

Luiza Baldan, São Casas

... And then the train stops. In this moment, someone turns and glances in the direction of the camera. And another, all of them curious to know what it is doing there; what it intends to record. Anxious to place themselves fortuitously in its view, to become part of the film, knowing that if someday they see it and recognize themselves mirrored there, they will be entering another time; part of what was perhaps one of the last legitimate possibilities of monumentality in modernism — cinema.

This description of the final scene of Billy Bitzer's 1905 short film in the New York City Subway helps us to understand the works of Luiza Baldan, here on display. If we leave substantive issues aside (our revelation of the documented act as the simultaneous gesture of timelessness and an affirmation of the present) like contingencies (the human presence in the first, contrasted with eventual human absence in some of the works by the artist), two issues resonate: the appearance of urban experience and, above all, the role of temporality in the image. To put it another way, a quality inherent in the image establishes the image's own time and, to use a popular term of common domain (place), "freezes" everything: light, landscape, the world. From this arises the imprecise feeling of ambiguity in her images, the flagrant sharpness, now visually stunning, now dry in its austere formality, accentuating our inability to determine the where, when, how, and why normally expected of a photograph or a film. Therefore, I dare say, it matters not if the photograph is inhabited, what matters is that each image be self-evident, autonomous.

To speak of the autonomy of an image in relation to works of art that make us confront the urban universe seems contradictory at best. But maybe it is just this point that brings the threshold of the image to our attention. After all, on the one hand, there is, a kind of "staging" or, better, a dissection of the component codes of the image: a calculation of a determined gesture, the pose (or the subject posing), appearing and repeating the way it wishes to be registered, and we have the acumen to understand how captured light, in addition to creating "atmosphere," fills it with volume and space. On the other hand, just to be clear, if all things (places and issues) were equal, this can only happen within the limits of the photographic space, because even framed and pasteurized in various constants perceived by the artist, it strives for singularity or, if you will, an identity. Moreover, it is impossible to remain indifferent to these seemingly open-ended places, in fact, they are where we live and coexist, whether we realize it or not. Her video installations also alternate between fully autonomous and "staged," accentuating the fluidity of the boundary circumstantially separating these states. After all, the very idea of staging implies the presence of a spectator. The spectator

inhabits the images (and becomes an “involuntary actor”). In turn, the spectator puts himself within the scene onto which he projects himself. In other words, the spectator takes on another identity, even if provisionally, in an ephemeral space, transposing one locale (the origin) to another (the room where they are displayed), instituted in the latter configuration that goes beyond the original. Space – an abstract category - is transformed into place, or fitted with significance.

To sum up regarding the temporality of an image, I return to my comparison of the 1905 film with various photographs made by the artist in the *Conjunto do Pedregulho*, 2009. In the final scene in the subway, disturbing the supposed indifference of the “characters” when they perceive the camera, some correct themselves or control their attitude because they sense what it would cost them to be condemned to eternity in an inappropriate posture. In the Pedregulho photographs, the artist calculates gesture, chooses the corresponding outfit translate it, and the objects that surround her. Beyond the logic of the portrait, with its task of revealing whom it is about and how she should be seen, the picture contains all the elements that time will devour, but that will also seem saved by the protective mantle of the image. Anticipating a future archeology of the twenty first century, one might perceive the image as a statement for posterity, and an antidote for amnesia. Arcadia of bytes.

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October 2012