

Title Cristiano Lenhardt
Date 2015
Publication LOOKOFSKY, Sarah. *Cristiano Lenhardt*. Artforum, 03.2015

Author Sarah Lookofsky
Artist Cristiano Lenhardt

Cristiano Lenhardt

The idea that an object exists only because the force holding it together is stronger than the force pulling it apart was the stated subject of Cristiano Lenhardt's recent solo show "*Matéria Superordinária Abundante*" (Superordinary Abundant Matter). Citing this entropic premise as fundamental to the cultures of the indigenous inhabitants of Brazil, Lenhardt composed a show concerning the precarious balance between the made and the unmade that nothing and no one can achieve except temporarily.

In a departure from his prior preoccupations with film and printmaking, Lenhardt culled commonplace materials from the streets of Recife to create the works for this exhibition. *Dobrados com bordas* (Folds with Edges; all works 2014), for instance, consists of pieces of a kind of aluminum screen typically used to cover satellite dishes, which had been folded in dense compositions that call to mind Brazilian Neo-concrete works such as Hélio Oiticica's Spatial Reliefs. But compared to Oiticica's, these pieces lack definition—their softened geometries possess a formal indeterminacy neither entirely haphazard nor clearly deliberate, thereby mimicking the common afterlives of the screens themselves, collected and folded onto small carts by the city's poor to be sold for the price of their metal. A similarly fleeting and ancillary formal system was on view in *Cabo da trouxa de pertences* (Stick of Pack of Belongings), in which plastic broomsticks abandoned around the city lay precariously balanced on one another in a crisscross pattern, only one visitor's errant step away from suffering haphazard recomposition. Lenhardt also used a camera to collect, in a different sense, everyday aesthetic structures from the urban scene. *Fucinha* (Snout) consists of three close-up photographs depicting closed eyelids covered in the vibrant, multicolored eye shadow that has become trendy among young women in the city. An 8-mm film, *Edificações Mediúnicas* (Psychic Buildings), captures brightly painted playground furniture (also the subject of several photographs), devoid of people, in various parks around town. Removed from their particular cultural and historical environments, these hulking, polychrome structures, like the eyelids, appear oddly out of time.

Although most of the objects that were on view seem to refer in some way to the material conditions of the poorest inhabitants of the Brazilian northeast, they did not amount to a representation of these geographic and economic conditions. Nor did they serve as Duchampian readymades pointing to their artistic context. They might be better described as readymades in reverse, giving emphasis to the fragile, aleatory, and impermanent properties that objects possess, but that art objects regularly disavow. The three sculptures each titled *Trair a espécie* (Betray the Species) are a case in point. All are composed of metal rods and *cará*, a starchy member of the yam family native to the New World, which is one of the oldest cultivated foods in the Americas. Propped against the wall, with legs splayed, one was a humanoid figure to which the organic material contributed a lumpy, hairy appearance. The other two sculptures were a T. rex-like creature and something akin to a reindeer. At the time of my visit, the latter was lying on its side, felled by gravity's pull. Nevertheless, the two long shoots serving as the creature's "horns" seemed to express an ascending organic energy, as if to offer a humorous reminder that mortality often is cosmically, and randomly, coterminous with new life.

It was unclear whether the titular *betrayal* was a reference to humankind's historical exploitation of the yam as a food source, or rather to this particular plant's apparent defiance of the artist's plan. In any event, the *cará*, like the other prosaic materials on view, seemed to elude representation and abstraction in equal measure. This double denial

Title Cristiano Lenhardt
Date 2015
Publication LOOKOFSKY, Sarah. *Cristiano Lenhardt*. Artforum, 03.2015

Author Sarah Lookofsky
Artist Cristiano Lenhardt

seemed less a refusal of art-historical categorization than a circumvention of any fixed material state in an aleatory, provisional insistence that no thing is its own apotheosis but that each is just a slap-dash by-product of something else.