

***A propósito de duas janelas* [Regarding Two Windows]:**
Lucia Laguna's Everyday Present

*Tá tudo solto na plataforma do ar
Tá tudo aí, tá tudo aí
Quem vai querer comprar banana?
Quem vai querer comprar a lama?
Quem vai querer comprar a grama?¹*

Observing Lucia Laguna's landscapes is akin to peering into the memories of both domestic and urban spaces. More acutely, it is the perception of a border zone in which we stand beyond the window or the doorway. From canvas to canvas, the world is captured not in an imprisoning manner but in a way that provides a particular and sensitive view of the ambiguous Brazilian and *Carioca* life. To stand on a threshold or rest one's arms on a balcony railing, allowing oneself to observe what time will bring before one's eyes, is what the artist offers in shapes and colors.

Over the years, Laguna dedicated herself to painting in front of the vistas that opened up from the many windows of her house in the north zone of Rio de Janeiro, creating a palimpsest of references in the spaces on the surface of the painting. In turn, the canvas is segmented in sync with the construction of the image or image fragment to be depicted. This has been the tenet of Laguna's daily practice for over two decades. What has changed is the place being observed. Place is understood here as the ambiance that only exists because of human presence and conviviality. And how did this change come about?

Laguna moved to Laranjeiras, a historic neighborhood in the south zone of Rio de Janeiro: an area between mountains, more linear in nature, and with a neighborhood culture that also exists in the suburbs of the north zone—a region where the artist lived, started a family, experienced her journey as a teacher, and became an artist. She was always contemplating the world from her abundant windows, doors, and garden, making this frontier experience the omnipresent theme of her painting, much of which was done in oil paint.

From the house with a yard to the two-window apartment—from which she glimpses Rua das Laranjeiras and a different kind of neighborhood life—the artist has woven the most diverse cut-outs and thematic zones that make up her current landscapes. There is a natural transience to the landscape, clearly impregnated by the memory of the artist who, for many years, lived through the city's structured splits when she commuted to work as a teacher, as well as during her training as an artist. Today, however, the canvases that emerge from her studio/room are conceived using acrylic paint, a different technical exercise from the previous one in which the nuances of oil appeared in the transitions and density of color. In any case, she has sensitively incorporated this transition of materials: it is no wonder that the highlighted vertical and horizontal stripes create frames, overlaps, and interruptions in vivid or artificial colors, thus taking the foreground. This is ironic given the exuberance of the depicted plants: whether those in her internal micro-garden, those in the streets, on the sidewalks, or those that stubbornly resist the harshness of the asphalt.

¹ First verses of the song "Presente cotidiano", by Luiz Melodia, released by Gal Costa on her album "India" (1973). Years later, Melodia himself recorded his version on his album "Mico de Circo" (1978).

These fragmented garden compositions pave the way for potential abstract situations, which remind us, for instance, of Lasar Segall's green thickets, painted in the later phase of his career in the 1950s. Similarly, Laguna's foliage reminds us of the floral textures composed by her fellow *Carioca* Luiz Zerbini, even though she does not mark out shapes by engraving or drawing. Indeed, there is no shortage of connections, not least because we are dealing with an artist who is generously attentive to what is happening around her, both in the art world and in the pleasures and crudities of everyday life.

In addition to the attention to detail in the small-format paintings that allow for variations in scale, there are large cut-out landscapes, such as the diptych *Paisagem n° 162*. At 94.5 inches in length, the work seems to add a synthetic value to the whole, contemplating several of the formal and graphic elements that permeate this new series of works in its two-dimensional structure. These elements are subtle recurrences of urban symbols, of the strength of the flora, of changes of perspective in a vista, and of obstructions in colored bands, oblique or not, which are in some way reorganized in different works. If in *Paisagem n° 153* there seems to be an established horizon with certain distances from what can be seen, in *Paisagem n° 156* the cuts are vertical in the manner of tilt windows and of the overlapping of green and earthy areas with constructed areas, roofs, and houses.

Another work that seems worth mentioning is *Paisagem n° 147*. It has a balanced compositional structure with closer approximations, such as a tree that branches out and presses its foliage against a regular fence mesh, the kind we see separating the street from the garden or on a front door. Even so, in this and the other works mentioned, the compositional structure of the painting gives us the idea of an irregular patchwork quilt, like a set of swaths that seem to make up a collage. These seams are also trails or paths for our gaze, adding complexity to the heterogeneous set of shapes and colors we see. Ultimately, it mirrors the complexity of this poetic path toward reinventing everyday life.

Lucia Laguna's poetic practice has already been emphasized in texts, but when reflecting on her themes and landscapes, it is impossible to dissociate her from her origin and home: the complex life of the Rio de Janeiro outskirts. The same life that Luiz Antonio Simas described to us with rare beauty: "The suburbanly sprawling city is one that, in order to be perceived, must be experienced daily, as if were erected at the crossroads in which permanence and transformation constantly meet."²

In light of this, Laguna's work may be seen in that fraction of time in which change happens, in which things overlap, transmute, and take on new lives. At the moment, it is the landscape in which the greenery—what we are used to calling natural—stubbornly preserves the exuberance and radicalism of what we see. However, the composition does not fail to contain the most diverse urban symbols, those that we identify, for example, when we sit at a bus window during a long journey with fortuitous stops and starts that make us contemplate our immediate surroundings, capturing the most ordinary and prosaic elements. And this is replicated even on a more limited urban scale when she looks out from her house, reaching the corner where so much seems to happen.

² Luiz Antonio Simas. *A artista de janelas abertas*. In: CAMPOS, Marcelo (org.). *Lucia Laguna*, Cobogó, , Rio de Janeiro, 2021.

This leads us to identify Laguna with characters from our culture who also echo a complex suburban culture that rarely reaches more privileged environments. I bring up as a parallel a pop music artist who was able to make a very similar transition, without ever letting the sense of origin and context disappear. I am talking about Luiz Melodia, a genuinely urban poet and composer, but not from a picture-perfect city. He was an artist out of the crevices and bowels of the most ordinary urban daily life, just as Lucia Laguna is. If Melodia sang about situations and feelings from Morro do Estácio, Laguna paints from the repertoire of a visuality that originates from the north zone, from the Rocha and São Francisco Xavier neighborhoods. Both found wonder in the facts of their realities.

As Gal Costa sang and Luiz Melodia wrote, "Everything is loose on the platform of the air/ Everything is there." These are the first verses of the song *Presente Cotidiano* [Everyday present], melody and lyrics that seem to correspond so naturally to a parallel with emanations from Laguna's research. This is by no means a visual correspondence, but rather an affirmation of the complexity of what we experience day after day. Faced with the desert of the real, it is possible to extract poetic deviations from the seemingly monotonous landscape of our daily itineraries.

This is this extractive gesture with which we arrive at Luiz and Lucia's sensitive encounter. The miraculous does not exist, only what resists at every edge of our senses. In the artist's case, the edge of the gaze, the very edge that defines the exuberance of the flat shapes on the canvas. To some extent, it is a poetic reaffirmation of Hélio Oiticica's words: "The museum is the world; it is an everyday experience."³ If, in those days, the artist advocated an environmental program, a place for art on an urban scale, today we turn to this reading to understand painting that has allowed itself to be contaminated by the outside, a painting that stitches together various noisy images of everyday beauty. In a sense, Lucia Laguna helps us amplify this democratic idea of art: her pictorial work has broken through the boundary of what contains it and thus has a survival value beyond the cleanliness of a white wall, which now takes place through two windows onto the world.

Diego Matos, January 2025

³ Hélio Oiticica. *Programa ambiental*, July 1966. In: OITICICA, Hélio. *Aspiro ao grande labirinto*. p. 79. As the publication is out of print, this text can also be found in the digitized archives of "Programa Hélio Oiticica," found online, through a partnership between Itaú Cultural and Projeto HO.