

BLACK SEA: reactivation of silenced memories

"A society without memory is an anathema," as Andreas Huyssen reminds us. Sea and memories of slavery are the driving axes of the poetry of Patrícia Francisco for her exhibition *Black Sea*, which has as its origin three foundational axes: the artist's proximity to the high seas in Rio de Janeiro; The previous realization of works at the seaside, as in *Ambientes - Red Signal Series (2014-2015)*, exhibited in his last individual at the Mamute Gallery in Porto Alegre, 2015, and his former interest in the subject of slavery and African culture.

The notion of document may be dependent on the idea of functionality of the photograph. It is not today that certain contemporary artists turn to documentary photography, investigating archives of other disciplines to realize their artistic propositions. Reactivating documentary images of files, in an aesthetic conception, can be one of the possible ways for artists to place their positions on a particular social issue. In order to conceive this exhibition, the artist researched about the slavery in the archives of the Museum of Communication Hipólito José da Costa - Photographic Collection and Museum of Porto Alegre Joaquim Felizardo - Sioma Breitman Photo Library, at the National Library Foundation - Manuscripts, in Rio de Janeiro, from where Rescued portraits of black people and texts with the record of the names of the enslaved. For the artist, "working with a file is a way of updating the present."

From previous works, Patrícia Francisco uses methods of association of different means, of diverse images and that generate crossings of meanings. The *Black Sea* exhibition consists of works in videos, photographs and objects that comment on the social fabric of slavery. The video *Mares (2016)* presents several photographs interspersed with moving images of sea water, ships, map, saints (Santo Expedito, Santa Bárbara, Nossa Senhora Aparecida, Iemanjá) and other elements associated with the Rio de Janeiro, where the enslaved men arrived from Africa, usually captured in several ports. Amidst such images, one in particular, the close-up on the head of a dead fish, with its mouth wide open and its body eaten, may be a symbol of the suffering awaiting the slaves arriving in Brazil. The location of its exhibition, Porto Alegre's Municipal Hall Basement, can also be thought of as an allusion to the basements of ships that brought lives to be enslaved.

In the video *Baptism (2017)*, the camera traverses the names of baptized of the enslaved in a book of records from 1704 to 1707, of the births in Irajá, in Rio de Janeiro. The children of the enslaved, according to the artist, were registered only under the first name, denying them, therefore, the right to the social identity of their family offspring. The state of erasure of some traces of the names on the pages of the archive is significant of stories so often hidden, as Patricia refers: "I do not want to silence in a country that naturalizes slavery. A country that killed and humiliated black people and did not make the due compensation. "

A network woven with white and black ropes and embroidered on a net cloth, still containing objects collected on the beach and of religions of African matrix, evokes the surface of the sea, Iemanjá meets the *Pretos Velhos* (2017) and *A Roda é a África* (2016), musical object that gathers the maps of countries that had their histories hybridized with the African continent like Brazil, Portugal, France and England, accompanied by *Ponto de Preto Velho*. The exhibition opens with elements that symbolize the *Umbanda dos Pretos Velhos*, a stool, a rose and a candle, all white and a glass of water.

At the bottom of the exhibition is *Atlas Atlântico* (2017), a large panel of nocturnal photographs of seas and portraits of enslaved blacks, on which spot lights flash to reactivate memories that have been silenced by a part of society that still hides its history.

With this exhibition, Patrícia Francisco rescues memories of the social and cultural history of identities that have been denied, revives dreams of freedom and makes a just quotation to a people that, often, society puts in oblivion.

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