

ONE ENCOUNTERS EVERYTHING

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One encounters everything: hallucinogenic plants, tweeds of artist friends, quotes from Renaissance paintings, patterns of kimonos, posters, pages torn from old catalogues.

Sometimes these figures merge, other times they seem to juxtapose following the grammars of image multiplication that invented the language of comics. The fact is that painting and drawing seem to acquire thanks to Francisca Carvalho a new task together aesthetic and cognitive but also a new space in society. From Vasari to Francesco Zuccari, drawing had established itself as the space in which all the arts meet and generate each other, but also as the place that allows the sensible and the intelligible to make each other mutually possible. Carvalho seems to return to these temporal latitudes to make painting a kind of space in which images, all images meet and mingle. It is not an archive; it is something more radical. And it is not just an aesthetic extravagance: it is a reaction to the new condition in which we find ourselves. The invention of digital space has completely changed the way we relate to images. Images no longer define their truth according to their ability to designate a real, objective body external to their reality, but according to their ability to circulate, from screen to screen and mind to mind. This means that it is their very ability to appear that defines their value. This mutation, caused by the construction of the digital infrastructure, has not weakened the value of images: on the contrary, it has indefinitely strengthened their authority. To the point that to produce an image today means first and foremost and mostly to aspire to exercise this authority, to aspire to draw the image that, at least for a few handfuls of minutes, will occupy all minds, will be present on all screens. It is as if each image aspires to become a hypnotic force that numbs consciousness rather than allowing it to orient itself in the world.

In the face of this unprecedented iconic universe, forms of freedom (of giving up producing images to exercise power) are very rare and very difficult to practice. Francisca Carvalho's represents perhaps the most accomplished form of resistance. Carvalho invents for painting a new twofold task. It is first of all to become the space in which images, rather than imposing themselves against each other, can find a kind of mutual dialogue, and mingle with each other. Images no longer seek to distinguish themselves and drive out others, but to articulate themselves together with others, to merge into something that makes one image inseparable from all others. On the other hand, it is in this mingling, in this new alliance between images, that they can aspire to make themselves a new cartography of the real, as if they were atlases, or rather tarot cards, because they must help us orient ourselves in time and not in space.

Every atlas is a paradoxical image because more than making the real knowable, it must make it habitable. This is why every image-atlas, rather than separating us from the object represented,

forces us to identify with it. We do not contemplate a cartography: to make it intelligible we must think at least for a moment of time of our body as identical with the lines and colours that describe space. A cartography must produce this strange fusion between the perceiving subject and the perceived object. A tarot does the same thing, but not with space, but with our own desire. It is an image that allows us to orient ourselves in the face of the telluric forces of our desires.

Francisca Carvalho's work reinvents for the century to come this new function: art must no longer represent the real, but neither must it reduce itself to representing itself and its own medium specificity. On the contrary, it must allow us to orient ourselves in a world made first and foremost and mostly of a sea of images that never stop circulating. Drawing is now this new art of iconic divination.

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