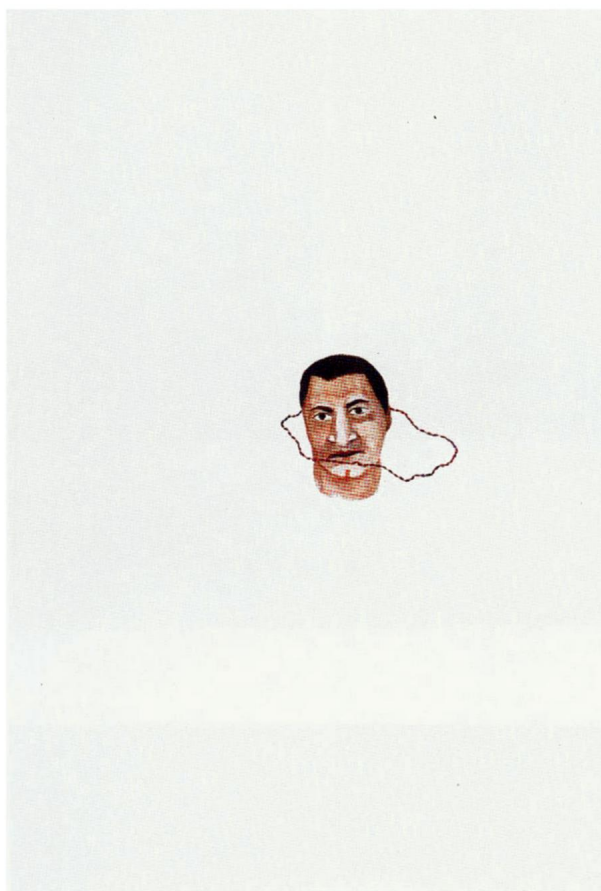


Title	Efrain Almeida	Author	Moacir dos Anjos
Date	2013	Artist	Efrain Almeida
Publication	PEDROSA, Adriano; DUARTE, Luisa (eds). <i>ABC – Arte Brasileira Contemporânea</i> . São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2013.		

1964, Boa Viagem, Ceará.
Lives in Rio de Janeiro.

EFRAIN ALMEIDA



1. *Untitled (Cabeça com colar)*, 2002
watercolor on paper
42 x 29.7 cm

2. *Os melancólicos*, 2009
oil on umburana wood
2 pieces, 25 x 10 x 7 cm (each)

Moacir dos Anjos **The importance of manual workmanship in your work gives rise to misunderstandings about the nature of the objects you create, as though they did not fit in the field of contemporary production, from which handicraft has nearly been banned.**

What is your position on this?

Efrain Almeida I believe that we live in a world full of possibilities, in which the artist can make use of any expressive medium, ranging from handicraft to high technology. It is not the use of a recent technique that makes the work more contemporary, a use that is sometimes made in an ingenuous way. The use of handicraft techniques plays an important formal and conceptual role in my work. I held an exhibition entitled *Handmade* in 2010, where the title obviously referred to the central importance of manual workmanship in my oeuvre, while also being in allusion, by opposition, to the Duchampian concept of the ready-made. I did this in response to the fact that some critics have often thought that I merely appropriated ex-votos and transposed them to exhibition spaces.

I find it striking how various critical analyses of your

work have focused on the elements of tradition that it affirms (the materials, the techniques), with no awareness in regard to how it comments on contemporary forms of sociability. To what do you attribute these clearly partial readings?

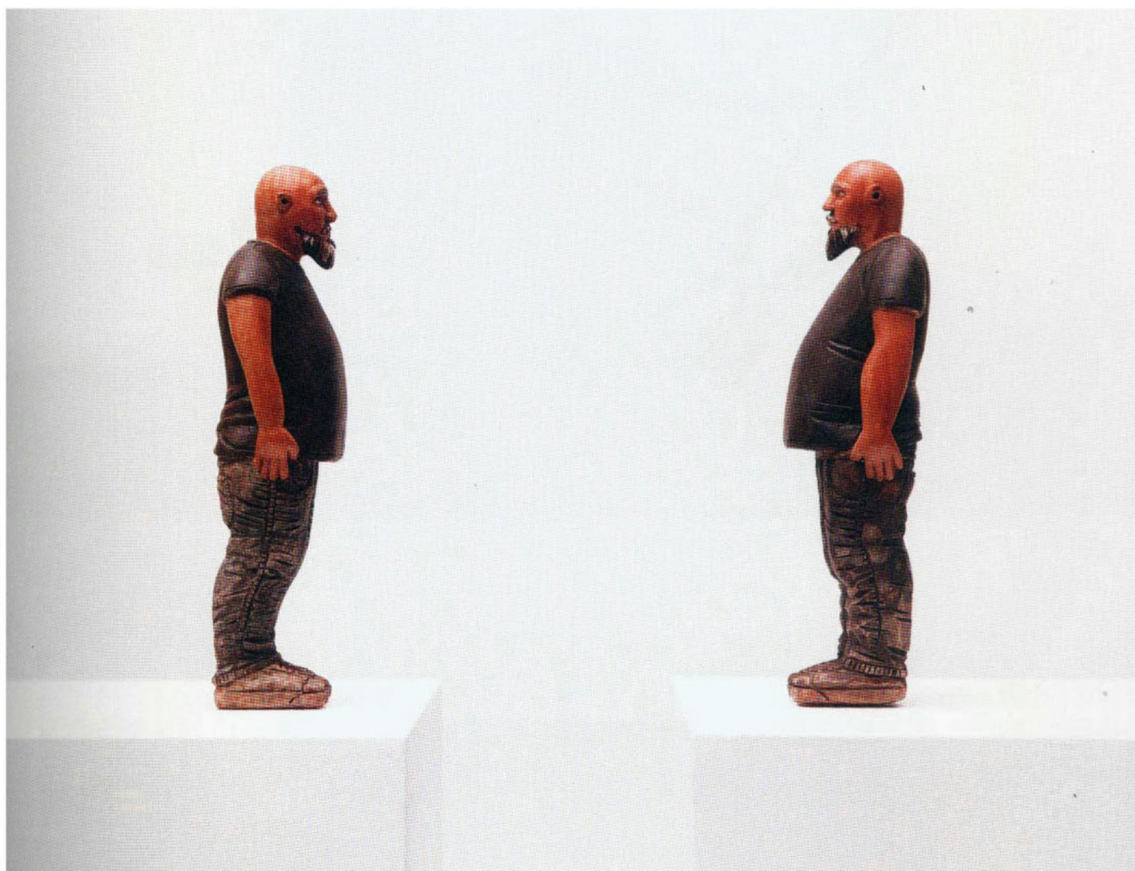
The art world is also, contradictorily, a world of preconceptions and rules. I perceive that in Brazil, perhaps for historical questions, part of the criticism is still restricted to merely formal questions of the works of artists. Insofar as it deals with questions that go beyond the form, my work has been subjected to many superficial readings by this sort of criticism.

Your work clearly lends importance to the memories you have of a symbolic place of comfort and affection, which you seem to want to recover through the figures and situations you invent, to the point where you entitled one of your exhibitions *Éden*.

What place is this?

Despite that I deal with "memory" in my work, I do not consider myself nostalgic. I do not perceive myself as someone who keeps affirming the past as better or more interesting.

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I think that I engage in a sort of inverse nostalgia since I bring the memories to the present and try to improve the future. I think about the past/present/future in a process of constant exchange and hybridization. This being the case, my "Éden" is a place between times, a poetic hole drilled through the common notion of space/time.

Why do many of the figures you sculpt or draw evoke melancholy? Is it nostalgia for a time when the body was unregulated?

I think that melancholy is directly linked to my life experiences. In my memory I carry the horizon of the landscapes of the vast arid backlands where I was born and grew up, along with the nearly minimalist emptiness of the houses in Brazil's Northeast. Naturally, I bear this melancholic and existential feeling of my origin. I think that in one way or another it is intermixed in a significant part of my work.

In many of your works there are religious and sexual references. How does the friction between these different symbolic fields attract or interest you?

Sexuality and religiosity are distinct yet interlinked fields. In my case, my close contact with images and the religious

context during my childhood is directly linked to my discovery of sexuality, since among my family there was a desire for me to become a priest. I think it is natural that the sexuality/religiosity dyad appears in my work, since it often deals with biographical matter.

The scale of your works is nearly always that of the small, household object. It often requires, however, an extensive empty space around it to be activated, as was clear in the works presented at the 29th Bienal de São Paulo. To what do you attribute this need?

I believe that the reduced scale of the works emphasizes the character of "memory" that pervades my oeuvre. The self-portraits are on a reduced scale. For their part, the animals are life-sized. With this procedure, I make references to the world of childhood and the sphere of affection. The empty spaces lend the exhibition space a silent and melancholic air, creating environments formally similar to the landscapes in metaphysical painting. The white walls and the plinths, in the case of the sculptures, are intentionally disproportional, as is the whiteness of the papers, in the case of the drawings.

3. **Quintal**, 2010
oil on umburana wood
and pyrography
48 x 38 cm

4. **Cabrita (manchada)**, 2007
oil on umburana wood
42 x 18 x 60 cm

5. **Mãos (Milagres)**, 2010
oil on umburana wood
22 x 20 x 5 cm

6. **Autorretrato com tattoos**, 2008
umburana wood
21 x 8 x 8 cm