

## **Artist to Artist Interview:**

**Bruno Castro Santos is interviewed by João Santa-Rita for the Umbigo Magazine\* 04/11/2015**

**JSR - You were, you are and you will always be an architect... at least in some ways of looking at the reality. Painting is now at the core of your life. How does architecture inhabit and influence your art work?**

BCS - For sure somehow, but not intentionally. We are cumulative beings. Our conscience and intuition is a product of our experiences. Architecture is in me. 7 years of academic training and 10 years of studio practice accounted for a very intense living for about 17 years. In 2008 I resumed my fine arts training with a different sensibility which took me to a whole new universe and set of interests.

**JSR - There is an architecture culture embedded in history and in critical theory which in many cases were led by the architect's themselves. Can we say the same about the arts and painting in particular?**

BCS - Absolutely. Painting has always promoted discussion. Each period experienced his consensus and disputes. Artists have always pushed the boundaries of their own time. The place in history is attained according to the input each artist was able to contribute to that expansion. The strongest example of which might be Duchamp. Picasso, although better noticed, was an artist who shuffled the game while Duchamp re-invented it.

**JSR - Many architects become central in theorizing about architecture. How do artist contribute to art theory?**

BCS - In a singular but limited way. Limited because its singularity has no longer the strengths of the avant-guard's work. There are no longer ruptures, "isms", or tendencies for that matter... Expansion happens in all directions (like the universe) therefor is not perceivable. Singular because it is in the nature of the work to be singular. Therefore, the expansion is collective and the individual contribution is minimal. This is something that annoys some people, but we all have to leave with that reality.

**JSR - History has shown us that it was not always the case, but today, art and architecture seem to be autonomous fields despite some very clear examples of influence. I am thinking of Anselm Kiefer or James Casebere... their work seems to report to architecture. This is something that interests you? Or have you departed completely from architecture? I ask you this because I can see your work responding to another dimension...**

BCS - I don't think about it too much. Architecture is either a discipline or a motif of representation just like any other. The artist you mentioned use architecture as a mode of volumetric representation. To the senses they belong to different universes. Presently I am focused in drawing and painting. If the future calls for other modes of representation I will try to respond.

**JSR - Architects face very concrete and real challenges. How do you see reality in painting?**

BCS - It's a complex issue for artists and public alike. One has to construct that reality based on an uncertain ground. I can't see a reality that is not always flowing into something different. Giorgio Agamben addresses a similar issue in a very interesting article entitled *What Is The Contemporary*.

**JSR - As an architect I can assess a building in the way it responds to the program and its proposed ideas. It's an assessment based on an inescapable reality, the building itself. In painting there seems to be a continuous process of examination. I am thinking of Corbusier's paintings and the many layers in time these works contain. Is this so?**

BCS - Is there such thing as a static assessment? Even in a built static object such as a building, perception and critique seem to change over time. Today we look into 50 year old buildings from Le Corbusier with a solid critical viewpoint. In 50 years I suspect that view point might be different. In painting we observe the same phenomena. Perception is in a constant updating process. Sensibilities change over time. Among others, Thomas Noskowski is an interesting artist who revisits his work over long periods of time.

**JSR - Painting is an open-ended field. Pancho Miranda Guedes claimed for the architects the same freedom as to painters, yet Louis Khan discordantly argued that architect could not build reality in the same way painters would represent it. How do you interpret this matter in painting?**

BCS - Both had a valid point. To defend freedom in the creative thought is essential and it is also true that freedom of thought means different things for architects and painters. Nowadays we don't create by dogmatic rules or prescriptions, therefore both architects and artists are free to develop their own ideas. What each of them does with the freedom is what is central in the problem. Paradoxically, in a time of freedom I sense we have less amplitude to explore. In the past, utopias, manifestos and avant-guards were a platform for fearsome creativity. In the present time it seems we live in a certain dormant state which is inoperative for the arts.

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