

# ROTOR: Possibility/ Impossibility

18.09.21  
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Carlos  
Mensil

Through Carlos Mensil's work process we are confronted with reflections and procedures which stem from a praxis of research on phenomena and organisms that we associate with the several life cycles and with our perception of them. But these reflections and procedures also stem from a self-referential memory which resides in the presence of the machine, whether it is the machine of the familial workshop or an analogy with the mechanics of fluids, the movement of celestial bodies, the blood flow, or the apparently infinite motion of a thread sustained by a system of pulleys which leads us towards the endless course of one of its sections, like a "Díptico" [Diptych] under constant construction. Or yet towards the instability which a bird feather traverses, in a repetitive motion over a mechanical and complex construction of cables, beams, and pulleys which seem to disappear under the precarious situation of that light and diaphanous object, in its pendular flow, without beginning or end.

Much like the title of this exhibition, "Rotor", a palindrome which serves as a metaphor for the *modus operandi* that inscribes an idea of motion into all of the pieces, even those that we find in an unstable balance and seem static and safe, but which are embedded in the realm of uncertainty, perhaps endless and perpetual. Carlos Mensil elaborates various games of perception with the viewer, at the level of language – between the title of the artwork and the very artwork we experience –, as for instance in "Redline", "Díptico", "Desnorte" [Disorientation], or "Prova de resistência" [Endurance Test]. It is under the aegis of this notion that the possibility of simulacrum, like a prosthetic external to corporeality, can be proposed as a speculative discourse between what is, in this case, the artwork and what that artwork seems to be in its plurality of meanings, as an experimental model which does not escape scientific index and cannot be reduced to the temporal constancy of measured time. In that sense, the idea of prosthetics is a model of representation and for that very reason expresses an idea of externality, but also of empathy with the viewer's body, as we can see for instance in "Redline", which summons us into a duplicity between the reality and the fiction of an endless and intermittent circulation in its flow, of what may be the thinnest membrane which sets death – as central and concise unity – and life apart. Of that duplicity we know only the state of wakefulness, of being alert to an "imaginary figure which, like the soul, the shadow, the image in the mirror, stalks the subject as its other, making it at the same time themselves and never quite look like themselves, stalking them as a subtle and forever conjured death. However, it is not always thus: when the double materializes itself, when it becomes visible, that means

an imminent death".<sup>1</sup> It is important to remember that this piece, free of evocative pretense, was undertaken during the year of 2020, a year lived in suspension for public health reasons, a year of political actions which became universal departing from the imprecise establishment of the idea of globalization. Moreover, the piece traverses a space which is also a constructed body, a functional architecture for the exhibition of artworks, the gallery. This is an organic body, dimensioned in its fragmentation to allow for the differentiation of the spaces as containers of meaning for the different artworks on display. The canonical relation between interior and exterior is present, as is intimacy and sharing, in a metaphor for nature outlined in the narrow interior garden of the urban refuge, where we will find a gush of water which continuously decants the liquid into a bucket, in the piece titled "(avô) a regar" [(grandfather) watering]. I'll draw on, here, an expression which is difficult to translate, and which may embed us in this initiatory moment: *heimlich/unheimlich*, which is to say, perhaps between the familiar (and self-referential) intimacy and the unsettledness of presence.<sup>2</sup> It is in this dimension, founded on the appearance of manufacture and the near-workshop proficiency of Mensil's work, that we are confronted with a universe of experiences between physics, biology, and questioning carried out as artistic process. All these procedures, from the most complex to the simplest, do not lose sight of the models that make present our human condition, as universal beings, beings in a relation with the Other, and participants in an empirical memory which can be found, as a speculative model, in the experience conditioned by "Entre o Sol e a Terra" [Between the Sun and the Earth], a complex installation of remarkable scale, conceived and assembled specifically for this exhibition. Still on the artist's work, I draw on the words of another curator and scientist, who on Mensil's artistic process noted the following: "His objects might be fragments, "traces", taken from the world and re-presented as though the world had not noticed their absence. He plays with our perception. Not by causing an immense upheaval that knocks the viewer to the ground, but by forcing one to turn around, look back and to realize that something is not right, that there is a problem."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BAUDRILLARD, Jean, *Simulacros e Simulação*, Lisbon: Relógio D'Água, 1991, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Translation adapted from a note by translator Maria João da Costa Pereira for *Simulacros e Simulação*.

<sup>3</sup> A arte não é mentira, mas também não é verdade. Paulo Cunha e Silva, Porto, December 2012.