

## Shadow line.

And they were just a single large shadow  
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And they were just a single large shadow...

José Asunción Silva, *Nocturno III* (1889)

A search in a dictionary always surprises: the definitions of words that we think we know include much more than the explanation of their conventional meaning and propose other unexpected meanings while making us see the multiple metaphorical displacements of the words into other usage, whose connection to the original term we were not aware of. And the dictionary does this by sending us always to other words, usually similar but sometimes quite different. The definition of the word always has traces of what came before it; each word is the shadow of many others.

This exhibition proposes a particular journey into the work of the very prolific artist Regina Silveira. Despite what the title, *Shadow Line*, might suggest, this trip is neither chronological nor linear, but rather labyrinthine. The exhibition is structured like a labyrinth whose purpose is ambiguous: it leads but also confuses; there is no single way out, but rather many possible ones; and the main motivation when one enters it is not to seek how to get out but, rather, to experience the adventure of going through it. It is a puzzle that needs to be solved, a game of discoveries.

*Linha de sombra [Shadow line]* proposes a number of ways of understanding the wide and complex concept of the *shadow*, whose most common definition is that of partial absence of light caused by an illuminated body. Nevertheless, perhaps few words as *shadow* contain meanings that are so diverse, literal or figuratively speaking: attenuated clarity; sign or marking; ghost or phantom; screen, trace or vestige; dream or apparition; vague idea or a notion that subtly insinuates something; secret, mystery. The exhibition also is a dictionary, in the sense that it offers clues and at the same time confuses the reader. Like a dictionary, that tries to define a concept but at the same time opens it up to other possible interpretations, this exhibition intends to show different lines of action in Regina's oeuvre: the use of projection systems and perspective representation; the interest in *anamorphosis*, a method of geometric deformation that produces enigmatic and strange images; the extension of the concept of shadow to that of vestige, showing that a trace is an index, determined by the real relationship that it maintains with the object that generates it – but bringing this indexical relationship always to its limit; the ironic treatment of the subjects, withdrawing the referents in order to break the relationship between an object and its shadow and inviting the spectator to decipher what is suggested in the presence of that ghost in the space.

In “Regina Silveira: the revelation of the shadow,” the article that Teixeira Coelho wrote to present the *Enigmas* exhibition in 1981 – where shadows appeared for the first time in a literal manner in the artist's work – the author used the word *ideographs* (a neologism analogous to *ideograms*) to describe the works: the sum or

juxtaposition of two or more signs, whose meaning is not clearly defined nor intends to be: “collisions of signs of an unsuspected proximity.” Coelho argues that what Regina’s work wanted to make evident is the *matter* itself of the artistic act, a result of the confluence of form and content, but situated beyond a simple symbolic juxtaposition between these two elements. “It is not the content that is in play, there is no interest in an eventual describable message in conventional logical terms; nor is there interest in exterior form.

The proposal is to evidence the *matter* of the poetic act: the moment of direct contact with something that is merely virtual: the poetic discovery, now, of a possibility. This something is not here, but its presence is palpable: it is a game of discovery.” Regina’s works behave like an enigma: they have multiple meanings so they evidence that there is never a final and definitive meaning, or that maybe there *is no* meaning at all, one that we might someday understand.

In her first works, Regina overlays shadows on other images (a fork on top of a telephone, a saw on a briefcase), creating signs – *ideographs* – that are paradoxical and undecipherable. Later, she uses architecture itself as a support of the sign (projecting the shadow of absent objects on the walls of the museum, leaving traces of broken glass on the floor of the Crystal Palace), removing its neutral character and imbuing it with a new, significant force. A third element in this game is the role of the viewer. By generating multiple perspectives and several vanishing points, the artist is able to destabilize privileged points of view, inviting the spectator to enter the work and introducing a temporal dimension into the experience, in which perception varies depending upon the viewer’s position with respect to the image. There is always tension in Regina’s work, a contrast between apparently incongruous elements. In it coincides a rational desire to understand reality through classical systems of representation, and a surrealist impulse, leading us to the genealogical line that connects her through her master teacher Iberê Camargo to Giorgio De Chirico, who for his part was the mentor of the Porto Alegre painter. Maneirist grids, surreal paradoxes, conceptual strategies and poetic reflections about technology are conjugated together into ambiguous, seductive and intriguing works of art, which never cease to surprise.

We cite Coelho again: “The function of the shadow: to reveal, to deeply show what there is to see (actually, the shadow reveals and then re-veils, conceals again...)”. The Surrealist artist Hans Arp, De Chirico’s contemporary, affirmed that if a tri-dimensional object projects a two dimensional shadow, we should be capable of finding that object in four dimensions, of which we are the shadow. Regina Silveira’s games with signs may be thought of as an attempt to understand this multidimensional object, in which we recognize ourselves as a shadow.

Alejandro Martín y José Roca.  
Bogotá/Philadelphia, 2009.

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