



THE LAYERS OF A RUBY

When entering Sara Bichão's studio, one reaches a place of wholeness. The walls are white and reflect Lisbon's luminosity. The space overflows with a particular aura. It's a work place, but also a place for thought, travels and wanderings of great intimacy. The wholeness has to do with exactly that: once the door is transposed we overcome an imperceptible barrier and enter the world of Sara Bichão.

In early March, the walls of her studio were invaded by the works she had developed for her individual exhibition *O Meu Sol Chora II* (My Sun Cries II) in Lisbon. Mostly, these works resulted from an addition of objects, patiently juxtaposed, intertwined, nailed, tied and painted.

Sara Bichão seeks intensely for those materials and specific elements that will become components of her works. Seemingly banal, these objects include sponges, concrete, a tennis or ping-pong ball and even soap. They also include organic and natural elements such as a pine cone which could be a mineral, a rock with an almost lunar format or even a wooden beam found during a wintery ramble on the beach. These elements are later combined with other materials of election belonging to Sara Bichão, which carry a symbolic meaning. These include the twisted and coiled rags, an old shirt in a tartan pattern, denim, orange linen or even the pinkish bed sheets painted with permanent ink. They belong either to the artist or to someone close to her and are used – sometimes in a punctual or almost imperceptible manner – as relic objects. In her works one recognises industrial materials – harsh, extremely resistant and tough – combined with truly opposing ones such as the lightness and softness of a fabric. With a certain innocence and candour, she rediscovers new possibilities in the textures, colours and forms of daily objects, shown through new combinations and uses. Their juxtaposition encloses a myriad of meanings, senses and intentions.

The set of works for *O Meu Sol Chora II* (My Sun Cries II) reveals a departure from bi-dimensionality towards other scales and volumes, that has been perfected along Sara Bichão's path as an artist. A trajectory initiated in Painting, that naturally evolved gaining new forms and formats, closer to the objectual dimension or even installation.

In terms of composition and junction of elements, there is a proximity between these last works and the practice of drawing. There is an inherent freedom, a broadness and agility of gestures, characteristic of the act of drawing. They could, therefore, possibly be designated as "three-dimensional drawings". Having a very particular expression, Sara Bichão's drawings are composed of patterns and linearities, in a search for something un-nameable. Lines that travel within the sheet of paper and finish in a suspended moment, as if the action were to go on. It is that very moment of suspension that one finds in these works.

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These drawings result from the addition of numerous layers. There is an overlap of elements and found objects, different forms and textures, all harmoniously combined and constructed. Being finished this process of accumulation and superposition, Sara Bichão adds another layer: paint. Recurringly in light and matte tones – whites and pale pinks, light yellow and whitish blue, and that matt emerald green – sometimes a few accents of red tones appear, evoking warmer latitudes. The use of these colours, in the coating of the structure built by the objects, assures the balance and coherence of the set, but the colour also releases the various components from their previous use and former life. It helps their emancipation, liberating them from their memory and their mnemonic function. The objects, stripped from this symbolic weight, are remitted to a primordial state.

All these layers compose Sara Bichão's three-dimensional drawings. In her works we can therefore find a junction between the component of free experimentation, the thorough and detailed manufacturing of drawing and the equilibrium granted by the order of the formal composition of painting, at each moment.

Finishing this personal process of discovery, encounters and appropriation, there is a mysterious moment in which Sara Bichão gives for complete her creation. When she finishes her works she attributes them with a name, as if the result, now autonomous, needed its own identity. Looking at her works as a whole and abstracted from the various components, the names she attributes them highlight a reading of their global composition, referring to them as well-known utensils and familiar forms: Axe, Ruby, Harpoon, Deer, Bow and Rocking Horse. They are the answer that Sara Bichão constructed upon the final result, her subjective interpretation of what she sees after the conclusion of each process. In the exhibition these names aren't visible. It is as if she doesn't want to condition the vision of the visitor, so that the visitor himself can assimilate and create his own interpretation of the works.

These three-dimensional drawings appeal to the senses. When before them we travel, roam and question. We start by having a superficial and global view of the work but we are then challenged once we look for the details. Suddenly we feel the need to understand their totality and particularity, what they are made from, how were they constructed and their purpose. It is in that moment of questioning that these works should be contemplated and appreciated, when they challenge our individual sensitivity. And perhaps we will see a pine cone, or perhaps we will see a ruby.

LUÍSA SALVADOR, MARCH 2016

