

Title	The dance of loneliness	Author	Nuno Ramos
Date	2016	Artist	Marina Rheingantz
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## The dance of loneliness

Nearly everything in this painting looks distant. This is its primal element, a gentle placenta that keeps at a distance what has been gradually gathering in her work. Swimming pools, trailers, chairs, trees, and soccer goals pepper a mass of sky and clouds, a preternatural ground or sea, on whose surface they do not seem to rest, but rather float. It is in this generic and profound sense that Guignard lies at the core of Marina's painting, with its Chinese garden, its diffuse fog, its little Minas Gerais churches, which lend scale to that fleeting suspension, which eludes us.

Here it seems that our perception is in flight, looking down from a bird's-eye view. More than landscapes, in the Cézannean sense (a painstakingly detailed and always solid compromise between near and far, appearance and disappearance), in Marina's work (as in Diebenkorn's) we see aerial views, taken from atop some rock outcropping. This is why the things there below seem to be naturally separated, as though this were their original condition. Despite a certain mildness of the background, I think that they wish to remain in their loneliness, softly singing their name, color and shape, somewhat disconnected from what surrounds them. The brightness of the little star, the falling leaf, are immersed in this disperse and inconclusive whole.

This requires, therefore a certain exaggeration between the scale of the space, the intense flow of the lines of perspective, the light that projects the gaze backward, and the family of beings, the nouns, the little ants that we find along the way. There are few foregrounds, and when they do appear – the red and yellow latticeworks, for example – they are semiabstract, like fences that intensify the power of what is far away, behind them, passing through their gaps. The foreground is no more than this, the entrance layer of a large placenta, enhancing the value of what lies behind it.

Because, it is in the large ocean, coral reef, placenta, foggy cloud or large theater of the world that the *things* are immersed. I especially like the paintings that contain these things, small offsprings of being, pleasant pieces of merchandise abiding there, between quietude and absurdity, waiting for something unknown. Alone, without an echo, bearing no proportion to their surroundings – what are the four chairs doing, after all, next to the ocean? Alone, because they do not seem to want anything. To endure, perhaps.

In this sense, there is an opposite force here, emanating from these small beings, a collection or snippets from a notebook that drive the day-to-day variation of the paintings, such as a fish hook embedded in each of the canvases – a certain poetics of the concrete that used to lie at the center of Marina's work and which was gradually emptied by the aforementioned distant placenta. While the viewpoint rose higher, while the bird carried our eye into the sky, the things lost the weight of their origin and shed the Morandian sobriety deriving from her lessons with Paulo Pasta. It would be tempting to transform them into a sign, a code, a language. In a certain way, this is the temptation posed to Marina's generation and to recent Brazilian painting as a whole – a certain disjunction, akin to that of Richter or Tuymans, between the unique painting and the artist's style, which would strip away the weight of each painting. The style, like a sprawling institution, has always offered a quantity of variation to which each unit conforms. In a certain way, the artist began to act as a curator of her own potential, patiently disciplining it, like a theater director guiding an actor.

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In these artists, painting is above all a protean mass, ready to receive any determination – a seal, a lion, water [I refer to the famous scene from the *Odyssey*, in which Menelaus tightly grasps the god Proteus who turns into a bearded lion, a snake, a leopard and a giant boar; he even turns into running water and a towering leafy tree (Canto IV)]. In Richter's work, photography and painting switch places, in a basic, fundamental indetermination – but so do art history and the present, abstraction and figuration, expression and coldness, the political and the apolitical. The result is an enormous neutral element, a space of negotiation where everyone speaks in murmurs, a disciplined Babel, watchful of its effects and aware of itself – in short, a superego, something monstrous and impassive, like a multitude of Mr. Spocks exchanging telepathic messages. In Tuymans, unlike in Richter, this neutrality seems to be once again coupled with a certain lyricism, creating an even stranger poetics – an exiled self that patiently covers each image (ranging from the horrors of the Belgian Congo to Christmas decorations) with its impassive features. All while maintaining, with this impassiveness, an equal distance from all and any drive, motive or record. Each painting by Tuymans is a poignant conquest of this distancing.

I think that a good part of the new Brazilian painting resorted to this approach as a true vein of ambition and power. The expressive questions, with a certain subjective anchoring and fidelity, which still ruled my generation, were discarded without nostalgia. They are painters who in a certain sense are extremely capable, and the availability of myriad motifs as well as styles is part of this power: they may create a cartoon, they may be Manet, they may portray a cow or discover the lilac sheen of the broken handle of a teacup, without really creating dissonance or parody. Balancing a certain discretion and fragility in this power of choice, lending visibility to this neutral territory on which the work is supported and spread is perhaps what constitutes the challenge and space of conquest in this project.

I also see in Marina the presence of this neutrality – in the use of emotionless photography, in the nondifferentiation between motifs and graphic signs, in the sporadic equalization between mimetic power and the replication of the sign. But I perceive in her work a moving force of unity, of a return to itself, which makes it unique. Her painting has a scale among the things, a light in the background, a flow in the brushstrokes all her own; there is a sort of constant return here, as though the sea-cloud-tide that sweeps up everything and makes it float also returned everything, in a cycle. In this sense, perhaps the Nordic lyricism, à la Munch, by Peter Doig, offers the most interesting approach. There is in Doig a certain nearly kitsch *enchantment*, like illustrations from a fairytale, which is of interest to Marina's work.

Marina opts precisely for skill in crisis. Despite being so fresh, her work seems to be already tired of wanting, of having to make choices. It would be important, without being ingenuous, to achieve a certain fatality of solutions and searchings, negotiating *for less* with the enormous availability around her – there is an image everywhere; in each image a name; in each name, a style; in each style, an author; in each author, a biography; in each biography, an era; in each era, a history; in each history, a version; in each version, an image. How to stop this endless flow, like a looping Russian doll, which when it reaches the smallest unit gets big again, where each thing leads to everything else and each piece of the whole is already full of itself while containing smaller units?

Perhaps by isolating the things a bit? By giving them breathing room, by wafting air, light and paint around them? If no one can tell the difference between a photo and a painting anymore; if virtuosity and naïveté now look alike; if Dutch baroque painting and the tattoos of a tribe from New Zealand look like the same style; if everything is endless and

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nameless flow, infinitely modulated cacophonous music, so that no one is annoyed – then wait a minute. Take it easy. Are we going to put a trailer in the middle of a wheat field? A delicate curtain, almost a spider web, in a starry night or an evening of St. John's Festival? Are we going to let each thing sleep by itself and see what happens when they are alone? And, after all, are we going to set them to dance?

– *To dance what?*

– The dance of loneliness.