -IEB-USP*).

⁶Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro

⁷Armando Alvares Penteado Foundation

⁸In the original: Galeria do Teatro de Arena

⁹In the original: *A Pintura Nova tem a cara do cotidiano*

¹⁰cf. The use of the term in the author's text entitled *Os limites da denúncia*, Ferro, 1967, p.3.

¹¹New Painting

¹The painting name literally translated is: Well Thinking Families' Marcher.

²The *Pinacoteca* de São Paulo is a museum of the visual arts with an emphasis on Brazilian art

³Literally translated as Marcher.

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will see the picture of the Império owns ideas: *mobile, neutral, and maximum theater system*. The aim is bringing the picture closer to the idea of sociological *experiments*, as Anatol Rosenfeld¹² interprets the Bertold Brecht work. In this way, I want to bring the painter works closer to what he did as a set designer, contributing to a more complete view of his activity.



Figure 1: Flávio Império. *The Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes*, 1965. Acrylic, graphite and collage of paper and objects on canvas. 40 x 39 cm. Collection of Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo - Donation of Carlos Lemos, 2009

The Pintura Nova has the face of everyday life

The Marchadeira and the term *Brazilian Pintura Nova* are linked to the architecture studio that Flávio Império formed together with Rodrigo Lefèvre and Sérgio Ferro,

friends and partners since college, where they attended together¹³. After graduation, the three are immediately hired as professor assistants at the same place, FAUUSP¹⁴. In addition to his academic and office activities, Império is a set designer for the main theater groups in the city - Arena Theater and Workshop Theater¹⁵ - he also is a visual artist. All of these works are brought in the space where he lives with the other two companions and, often, seal relationships among them that go beyond architecture. Lefèvre signs as the artist who sets *Every Angel is Terrible*¹⁶ in 1963, and also the Workshop Theater renovation in 1967. With Sérgio Ferro, Império shares the making of painting - a practice that they will develop very closely during the 1960s.

The status of these other artistic activities developed in the architecture studio scope is in Rodrigo Lefèvre's text, published in the 1965 magazine *Acrópole*.

"To fight marginalization more directly, [the architect] is forced to get into construction non linked sectors as visual communication, industrial design, etc. There is increased performance, pretentious in some cases, in related fields as painting, theater, cinema, literature, etc. There is an increased interest in the survey and interpretation of our cultural facts, resulting in a needing for greater dissemination and discussion of our architecture through publications, debates, conferences, exhibitions, etc. is felt. This happens in an attempt to replace the performance almost total failure with the rigor of each attitude¹⁷.

This dispersion may implicate in characteristics compromise with the regime conditions. The underdevelopment and subservience are the easier choices that tend to enhance architecture as a luxury item concept. But this dispersion, on the other hand, if conscious, controlled, ordered, serving to increase our reality knowledge and combined with the coherent interpretations search, helps to establish the bases for overcoming this situation." ^{18 19}

¹³About the group, the fundamental importance it has for the History of Architecture, see Koury, 2003. The term *Pintura Nova* is related to the term *Arquitetura Nova* which is Ferro's text from 1967. Cf. Ferro, 2006, pp. 47-58.

¹⁴School of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Sao Paulo

¹⁵In the original: o Teatro de Arena e o Teatro Oficina

¹⁶In the original: Todo Anjo é Terrível

¹⁷In the original: Para combater a marginalização mais diretamente, [o arquiteto] é forçado a penetrar em setores não ligados à construção, como a comunicação visual, o desenho industrial, etc.; é aumentada a atuação, pretensiosa em alguns casos, em campos próximos como a pintura, teatro, cinema, literatura, etc.; é incrementado o interesse pelo levantamento e interpretação dos fatos de nossa cultura e sentida a necessidade de maior difusão e discussão de nossa arquitetura, através de publicações, debates, conferências, exposições, etc.; numa tentativa de substituir a falha quase total de atuação pelo rigor de cada atitude

¹⁸In the original: Essa dispersão pode assumir características comprometidas com as condições do regime, subdesenvolvimento e subserviência é a escolha mais fácil e que tende a ampliar o conceito de arquitetura como artigo de luxo. Mas, ao contrário, essa dispersão, se consciente, controlada e ordenada, servindo para aumentar

¹²The choice of this author is not random, Flávio Império and he were colleagues as teachers at Dramatic Art School (Escola de Arte Dramática -EAD) between 1962-1966. The book, *O Teatro Épico* has its first edition in 1965.

In Lefèvre's words, we can see a hierarchy in which architecture takes some major importance. We can explain this by the fact that the text is dedicated to architecture and is not to other activities, which are seen as dispersion risky, as they would reiterate the profession's elitism. On the other side, this same *dispersion* localized in the heart of which we can include the Brazilian Pintura Nova by Império and Ferro, if executed consciously and rigorously it would serve as a tool for the knowledge and interpretation of the reality. Therefore, it would establish bases for overcoming the underdevelopment and subservience regime.

In what terms is the Brazilian Pintura Nova a knowledge tool? Exactly because of its efforts to engender a social, political, and economic critic. In these works, created images organize the violent daily life of Brazil after the coup as part of the typical forces capitalism system, recognizing the country in its position in the international logic: underdeveloped and dominated In *The limits of denunciation*²⁰, Sérgio Ferro talks about this point:

"The Brazilian Pintura Nova is a clear manifestation of what we are today: a yankee colony. It exposes the complexity of contradictory attitudes - attraction and repulsion, denunciation and envy, a confusion that sets the strained relations between the colonizer, his internal representatives, and the colonized."^{21 22}

The artists present this critique by appropriating the *Pop Art* language - which they also call Pintura Nova - to talk about these *tense* relations. The language is identified as a North American product and used to refer to the oppressor, as an iconography characteristic, presenting it as part of a paintings organizing force game. In these works, *Pop* is not just a technique set, but also a kind of *leitmotiv*, which introduces the United States the capitalist production system and mass communication, while also serving as a reference to them. According to Flávio Império in *The*

New Painting has the everyday face.²³

"New Brazilian painting is the daughter of 'pop', but undoubtedly a black sheep. It uses its language and responds to the punches, showing the other side of the issue. As a sorcerer apprentice learns the advertising language and shows that the king is naked - how brave the 'general sin general', 'motors electric [sic]', 'and so on'. U.S.A. ARMY NEEDS YOU but who needs USA Army"²⁴²⁵

According to Império,²⁶ the *Pop* starts from the awareness that the world is in crisis; that conflicts - war - are capitalist products urging to maintaining the middle-class life conditions, from the "consumer society it generated: the United States". Language responds to this observation objectively and directly. It turns away from the assertion that calls *Informalism* and *Tachisme*, but it remains an inseparable system part that generated it.

Pop is described by him as a "consuming middle-class product", assuming the image of the consumption objects, replacing art history with articles from the mass industry.

In this process, *Pop* divorces itself from painting to connect with the advertising language, feeding on it. Sérgio Ferro digs deeper into this analysis:

'Pop' is also a product of the violence awareness, but with a guilty consciousness, with a pang of shallow guilt. Its fault is being part of the amorphous mass that consents to the concentrated political, military, and economic power responsible for worldwide violence - in Congo, Greece, Laos, Vietnam, Brazil, and even in Harlem. And the biggest effort of this mass is to hide this evidence from itself. Its awareness would imply a burden choice between compacting or resisting.^{27 28}

But the appropriation these artists make from the *Pop* in their paintings has some significant characteristics that set the tone to the method in which they try to subject

²³In the original: *A Pintura Nova tem a cara do cotidiano*

²⁴Império, c. 1966. op.cit.

²⁵In the original: A pintura nova brasileira é filha da 'pop', mas sem dúvida a ovelha-negra. Usa sua linguagem e responde aos murros e pés-do-ouvido, mostrando o reverso da moeda. Como aprendiz de feiticeiro aprende a linguagem da publicidade e mostra que o rei está nu - como são valentes os 'general sin general', 'motors electric' [sic], 'and so on'. U.S.A. ARMY NEEDS YOU but who needs USA Army?"

²⁶Idem.

²⁷Ferro, op.cit.

²⁸In the original: A 'pop' é produto também da consciência da violência. Mas, de uma consciência culpada, com uma culpa vaga. Sua culpa é ser parte da massa amorfa que consente o poder político, militar e econômico concentrado responsável por uma violência no mundo inteiro - no Congo, na Grécia, no Laos, no Vietnã, no Brasil e, mesmo, no Harlem. E o empenho maior desta massa é esconder, de si própria, esta evidência: seu reconhecimento implicaria na escolha pesada entre compactuar ou resistir."

o conhecimento da nossa realidade, aliada à procura de interpretações coerentes, ajuda a estabelecer as bases para superação dessa situação

¹⁹The excerpt is part of the texts collection written by the three architects entitled *Notas sobre Arquitetura* and originally published in magazine *Acrópole*, issue 319. The complete transcript was republished with the new title *Arquitetura Experimental* em Ferro, 2006, pp. 37-39.

²⁰The original title: *Os limites da denúncia*

²¹Ferro, op. cit.

²²In the original: A pintura nova brasileira é manifestação clara do que hoje somos: colônia ianque. Expõe o complexo de atitudes contraditórias - atração e repulsão, denúncia e inveja, confusão que compõe as relações tensas entre o colonizador, seus representantes internos e o colonizado.

this North-American language to show that the “king is naked”, as says Império. It is about making an underdeveloped economy, precarious industrialization, and a violent production system appear.

“Then, due to distortions and radicalizations, we have tried to graft something into these imports. And yet, we express what we are, because we are what we manage to do within the limits and standards imposed on us by the metropolises. It may come a different day, but it hasn't come yet.”²⁹³⁰

Pintura Nova is deeper, in contrast to the smooth and uniform sophistication of works such as those by Andy Warhol and Rosenquist, according to Ferro. It makes the handmade performance painting appear as data, present evidence of the hand of the person who made it. In *Marchadeira*, we find this in the material aspect; each color layer takes and in the gestures marks engaged to the spreading of it over the surface of the wood. The characteristics of this surface indicate that it is a reused object, produced for a function other than receiving the painting. The many objects attached to the painting, also carry meanings of a precarious economy that, with creativity, knows how to prolong the useful life of what you have, taking advantage of little for other uses. Flávio Império uses this resource in his painting; making the city's residue part of his painting.

Other Important characteristic Pop language subversion is the caricature and its critical potential. In the Ferro's words:

“It even made the caricature reappear, typically 'given' and dismissed by the 'pop'. Particularly from those who criticize oppression, it does not have a room in bad faith. It means saying, and making understand, what is not said, and 'pop' does not mean what, despite itself, it says. Here, the violence prevents the violence reporting, in there, it is necessary to evade the violence awareness”.³¹³²

In *Marchadeira* this trace is already introduced in a generic aspect - not very subjective - and exaggerated in the character's look. It is also present in the title, ex-

pressed by the neologism that gives this lady's connection with the conservative march the line of a repeated practice; if attending to reactionary protests was her way of life, just as gossip is for gossipers. Anyone who sees the painting recognizes the distortion and exaggeration in the reference to these ladies who were at the country's daily news as Civil-Military Coup supporters. In this way, the artist shares laughter and mockery with its audience using the ridiculous image it elaborates on a character that everyone knows.³³ With the caricature, Império manages to point out the oppression that prevents the violence denunciation, of which the anti-democratic regime that ruled Brazil at the time was the expression of it. The critic Mário Schemberg reflects on this point:

“Flávio Império has a special position in the group of five painter architects due to his satirical temperament and political concern. He is undoubtedly the Daumier of Brazilian satirical art today, potentially one of the greatest satirical painters in the world.

[...]

With a sharp and relentless intelligence, Flávio reveals Brazilian reactionaries inhumanity, confusion, and vociferous ineptitude. Revealing their empty inflated [...]. Flávio unmasks and whips, without pity. It has the greatest political effectiveness”.³⁴³⁵

The way Flávio Império appropriates *Pop*, imposing in it the charge for underdevelopment, creates a caricatured image of the North American language. The several objects incorporation – useless stuff - also develop the ridicule of the *Marchadeira*: it is a profile that alludes to some heroism, but is elaborated with - and has as an attribute - children's toys, fragments of underdeveloped and rusty capitalism; the delay.

The caricature critical potential is connecting to the way these fragments collaborate *Marchadeira*' assemble. For this, it is important to note them as *extra-painting* elements that sometimes appear as images of themselves - things of the world - sometimes as character's attributes. It is the recognition of this double aspect that allows criticism through ridicule and caricature. Ferro track this characteristic witch

²⁹Idem.

³⁰In the original: “Depois, por distorções e radicalizações, tentamos enxertar alguma coisa nestas importações. E, mesmo assim, exprimimos aquilo que somos, porque somos o que de nós conseguimos fazer dentro dos limites e padrões que as metrópoles nos impõem. Poderá vir dia diferente, mas ainda não veio.”

³¹Idem.

³²In the original: Fez, inclusive, reaparecer a caricatura, própria do 'dada' e desprezada pela 'pop'. Própria de quem critica sobre opressão, não cabe na má-fé. É dizer, e fazer entender, o que não se diz, e a 'pop' não quer dizer o que, apesar dela mesma, diz. Aqui, a violência impede a denúncia da violência, lá, há que iludir a consciência da violência

³³For a preserved discussion of the caricature, cf. Belluzzo, 1980.

³⁴O título do texto é *Cinco arquitetos pintores* e foi publicado originalmente na revista *Acrópole*, 1965. The text was republished with the wrong date in a collection *Pensando a arte*, cf. 1988:187-189.

³⁵In the original: Flávio Império ocupa uma posição especial no grupo dos cinco arquitetos pintores pelo seu temperamento satírico e sua preocupação política. Ele é indubitavelmente o Daumier da arte brasileira satírica de hoje, potencialmente um dos maiores pintores satíricos de todo o mundo.[...] Dotado de uma inteligência aguda e implacável, Flávio revela a desumanidade, a confusão e a inépcia vociferante dos reacionários brasileiros, desmascarando a sua vacuidade empolada [...]. Flávio desmascara e fustiga, sem se apiedar. Tem a maior eficácia política.

is appropriate from *Pop*:

"Imitating 'dada', 'pop' has given a new pushing to an active and politicized painting. An example is the 'deconstruction' technique; an essential 'dada' procedure is the shifting of something or facts from its normal context and placing it in a different one. With this technique it is possible to highlight aspects or meanings that are usually overlooked or unnoticed".³⁶³⁷

The presence of these objects is also *part* of the painting essence. It reveals its production context and the underdevelopment of the country. As mentioned, this procedure contributes to a reactionary caricature forming. By gathering these pieces, Flávio Império draws attention to its ordinary aspect, a common residue made by capitalist daily life, a reality shared by all. That is pointed out by the critic Flávio Motta when he comments on the reliefs of this set of works.

"The artist captured reality fragments. He was standing on the sidewalk. He looked at the ground while waiting for the green traffic lights to cross. And he saw, on the street, lots of metal scraps smashed [...]. From this event, the incredible idea came from it; taking all these things from the floor and put them on the wall. Therefore, everything that goes over the top, indifferent, emerges in the frontality condition as something impossible. And it makes you think about things that are beyond, including the thought that thinks of reestablishing connections, the lucidity resources able of being present in the most distant future and the most aged past; in the presence of everything and everyone at the same time".³⁸³⁹

There is the painting as an instrument to achieve reality knowledge Lefèvre suggests in his text. It is this because it makes the experience of everyday life dipper. Each technique used in *mobile system* development present their intrinsic critical potential, calling the public for analysis. We are going to talk about this *system* later. Before, it is worth mentioning its *denunciation* aspect pointed out

by Sérgio Ferro; Brazilian *Pintura Nova* is "anti", according to him. It is a way of reacting to the "wide common frustration from 64, to the restrictions on any free and responsible action, to the morbid irrationalism that rules by proxy".⁴⁰ According to Ferro, it is a weapon, even though is a weak one. In Império's words:

"A lot of people find my painting aggressive. I wonder if is true. Currently, any newspaper news is a lot more. Either very little is being read, or there is a generalized hypersensitivity crisis ...".⁴¹⁴²

Mobile system; theatrical neutral and maximum.

If painting is intended to be as an instrument to achieve reality knowledge, it must be a *mobile system*. According to Flávio Império, in his contribution to the *Notes on architecture*⁴³ this is the way that allows learning.

"Some feel profound modern when they state that our century is 'chaotic' and that the world of our time is 'nonsense'.

This subjectivist attitude protects the neutrality peace by encouraging the masochistic heroic comfort of personal dramas.

Human relations have never been Cartesian, except in times when limits are officially defined. For that, it is necessary to use force, considering the objective which is holding the history.

The 'chaotic' is born from a simple comparison among facts aspects or idealistic cravings for final meanings on the 'explanation' of the Universe.

Non-finalist and mobile systems allow knowledge; knowledge as commitment and not as a definitive explanation, and also as a verification tool and not 'the truth' itself."^{44 45}

In the above quote, Império contrasts two systems, two ways of capture reality. The first is the one which seeks to organize the reality logically and without success, concludes that it is chaotic. This approach would aim to find the *truth* - or

³⁶Ferro, op. cit.

³⁷In the Original: "De fato, imitando o 'dada', a 'pop' deu novo impulso para uma pintura atuante e politizada. Exemplo a técnica da 'desconstelação', procedimento essencial do 'dada' que é a retirada de alguma coisa ou fato de seu contexto normal e sua colocação em outro diferente. Com esta técnica é possível evidenciar aspectos ou significações habitualmente desprezados ou não percebidos."

³⁸Unfinished text by Flávio Motta, Os Metamoldes de Império, probably written between 1965-1967. Today at IEB-USP.

³⁹In the original: O artista captou fragmentos da realidade. Estava parado na calçada. Olhava o chão enquanto esperava o sinal para atravessar. E viu, no asfalto, uma multidão de migalhas metálicas absolutamente amassadas [...]. Daí veio a sugestão sensacional, pegar todas essas coisas do chão e colocá-las no muro. Assim, tudo aquilo que se passa por cima, indiferente, emerge na condição de frontalidade como algo intransponível. E faz pensar nas coisas que estão além, inclusive no pensamento que pensa em restabelecer ligações, nos recursos da lucidez capaz de estar presente no futuro mais distante e no passado mais envelhecido; nessa presença de tudo e todos no mesmo instante."

⁴⁰Ferro, op.cit.

⁴¹Império, op. cit.

⁴²In the original: Muita gente acha minha pintura agressiva. Será? Nos tempos que correm qualquer notícia de jornal é muito mais. Ou se lê muito pouco, ou existe uma crise generalizada de hipersensibilidade..."

⁴³In the original: *Notas sobre arquitetura*

⁴⁴ Same collection of texts written by the three architects already mentioned. Cf. Ferro, 2006.

⁴⁵ In the original: "Há quem se sinta profundamente moderno ao afirmar que o nosso século é 'caótico' e que o mundo do nosso tempo é 'nonsense'. Essa atitude subjetivista resguarda o sossego da neutralidade incentivando o conforto heroico masoquista dos dramas pessoais. As relações humanas nunca foram cartesianas, a não ser em épocas cujos limites são oficialmente definidos. Para isso é necessário que se empregue a força, uma vez que o objetivo é reter a história. O 'caótico' nasce de uma comparação simplista entre a aparência dos fatos ou duma ânsia idealista de significações finais para a 'explicação' do Universo.

Os sistemas não finalistas e móveis permitem conhecimento. Conhecimento como forma de participação e não como explicação definitiva, instrumento de verificação e não 'a verdade'."

even to impose it. It has the univocal characteristic, therefore, authoritarian.

Mobile systems, on the other hand, do not have a single purpose or move around the *truth*. They are, in contrast, instruments to analyze reality. In this system, subjects learn when they face a situation and become aware of its complexity, realizing the

different competing forces in its construction. For this reason, *mobile systems* call public engagement by opening different possible syntheses.

This theory has interesting similarities with Berthold Brecht's proposals for an *Epic Theater*. In his plays, the author presents situations to the public as a result of social forces, giving the synthesis power to whoever sees the plays, and not to the characters. According to Augusto Boal:

“Brecht's poetics is the Poetics of Awareness: the world reveals itself to be transformable, the transformation starts on the theater itself, as the audience does not delegate powers to the character to think in his place anymore. [...]”⁴⁶

It is essential to say that Augusto Boal and Flávio Império have been working together since 1957 when the artist approaches the Arena Theatre. The study of Bertold Brecht's⁴⁸ work and the assembling of his pieces - for example, *Os Fuzis da Mãe Carrar (1962)* - spread through not only the company's trajectory but also the Império's one⁴⁹. For this reason, just like his work with Sérgio Ferro and Rodrigo Lefèvre in architecture, we can see how his thoughts in the theater feed the painting he does.

His painting seems to allow something very similar to what Brecht wanted from the audience, which Boal defines as *Poetics of Awareness*. As a mobile system that comes closer to what the German author calls *Versuche*, an essay, or *sociological*

experiments in which the audience is called upon to synthesize what they see⁵⁰. It doesn't get into history, but you see yourself in front of it. Instead of getting involved, the person studies. The actor does not act, but narrates, placing the viewer in the observer position. As opposed to entertaining, draining the audience's power, it awakens their action. Therefore, it does not work on emotion as the dramatic theater form, sharing experiences, but it forces the decision. In the character subjective feelings place, the performance presents arguments and social forces that shape the context that the scene develops⁵¹. As Anatol Rosenfeld summarizes, the intention is to:

“[...] presenting a “scientific stage” capable of clarifying the public about society and the need to transform it; capable at the same time to stimulate the public, provoking in them transformative action.”⁵²

Like a Brecht character, *The Marchadeira* is not a heroic portrait or a negative allegory of the conservative lady. But a scheme where the viewer is placed before lots of procedures (forces) that appear in its elaboration. There is no identification possibility with the theme of the painting, but recognition of the actions that it develops. It is not about the character representation or the figuration its purposes, but the assembly of *The Marchadeira* as a result of several important processes.

This non-identification is particular of Brecht's theater, for whom “distancing is seeing in historical terms”⁵⁴. According to him, it is only from the *strangeness* that the audience is led to carefully study the scene, without getting lost in individual dramas. According to Rosenfeld about Brecht:

“For the children of a scientific age, eminently productive like ours, it cannot be more productive fun than taking a critical attitude in the face of the chronicles which narrate the social life vicissitudes. This joyful didactic effect is brought by the play' entire epic structure and mainly by the 'distancing effect' (Verfremdungseffekt = strangeness, al-

⁴⁶ Part of the text *Conceito do “Épico”* from Augusto Boal, written in Buenos Aires in 1973. Cf. Boal, 2005, p. 236.

⁴⁷ In the original: A poética de Brecht é a Poética da Conscientização: o mundo se revela transformável e a transformação começa no teatro mesmo, pois o espectador já não delega poderes ao personagem para que pense em seu lugar [...]”

⁴⁸ About Brecht in Brazil, see *Encenações Brasileiras - Brecht: Monstro Sagrado?* de 1967, originalmente publicada no *Suplemento Literário* d'O Estado de São Paulo. Cf. Rosenfeld, 2012, pp. 93-100.

⁴⁹ See text by Iná Camargo Costa, published in the catalog of the artist's retrospective exhibition, *Flávio Império em Cena*, cf. Costa, 1997.

⁵⁰ About the term see the afterword entitled *Brecht e a Teoria Teatral* wrote by Anatol Rosenfeld em 1962 to the Brazilian translation *Cruzada de Crianças*, by Berthold Brecht, published by Brasiliense publishing company. O texto foi republicado em coletânea editada pela Perspectiva, ver Rosenfeld, 2012, p. 81.

⁵¹ This is a brief summary of the famous comparison in which Brecht opposes the dramatic form of theater vs. to the epic form of the theater, originally written as notes for the *Opera dos três vinténs* (1928) and *Ascensão e Queda da Cidade de Mahogany* (1928-1929). Cf. Rosenfeld, 1965, p. 149-150.

⁵² Rosenfeld, 1965, p.148.

⁵³ In the original: “[...] apresentar um “palco científico” capaz de esclarecer o público sobre a sociedade e a necessidade de transformá-la; capaz ao mesmo tempo de ativar o público, de nele suscitar a ação transformadora.”

⁵⁴ Brecht *apud* Rosenfeld, 1965, p. 155.

iation). The viewer begins to find something odd in many things that by habit are set as familiar things, therefore natural and immutable, convinced of the need for transformative intervention".⁵⁵

The synthesis is an action that Império calls the public through many processes that elaborate The Marchadeira' framework and that causes strangeness since they always present a displacement in relation to its original function. This calls the attention of those who see its meanings: the appropriation of Pop, as a language of capitalism, transformed by the underdevelopment technique⁵⁶; the caricature use in which the public shares the laugh with the artist and not the identification with the character; and, also, the incorporation of *extra-painting* elements that are strange to that context and, therefore, draw attention to their production context.

We can relate the strangeness caused by Flávio Império's caricature to what Rosenfeld says about the comic in Brecht:

"The combination of the comic and the didactic element results in satire. Among the satirical resources used is also the grotesque [...]. It is not necessary to say about the very essence of the grotesque which is to transform 'strange' by incoherent association, by the combination of unequal, by the merger of what does not get married [...]. Brecht, however, uses grotesque resources and makes the world unfamiliar in order to explain it and guide us".^{57,58}

The *incoherent* association also appears in the incorporation of small objects onto the picture. These extra-painting⁵⁹ elements are used with the intention of provoking *strangeness* and, with this, make the audience ask themselves what are they? What do they replace in the form of attributes? Also, it makes them ask about the meanings of its use; and how these meanings reaffirm the caricature of *Marchadei-*

⁵⁵In the original: "Para os filhos de uma época científica, eminentemente produtiva como a nossa, não pode existir divertimento mais produtivo que tomar uma atitude crítica em face das crônicas que narram as vicissitudes do convívio social. Esse alegre efeito didático é suscitado por toda estrutura épica da peça e principalmente pelo 'efeito de distanciamento' (Verfrem-dungseffekt = efeito de estranheza, alienação), mercê do qual o espectador começando a estranhar tantas coisas que pelo hábito se lhe afiguram familiares e por isso naturais e imutáveis, se convence da necessidade da intervenção transformadora"

⁵⁶The underdevelopment seen as a technique is in Ferro, op. cit., p.158.

⁵⁷Rosenfeld, op.cit., p.158.

⁵⁸A combinação entre o elemento cômico e o didático resulta em sátira. Entre os recursos satíricos usados encontra-se também o grotesco [...]. Não é preciso dizer que a própria essência do grotesco é tornar 'tornar estranho' pela associação incoerente, pela conjugação do dispar, pela fusão do que não se casa [...]. Brecht, porém, usa recursos grotescos e torna o mundo desfamiliar a fim de explicar e orientar."

⁵⁹The extra-painting idea here is the same as in Boal when the author speaks of Erwin Piscator's Epic Theater and relates to Brecht. In that case, it is about the audiovisual resources incorporation, such as the cinema and slide, used to situate to the public the historical reality that it wants to deal with in the play. Cf. Boal, op.cit., p.140.

ra. In the play the Best Judge, the King (1963)⁶⁰, by Arena Theatre, Flávio Império writes the text *A Good Experience*⁶¹, in which he talks about the statutes/role that each element of his set design takes place on the scene:

"The Realistic Theater [...] has its roots in the simulation of the accessible through knowledge, inscribing itself in the natural languages orbit. [...] It is always from real objects that it leaves, and through them that it communicates. These more private or more generalized objects take closer or more distant nature forms. In the whole scenario, the concept is not inverted [...]"

In theatrical realism, the use of one reality aspect as fundamental is restrictive. Hence, psychologism or the mere objects relative situations are restrictive as a scenic unit.

The colorful shape, the assigned object, started to be thought of as a new entity. It was necessary to specify its sphere.

Returning to the old approximation-detachment unit, applied to theatrical realism, we understand the 'neutral' as the minimum wear, the last obstacle to the object, the object-audience identity. The theatrical maximum, therefore, is the abstract contradiction structure of the usual attributions.

The same chair, inside a room and under a bridge lends both all different meanings. A usual chair in a usual room can be considered 'neutral'. If it is under some bridge it may be considered 'maximum contrast'. These attributes come from the sense of usual for some society. The scenic unit depends on the interplay between audience and scenic object, as a cultural factor.

From the relativity of these possibilities, the degrees of scenic 'theatrical' image arise. The process is never a summing one, but of synthesis."^{62 63}

⁶⁰In the original: *Melhor Juiz, o Rei* (1963)

⁶¹In the original: *Uma boa experiência*.

⁶²Império, Flávio. *Uma Boa Experiência*. Programa da peça *O Melhor Juiz, O Rei*. Teatro de Arena de São Paulo, 1963. Today part of the IEB-USP collection.

⁶³In the original: "The Realistic Theater [...] has its roots in the simulation of the accessible through knowledge, inscribing itself in the natural languages orbit. [...] It is always from real objects that it leaves, and through them that it communicates. These more private or more generalized objects take closer or more distant nature forms. In the whole scenario, the concept is not inverted [...]"

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The Império's scenography synthesis is made in the public sense; the relativization between the *neutral* and the *maximum* theatrical of each element. Now, in *Marchadeira* we also see the same process; the mentioned double aspect of the objects that are attached to the painting. When *neutral*, they are garbage, scrap, useless objects - witnesses of obsolescence itself, capitalism residues. Everyday things that, if they weren't on the board, we wouldn't even notice. In a neutral position, they present the Brazilian form of *Pop*, impregnated with the local context.

They assume the *theatrical maximum* when they have seen as attributes of the *Marchadeira*. It is not possible to ignore what they are. Hence the *strangeness* caused by the contradiction between what they are and the appearance they assume in the painting. *Neutral* and *maximum* can be understood as forces that tension *The Marchadeira* among things and its attributions; the everyday life and its narrative; underdevelopment and conservatism; the real and its meanings.

In the years that followed the re-democratization in Brazil, *Marchadeira das famílias bem pensantes* as well as other works by Flávio Império at the time, integrated some retrospective exhibitions, where they were exhibited together with works by other artists of the 1960s. It became common to relate these artists' works in large groups that moved around the *figuration return, new realism, Brazilian pop art*⁶⁴, among others ideas, and linked them to cultural resistance to the military and authoritarian regime.

After years of democratic normality, many of the meanings that these works shared with the public are lost. The daily life is no longer the same. Each work references related to an immediate reality loses space to broader classifications, which the objective is to understand what happened. These classifications impose certain rigidity to *the Marchadeira's mobile system* - as they already offer the public a more structured conclusion - in which the *synthesis* of the many operations results in a representation of the artist's performance to the period of exception.

But this view is also part of the past. Since 2013, more intensely during the President Dilma Rousseff impeachment (2016), and after 2018 with Jair Bolsonaro, reactionary right wing has regained power in Brazil, imposing absurd agendas on us.

The well thinking families' march is once again an image that visits our daily lives, and terrifies us. With this urgent impulse today, we are able to share the complexity of their meanings more easily and the framework system regains its mobility, inviting us to operate the synthesis and promote action.

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⁶⁴About these ideas, see Peccinini, 1999.