

Everything is what it seems**by Raul Mourão**

We hammered *Sexta-Feira* [Friday] (2022) into the garden's ground in front of Carpintaria, a bronze vertical sculpture by Barrão, resulting from a pile of disparate elements: vat/speaker/wooden stump/jar/vase/bottle/tubes/skulls. Around it, we positioned five works from Josh Callaghan's *Social Block* (2022) series, cinder blocks built to twice their size that here lend themselves as benches. What used to be construction material became urban furniture. Inside the gallery, Barrão's sculptures, made from intentionally shattered and reorganized ceramic and porcelain pieces, dialog with Callaghan's works: plastic drill bit cases filled with different-sized twigs, a sculpted refrigerator, tree shapes conceived at the empirical crossing of tripods, tubes and aluminum bars.

Josh and Barrão are artists of manual labor, doing everything by hand. Alone in their studios, they recreate and give life to common objects that have already passed through our daily lives. They reinvent the ordinary in compositions that contaminate each other. Sculpture in search of a good rhyme, as in a repente, a rap, a partido-alto¹. Parts of things like words. Sculpture with a voice, a language. Body-sculpture that wants to speak. Plant-sculpture. The nature of things. Silent speech. Communication through images. Trees, roots, a forest of things. Things combined in a new way. Everything is what it seems.

Like in a complementary yin-yang dialog, Josh "draws" lines in space to create volumes. Barrão decomposes objects, leading to new volumes and tracing a skeletal-structural "drawing" with the glue lines joining the parts. The works shown here, through the contrasting procedures of each artist, attain a balance. In *Inventory of Personal Property* (1993), Josh listed all his clothes and personal belongings on a page from a notebook – an organization of items that presages a similar procedure in his current work, in which accumulated objects are "cataloged" and rearranged in formal conjunction. Just as in *Sculpture Against Hunger* (2022), in which Josh transforms a refrigerator into a Brancusian column, Barrão has also used refrigerators in his work. In one of his most iconic pieces, he attached a doll's head to a Coca-Cola bottle (*Mulher Coca-Cola*, 1987) in a procedure involving collage and appropriation of workaday things that appears in his more recent work, where objects lose their original function, opening a path to new interpretations; starting from the familiar world toward another one charged with ingenuity, humor, and irony. Josh's works also grant access to this world.

I met Josh in 1994 on the occasion of the SP/NY exhibition, a group show of artists from New York curated by Márcia Fortes at Galeria Camargo Vilaça. Josh Callaghan was a young New Yorker artist who went to São Paulo to help with the exhibition. Barrão and I, also young artists, went from Rio to São Paulo for the opening. Twenty-eight years later, FALA COISA gathers recent works built by Josh in Los Angeles and Barrão in Rio, but it is also a gathering of affections. There is an invisible and electric love uniting us. Some call this friendship. I feel it's something more. FALA COISA involves the admiration I have for Barrão, Josh Callaghan, and Márcia Fortes and for the work they've been doing in the art world for the last few decades. FALA COISA is also a celebration of the dialog between me, an artist and here a curator, Márcia, curator-critic then and gallerist now, and Barrão and Josh, always the artists. We're happy. Art is affection; art is letting oneself be affected; art is affecting the other. Today there is a party at Carpintaria.

¹ Repente and partido-alto are two forms of Brazilian popular music relying heavily on improvised wordplay and verbal invention.