

«Rising»

Rui Soares Costa

«L'inconscient du temps vient à nous dans ses traces et dans son travail. Les traces sont matérielles: vestiges [...] symptômes ou malaises, syncopes ou anachronismes dans la continuité des "faits du passé".» — Georges Didi-Huberman

Time as a subject, the one that according to the artist "is the only thing we cannot add to existence", has been a constant in Rui Soares Costa's artistic and research process, both from a philosophical and an endogenous perspective, in which his "Lifeline series" stands out: human seismographs that register in parallel lines a time that is not always continuous. Also relevant is "Sweet series", in which sugar, the raw material used in the construction of the work of art itself, becomes a record of the passing of time. By the hands of Rui Soares Costa, time, that abstract entity, has been scrutinized and represented in visual objects using multiple supports and different tools, like paper, wood, fire, sugar, lacquer, pen or chisel.

Probably as a result of his academic training and the practice of the scientific method, underlying each of these different series is an equation of duly specified and registered parameters, later used in the univocal identification of the work of art. In "Rising series", Rui Soares Costa uses the tides of the Tagus River as a drawing tool, oxidizing metallic pieces in a differential way as a result of the rising and descent of the water level, which becomes a fundamental element in this new equation. Each iron plate is submerged in the waters of the Tagus in a specific and pre-defined context: the geolocation, the height relative to the Hydrographic Zero and the period of time. These parameters will allow registering on the plate how long the plate was suspended by the riverside pier near his workshop in Olho de Boi, Almada, incorporating the successive variations of the tides. These oxidised pieces become themselves the memory of a time, the time intrinsic to their creation, which is concomitantly matter of fact and repository.

However, "Rising series" brings us yet another question and is in itself a symptom of a very contemporary circumstance, that of climate changes. In this sense, even if the above parameters were replicated, the oxidation would be different because the plate would be submerged for longer due to the rise in the average water level, which further accentuates the unrepeatability of this recorded time. Returning to Georges Didi-Huberman, the image unveils time, or its unconscious, in a constant dialectic between artist and spectator, between the time of the work and contemporary time, confronting us with the permeability of matter, the fragility of our perennality and the impossibility of the repetition of time. What is the weight of time, after all?

Ana Matos

Azinhaga, June 2021

"Rising" is an immersive project that has an original soundtrack by André Gonçalves, with extension at Rui Soares Costa's studio, in Olho de Boi, in Almada.