

## Onça-pintada

A Jaguar is covered by a coat printed with various geometric motifs that form patterns and vaguely recall indigenous crafts. Pet dogs wear coats made with this print and stay close to the parked car, as if they were keeping it company, or even guarding it. What draws our attention to Marielle Videler's work "Onça-pintada" [Jaguar in Portuguese] is the unusual scene created by the artist.

The Jaguar automobile brand, a famous symbol of luxury, disappears under the rustically sewn and designed white cotton coat. The dogs appear to be all the same, dressed in the same uniform. Two things of quite distinct natures, like a car and dogs, are made similar through a graphic design, the coats are composed of about forty ink drawings made by the artist and printed on fabric. As if the patterns that both carry on their bodies were capable of making them a single substance. What is constantly at play in the work that we see are the notions of identity and alterity.

Marielle Videler came to São Paulo with a plan not to meet any Indians. That's good, because if she wanted to meet Indians, São Paulo definitely would not be the best city to live in. It's easy not to meet Indians in São Paulo. Just circulate on the major streets amid the chaotic traffic, get on line in crowded banks, go to the movies, walk in the parks, shop in the shopping centers, go to the art galleries, and above all, always be busy and with no time to see what's happening around you. But that's not all that Marielle did. She read books about various indigenous cultures, learned about their mythology, spoke with specialists in the subject, did extensive research of indigenous design, looked for urucum seeds, sought out indigenous crafts and went to Rio de Janeiro to visit the Museum of the Indian. She did all this with the conviction that she would not meet them. Deep down, the artist knew all along that it would not be possible to meet them. The Other is always estranged, and it does not matter how close we come, his presence always escapes us.

It doesn't matter whether one is in Brazil or Holland, America or Europe, the Indian symbolizes the Other. And, let's say once and for all so there are no misunderstandings: there is something wrong in the idea that Brazil, was once a country of Indians. First, because one does not need to be a specialist in the subject to understand that there is nothing farther from the form of indigenous social organization than the political notion of the country. It is true that there is now a need to legally recognize the harm caused by the colonization process that decimated various tribes. We see this in a recent judicial decision against the appropriation of land occupied by indigenous people but sold in the past to farmers. In a land dispute involving a community of the Guarani Caiová people and a farm in Mato Grosso do Sul State, the Brazilian government, after pressure from the public and the media, decided to indemnify the farmer and keep the region as it is: occupied by the Caiovás.

It is only in the context of a judicial dispute over a right that we are capable of seeing the Indians, along with, of course, various other "social minorities" who also struggle for their rights and, above all, for the right to be recognized (as

another). It is only within a previously functioning system, whose norms have already been created – therefore, when the Indians enter the white man's territory – that we are capable of saying “look at the Indians (they want land, quotas in the public universities, Internet access...)”

Without help from the lens of the Federal Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, for example, it is necessary to make an effort to see the indigenous culture. As in Marielle's work we know that it is there, someplace... in the choice of certain patterns, a way of designing, the use of seeds, in the colors used: the green, the orange and the pink. But, amid the leaves, geometric shapes, natural seeds, sewing and craft we see computer codes, fences that separate the private areas of the city and other elements that are not at all indigenous.

Although the automobile and the animal have the same name, they are only seen as a single thing thanks to the print created by the artist, which is able to join these diverse elements in a single scheme. There are more than just hints of nature in these designs. The metal grates of gates and windows from the city of São Paulo appear ostensibly in the design, as a reminder that the territory here is basically private: examined, divided, allotted, isolated and protected. A matrix code, representing an indigenous word, transforms the spoken word (and not the written) into a two-dimensional image. In the lived world, things are not separated in paragraphs, items and articles that define and mark them.

In this scheme that covers the world created by the artist, what is seen is the attempt at approximation of new cultures and the inevitable distancing that we always maintain from them. Upon researching and mimicking Indigenous traits and acts, contaminating them with the impressions of a foreigner living in São Paulo, what is seen printed in the work are the countless distances between I and the Others; between the machine and the animal, the wild and the domestic, liberty and confinement, luxury and simplicity, the organic and the artificial craft and industrialization, to mention a few couplings evidently evoked by the work. All of these oppositions are woven, placed side by side, stitched down well and organized. But despite any method, they provoke the same shock as the encounter with the other: horror, exoticism, surprise and admiration.

Thais Rivitti  
November 2012