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The flowering of consciousness
2001
Efrain Almeida. Santiago de Compostela: Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea;
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*SHOOT: germ, leaf bud of
fruits. Part of the seed from
which the plant is formed.
Origin or beginning of
something.*

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*Cabeça com coroa
de espinhos, 2000*
Head with Crown of Thorns
Cedar wood
26 x 17 x 22 cm
Maria Helena e Antonio
Carlos Viana de Barros
Collection, São Paulo,
Brasil

ON THE WHITE SURFACE OF IMAGINATION, ON THE BLINDINGLY WHITE SHEET WHICH IS THE beginning of the conscience, Efrain Almeida's fruits germinate. Like unexpected germinations, out of season, Efrain Almeida's shoots are born from the other side of the museum, originate in the centre of the earth and race, in a covered space and well fertilised with creation, and fight to sprout on this side of the wall, this tidy, washed and ironed side of the museum, like roots which have been growing towards the outside and which with all their might break politely into our room.

Efrain Almeida's shoots peep in at our world in humble fashion. They are polished and filed to excellence by the hand of the craftsman, the sculptor, who from the very start assumes his task as a father who will tame, a father who loves his work, work which must have a special place in our surroundings, and a use.

His figures, born of the plant, the tree, do not serve to shake our conscience with an explosion of vitality, nor are they vehement or aggressive gestures of a nature which might, in all its narcissism, want to prove itself in opposition to civilisation. They do not even try to impress. Quite the opposite. Efrain's images beg our complicity, our acceptance.

All of Efrain Almeida's work is motivated by a desire to work and by restraint. An almost irritating restraint, a meticulousness and a reserve hard for the eyes of the spectator to believe, making him or her stand before the works a little disoriented at the start, trying to find something rough, something sharp, some kind of thorn that proves the undoubtedly invasive nature of the sculptures, in spite of the demure nature of the artist, who plays the softie, who winks at himself in complicity and throws us off track, preventing us from seeing that it is precisely at this unusual crossroads between force and restraint where Efrain Almeida fights his battle with us. And it is in this contradiction between obedience and a fit of rage where the artist fights with himself. Hence his rounded shapes, his love of curved shapes, his obsession with circles, with parallelisms so that, inside the chaos which the tree and the raw material represent, within the anarchy of imagination and memory, nothing has a sharp edge, so that nothing ever ends. Not even the work itself, which can then germinate infinitely, like a melancholic, eternal hymn.

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Freud explained to us that culture begins with the first sign of repression. Efrain Almeida offers us a cultured nature, or a naturalised culture, and in the middle of it all a pure white conscience, disturbed only by the unavoidable and subtle marks of memory.

Diametrically opposed to Expressionism, and with no relation whatsoever to figurative art, in spite of his narrative intention, Efrain Almeida always works the tree with another intention in mind. Neither do his popular tendencies, he a son of craftspeople, and from a town and masters who found their art on excellence and the surroundings of the primitive imagination, prop up Almeida's art. His hand stems from a different branch, the most unexpected one, the branch which is born free, unpredicted, like a conquered whim of nature, like a nobody's child.

Efrain's created objects are like orphans with washed faces who are being shown off in public for the first time, small faces, symbolic and oneiric inlaid work, men and little houses whose past is not revealed to us, because he represents them to us on one level only, that of the present pure and simple, of clean and rounded, almost mathematical, schematic, essence, because perhaps Efrain is less interested in processes than in results, in an exercise of reserve and moral and artistic meticulousness which is undoubtedly his greatest achievement, the eagerness to clear the imagination, to clean and polish its fruits, without the need to talk of their origin. This path which his works follow, from the unknown, underground world to a present, impeccable and external, is the mystery which Efrain Almeida presents us with. It is his offering, his petition.