

A UNIÃO ENTRE ARTE E NATUREZA

“The truth is that art is in nature and whoever manages to tear it out possesses it.” This phrase, uttered by the German painter Albrecht Dürer in 1512, is confirmed and realized in Marlene Almeida’s art in a double sense. For it is not only the artistic material she works with - natural pigments in her paintings and earth in her sculptural objects - that she takes from the Brazilian soil, but also what is created with this material, in space and on the plane, following the shapes of nature, organic and vegetal, such as seeds, shoots, flowers, grape varieties and fruits, hives or caves, foliage or parts of trunks, shells, insect larvae or animal carapaces.

The wealth, variety and colorfulness of nature and the landscapes of Brazil are home to the artist and her art, especially the landscape of Paraíba, which is very close to the equator, between the immensity of the ocean and the impenetrable forests, between colorful coastal landscapes and geological formations, between flowering trees and exuberant plants. Marlene Almeida looks for nature in the places where it has created majestic forms and so she paints fruits, flowers, leaves or branches, as well as in the elemental matter extracted from nature which, in her work, are the colors of the earth and the earth itself, which carries within itself the power to sprout and grow or as a relic of a past life. There are no urban aspects or human figures in Marlene Almeida’s art. The shapes she creates or the colors she applies - colors she has obtained thanks to prolonged processes - are not intended to imitate nature. It can be said with more certainty that it is the forms themselves that continue to retain their substance. What’s more, in this artistic transformation, nature and life are given increasing visual force, reaching symbolic values of great Significance.

For Marlene Almeida, art and nature form a unity. Her vision is not isolated. She does not follow any European artistic current or concept, where earth, ash, tea or coffee grounds are used, where leaves, flowers, branches or stones from all over the world are put together to form sculptures, where wood and stones are used in frottage, where nature is replaced by art and where attention is drawn to conserving and protecting nature and the land through artistic actions and outdoor installations. For Marlene Almeida, art and nature are not opposite poles, on the contrary, artistic forms and those of nature are made of the same material and are natural parts of her life and her field of action. In her paintings, fine colored shadows and light tones dominate and there are no unusual, strong dissonances of color. Unique shapes or a vision of wild vegetation emerge clearly in the color-saturated drawings, standing out from the background of the paintings as if they were a watercolor. Strange nature is communicated as an enigma, with a deep and attractive sensuality, or as a threatening wilderness. The artist looks for and finds colors while walking in the interior of the state. She isolates them from the other materials with which they are linked in nature and, in the laboratory, purifies them and thus, in a laborious process, obtains the colors. These pigments - black, red, blue, yellow, white, gray - are added to the binders so that, on paper, they can once again flourish with their vegetative life in artistic forms and contexts.

Marlene Almeida’s objects, too, with their earthen forms, which she carries from long distances to her studio and after some time returns to nature, from which she has borrowed them, so that there again, with the help of the sun, rain and wind, they can be reintegrated into

the soil, simply want to be stations in a natural circle and direct the viewer's gaze to the variety of forms in Brazilian nature. Series of objects emerge, such as bursting shells made of cellulose and earth, but also individual works in earth colors and closed, resembling capsules, bushes that turn into rings, towers or spheres. The outer surface, with different textures, looks like crusts or bubbling structures. The objects impose themselves as real, as large found pieces, as natural copies and almost always return to their place of origin, so that they symbolize growth and transience at the same time.

Marlene Almeida's artworks are intermediate stages in an organic circle, at the beginning of which is the difficult cognitive process of nature, followed by artistic creation, presentation and interpretation, almost always ending up in nature and incorporating it. In this way, the artist draws attention, inside and outside her country, to the quantity of colors and the beauty of natural forms. The observer, whose gaze is caught by the intensity and quality of Marlene Almeida's artistic creation, feels called to consciously incorporate that nature and landscape and preserve these sources of life and art.

Loose translation of *A união entre arte e natureza*
Sibylle Badstübner, 1997