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Multitud de estados posibles

[A Multitude Of Possible States]

Walden Naturae presents an exhibition of works by José Luis Landet, curated by Moacir dos Anjos.

There are various processes which, when articulated, characterize that which, from the late 20th century on, consensus has come to call globalization. Outstanding among these are the complex trans-nationalization of the production of goods, the constitution of deregulated financial markets, a revolution in data transmission technology and the spread of long-distance displacements of people. Over the course of the following decades, these processes would foment a gradual disintegration of boundaries between territories (limited, however, to the realm of goods and money) and at the same time, a reaffirmation of the differences that exist between the communities inhabiting them. Under the forces of this dynamic, nation-states—sovereign geopolitical units associated with specific peoples and territories—find themselves subject to pressure pushing for their dissolution, and yet also to reaffirm the singularities of which they are constituted. In the contemporary world, States subsist in a continual crisis of differentiation from all the rest, entangled in situations of approximation and taking distance from one another. In a variety of ways, it is to this changing world that José Luis Landet alludes in the works brought together in the *Multitud de estados posibles* (A Multitude of Possible States) project.

The project's title, however, can also be understood to have at least two additional meanings. The term states does not, after all, designate geographic and political entities alone. It can also allude to conditions of the mind that define the way in which each person is able to deal with the many happy and sad emotions produced by the world. It can therefore refer to the constitution of complex subjective cartographies, not only those that situate and distinguish peoples and countries. Lastly, the title suggests the coexistence of different states in the materials used by the artist in his works, setting them into continual transformation in order to create knowledge that did not exist before. As they accompany these multiple operations of construction, viewers nevertheless perceive that no hermetic separation exists between the different possible meanings ingrained in the project's title. The way in which objects, paintings and drawings are made and

articulated in the exhibition space is a commentary in itself on the world and a way of allowing oneself to be affected by its contradictions.

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Flags are physical objects. But at the same time, they are symbolic expressions of a community's as yet unmet desires, whether it be a country or one social group. Flags are an expression, then, of situations of lack: the lack of liberty, of security, of lands, of a feeling of closeness. This is why they are invented. However, while flags have meanings established at their point of origin, their lasting existence as physical things can occasionally wind up making the demands they once expressed forgotten. Sometimes they become graphic and chromatic representations of something long forgotten, and are thereby converted into mute objects. This silencing of differences is something the dynamics of a globalized world constantly threatens to produce, but it is always fought against by any group of people who consider themselves and wish to continue being unique.

By taking a group of flags from different countries as the initial support for his project, José Luis Landet suggests a paradoxical way of relating to these artifacts, at times so far removed from their original motivations: he produces an artificial operation of erasing the integral nature of each one in order to simultaneously confirm the irreducible singularity of the lives that invented them.

There are various stages involved in this procedure. After having selected 13 countries' flags—it hardly matters whether formal or political criteria were used—and gathered them together, the artist cuts them up and separates 56 rectangular pieces, discarding the rest of the fabric. He then stretches these sections on identical wood stretchers, as if they were paintings done on canvas. There are no absolute criteria applied in this operation of cutting, although he is guided, at least in part, by the desire to dissociate the fragments of fabric chosen from the almost immediate identification of their origin which would be possible in the flags' intact versions. By means of this procedure, only a portion of what had previously been complete symbolic surfaces remains visible, disengaging the particular articulations established between colors, sections, words and symbols.

Once the pieces are cut and mounted, the second stage of the operation is to solicit the fabrication of replicas of the flag pieces as blankets made from dyed wool from artisans with long experience in the craft of weaving. Though continuing to remain faithful to the fabric pieces that are offered as models, the recreations grant a denser materiality to the fragments than can be found in the silky fabrics of the original flags. By means of this procedure, an even greater distance is produced between the images replicated and the objects (physical and symbolic) from which they originated.

The third stage of this operation of erasing resides, in turn, in the action of partially submerging both the fragments of fabric mounted on the stretchers and their recreations in the form of rustic blankets in a recipient full of dark ink. This action is controlled so that only a small part of the bases of the flag fragments are immersed, creating an almost identical dark band in all of them. In the same sense, only the fringe on one side of the wool recreations is soaked in ink, making them dark and stiff once dry.

By making recognition of what were once accepted representations of territories, peoples or groups difficult by way of actions with cumulative effects, José Luis Landet submits them to a process where all the different lacks and desires the flags demanded and proclaimed is annulled. Nevertheless, in every fragment of fabric exhibited, these distinctions resist being suppressed. After all, that which is one part always evokes the whole; in turn, the new and rustic material remind us what the original fabric was like, and what is veiled by ink may well attract more attention than the part that remains visible. Recognizing the existence of this multitude of possible (political and personal) states, even (or especially) when they are difficult to identify, is a requisite for recognizing the other as a fellow human being. It is a requisite for recognizing the demands that are made by diverse peoples but always remain unmet in the graphic and chromatic articulations that flags are made of. The task of identifying and respecting the rights of those who are different is, however, a task that falls to each one of us. These works are also a mirror for every viewer.

The aspirations and desires expressed in flags tend to be communicated by multitudes in the street. They become the instruments of uprisings and insurrections. To these ends, they are tied to poles that serve as flagstuffs. These physical supports are to confirm states or to subvert them. José Luis Landet uses segments of these supports to create more works pertaining to this project. Cut in a variety of sizes, the artist associates each one to part of a phrase taken from a scientific encyclopedia. The texts suggest a kind of human belonging to a universe that transcends earthly geopolitical divisions, making them seem small or unimportant in the long term. They may suggest the possibility that other emotional states could become hegemonic, where difference would be recognized and staunchly defended. Every one of these flagpole fragments is also submerged in the dark ink that dyed the fabrics, creating painted segments at each end. This gives them the appearance of autonomous objects: they are no longer part of a flagstaff, but perhaps instruments of struggle.

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In paintings and drawings that form part of and complement the project, José Luis Landet uses different materials and procedures to construct additional representations for the multitude of possible states of the contemporary world. The paintings are made of colorful fields that seem to be in movement, projecting out from the support due to the powerful presence of the material. Formless segments of color collide with one another as if constantly seeking more space to occupy. In the background, a grid marked surface refers to the coordinates of cartographic representations. Part of it, however, is excavated (perhaps destroyed or impeded) or covered by images that evoke the sky. These are abstract paintings that are also possible maps of a world undergoing continual concrete geopolitical transformation.

The numerous drawings, on the other hand, recall countless possibilities for creating a map of the world, where fields of color that seem to be flag fragments—territorial representations, and therefore from separate states—are distributed horizontally. It can be supposed that the differences between one map and the next indicate frequent changes in position in terms of power and the conquest or loss of rights and desires. The drawn lines that articulate these

fragments of life spaces are, nevertheless, much denser in some works than in others. It is as if to demonstrate that the growing intensity of the lines made on the support implies an increment in the trajectories that permit going from one of these territories to another. And the greater this density is, the larger the degree to which different chromatic fields seem to cede to the gradual hegemony of a single dark field. Once again, it falls to each and every person to identify, even in situations where the process of suppressing the other is evident, the persistence of the singular and its insurgency. There are various possible states of subjectivation of what takes place in the world that are also continually in dispute, seeking to establish dominance.

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It is argued here that the process of creation for the entire group of works brought together in the *Multidões de estados possíveis* project states bears similarities with cartographic production procedures, in the sense that both are activities of mapping the territories that the artist and mapmakers focus on. However, these are investigative actions that always generate partial representations of these spaces. If the works created by José Luis Landet or the maps elaborated by specialists were to become confused with the territories they seek to portray, they would lose their function as a guide for the other (visitor to an exhibition, traveler) on their journey through a complex universe. They would become redundant and as such, useless. By definition, representations of the world always fall short of what is being represented. To produce art or to draw geopolitical maps implies making decisions, highlighting certain frameworks created or found while traveling through and investigating a determined space. When shown all together, these frameworks (exhibited in an exhibition or printed in the form of a map) generate knowledge—necessarily partial and subjective—about specific territories, produced from unique points of view. The flag fragments, their re-readings by way of the loom, the poles, the paintings and the drawings that the artist brings together and presents in the exhibition space are the frameworks that he has invented in order to comprehend and orient himself in the ever-transforming world in which he lives.

José Luis Landet
(Buenos Aires, 1977)

I think of my work as the place where there are different ways of operating and assimilating cultural processes traversed by social, political and ideological actions. I am interested in investigating some vestiges or socio-cultural wastes, for example: recovering painted landscapes (oil on canvas, produced between 1940 to 1970), with a certain Romantic or Bucolic look, made by amateur painters. A search for a particular notion of paradise, in order to recreate an apocryphal individual.

These images (paintings) and other symbolic elements such as everyday objects, photographs, letters, postcards, super 8 films, slides, writings, magazines and books are part of the materials with which I work, in a material and conceptual deconstruction.

When I find these objects, they have a thick background composed by memories, time and use. It is important for me to analyse each one of them, take a photographic record, classify and, later on, manipulate them according to the needs of the project in turn.

Usually these actions have to do with filing, cutting, breaking, covering, forging, submerging, fragmenting, simulating, getting them out of the shadows and resignifying them. These are metaphoric and poetic actions.

Public and private / The Utopian Past / The dystopic present / The Universal History

Moacir dos Anjos
(Recife, 1963)

Is a researcher at the Fundação Joaquim Nabuco (Recife). He was curator for the 29^a Bienal de São Paulo (2010) and the exhibitions *Cães sem Plumas* (2014), *A Queda do Céu* (2015), *Travessias 5 – Emergência* (2017), *Quem não luta tá morto. Arte democracia utopia* (2018), *Raça, classe e distribuição de corpos* (2018), *Educação pela pedra* (2019), *Língua Solta* (2021, con Fabiana Moraes), *Alfredo Jaar – Lamento das Imagens* (2021) and *Necrobrasiliãna*.

He is the author of the following books: *Local/Global. Arte em Trânsito* (Local/Global. Art in Transit, 2005), *ArteBra Crítica* (ArteBra Critique, 2010) and *Contraditório. Arte, Globalização e Pertencimento* (Contradictory. Art, Globalization and Belonging, 2017), in addition to being the editor of *Pertença* (Allegiance), *Caderno_ SESC_ Videobrasil 8*, San Pablo (2012). He regularly publishes essays as a columnist for *Revista ZUM* online (<https://revistazum.com.br>).