

female body and the possibility of photographing age groups beyond the usual spheres are present in the exhibition. Beyond this, the fact that the subjects of these photographs are not made or remade is another difference.

One leaves the exhibition without obvious verification: Alair Gomes is a great creator of images. His stars share an intrinsic obsessive will for the ideal moment for the shot generated both great quality and great productivity. His work, however, can also be seen as in dialog with matters that appear often in the contemporary visual arts in terms of the contemplation of images, which prompts some questions: What space remains for non-artistic male bodies in Gomes' work? What is the place of women in his aesthetic interests? Why is it that in the series, *The Course of The Sun*, where all the bodies were black bodies, faces were not in view?

This is not, however, an eschewed critique of Gomes' work, but an effort to highlight the fact that perhaps his images are able to bring to the fore, for instance, the racial tensions that existed between Rio de Janeiro's inhabitants in these years, 1960-1980. On the other hand, his images can also be seen as interesting objects of study to illuminate the *MacGyver* that pervades Rio de Janeiro culture, in particular Rio's male gay culture.

Many other pathways can be followed on the basis of the great Alair Gomes' images. Perhaps a wider unveiling and knowledge of his work (as this exhibition effectively achieved) will generate new critical approaches.

RAFAEL FONSECA

Mayana Redin Silvia Cintra + Box 4

Mayana Redin's first solo exhibition was an display between November and December at Silvia Cintra Gallery, in Rio de Janeiro. Titled *Aniquilou Escuro* (Dark Archive), the exhibition impressed viewers from the start with the atmosphere created by the artist: instead of the hospital-like lighting so commonly found in the "white cube", Redin chose to transform the gallery space into a dark box whose tone, in general, was provided by the light coming from some of the artworks.

Redin's choice connected with the use of the word *escuro* in the exhibition title and invited the viewer's body to a unique physical experience. In this exhibition, the artist shared with her public an archive of her recent experiments. I think that the semantics of the archival act has permeated Redin's production in different ways since her participation in the eighth edition of the *Mensur* Biennial, in 2011. There, she presented *Geografia de encontros* (Geography of Encounters), a series of cartographic drawings where different territories overlapped in fictional encounters, as for instance in her superposition of the Strait of Gibraltar onto the Ichmusus of Panama.

The act of appropriating maps and deploying them in a fictional construction reveals Redin's interest in subverting the instruments used in the different process through which the history of the human experience is built. It is not by chance that Redin went on to produce works where the notions of collecting, delimiting meanings, and archiving became centrally important. I am thinking, for instance, about works that use postcards, like *Acidentes de percurso* (Accidents of the Trail, 2012), or her dialog with a historical figure in *Caixa-móvel para Giordano Bruno* (Box-Furniture for Giordano Bruno, 2014). More recently, in *Edifício Cosmos* (Cosmos Building, 2015), her collection of building names with cosmological referents was a way of creating new constellations of structures in the urban grid.

This entire apparatus—the maps, the archives, the albums, and the catalogs—is comprised of age-long human attempts to observe, analyze, organize, and give meaning to existence. The perpetual failure of such efforts, well documented in Albrecht Dürer classical engraving *Melancholia I*, is due to humanity's inability to control its environment in an absolute way. Something will always escape, and it seems to me that Mayana Redin is interested precisely in that quotient, especially with regards to a human effort that, by dint of the discipline it entails, comes close to being sheer nonsense.

Going upwards, like peoples in Egypt, India, and the Maya regions, among others, do to this day—this is to say, observing the sky, the stars, and the planets and finding meaning in them—may be one of the activities that more explicitly express, at once, our insignificance in the universe and our boundless intellectual ambition. Edifício Cosmos already gestured in that direction, but it seems that it is in *Aniquilou Escuro* that Redin's obsession finds visual responses pointing towards more diversified pathways.

From the threshold to the exhibition, a slide projection titled *Astronauto e cosmonauto* (Astronaut and cosmonaut) established a tone that swayed between the comical and the tragic. Photographs of female astronauts were projected in pairs. On one side, we had the US/China McAuliffe, the first civilian to participate in a space mission, on the other, Valentina Tereshkova, from the former USSR, the first woman ever to travel to outer space. More than twenty years separate those two historical events, and the fates of their two protagonists were very different: while Tereshkova orbited around the Earth three times and returned home a heroine, McAuliffe died in the Challenger Space Shuttle accident. Ironically, the images projected here show them in similar training scenes and, in a second moment, bring forth for viewers how they became part of historical memory. One came back to Earth and went on tour; the other turned into dust, and all we are left with are the tears of those who bid her farewell.

Life is permeated by chance events like those so clearly exemplified in these contrasting biographies, which put us in mind of the *inorganic*. I think that the juxtaposition of materials operated by the artist—like bread dough with science or astronomy books—signals a similar line of exploration. On the one hand, we have biographic materials intended to explain, textually, the issue of celestial bodies. On the other hand, the coming together of organic elements capable of generating, by some alchemy,

Mayana Redin. *Pin* (Silver), 2016. Bread dough and wax. Variable dimensions.



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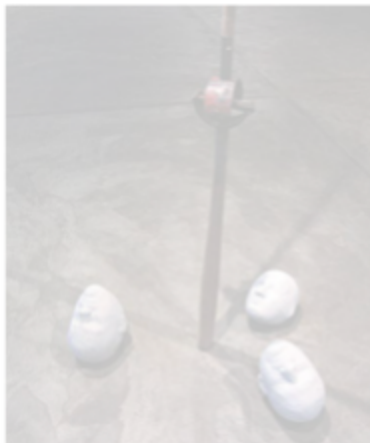
small three-dimensional objects that refer to extraterrestrial space, we can anticipate but never fully control the edges of an oven-baked piece of bread or the trajectories of asteroids in a collision course with the Earth.

When both domains are brought together in *Pin* (Silver), the banality of one attaches itself to the monumentality of the other, and a new unit emerges: one where wheat flour and cosmic dust are one and the same thing. There is no longer an up and down, only the reality of horizontality. A similar sensation invades our bodies when, in *Costas* (Costless), we walk towards one side of the gallery and crouch to enter an empty space between a corner and a photographic reproduction of the Moon. The Earth's satellite becomes an object that can be appreciated at the scale of our bodies. We are no longer required to gaze upwards in order to see the Moon; we see it frontally, all the while realizing that we are now too physically close to perceive it in full.

The relationship between the Moon and the Sun is also present in *Contido* (Content), where celestial bodies, moving as named *pin*, become a light canon in the exhibition space. Using a tube television inside a cardboard box as a projection device, Redin seems to be again signaling towards a trivial or anti-monumental understanding. The Moon/Sun is there with pathetic utility for the terrestrial viewer, though a light canon that could also be a stage spotlight. The process is similar to what we see in *Sol* (Sun), where an image of the star is captured in an astronomical observatory and replicated using a lighting device in the gallery.

An attentive listener will notice in *Contido* an insistent number of people yelling and celebrating the eclipse that the camera captures. I had the impression that Mayana Redin's artistic concerns turn on the observation of this fact: why does humanity insist on being so explicitly impressed by those celestial bodies, and, moreover, on generating expectations around them? What is the place of astronomical isomop-

Patricia Belli. *Portafólio* (Substant), 2015. Sewaled hat and five paper masks. 100 cm x 110 cm x 74 cm. 2000 x 300 x 300 and Private Collection.



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nality in a world where images proliferate to such a degree, and where the boundaries between banality and erudition have disappeared? In the face of natural phenomena around us, are we to adopt a posture of skepticism, or one of spirituality? Are we to be thankful for life and to celebrate the moment, or should we simply await, cynically, the arrival of the rock that will crash with the Earth and put an end to it?

In the absence of clear answers to these questions, it falls on the artist (and on those who follow her) to continue achieving small pieces of darkness.

RAFAEL FONSECA

SAN JOSE / COSTA RICA

Patricia Belli TEOR/ÉTICA

It was long overdue. An exhibition offering a broad view of the daring and multifaceted work of Nicaraguan artist Patricia Belli had been a pending task for years. Finally, from July to October 2016, Teoría's headline show entitled *Prayer* (Works by Patricia Belli, 1988-2016). Organized and curated by Miguel López, it offered a retrospective summary, a synthetic view of her production over a period of three decades, all within Teoría's small yet great space.

Although Belli's oeuvre is no way complacent, and even incorporates a sense of violence, the exhibition conveyed a peaceful feeling of finding oneself in a space full of intellectual and visual challenges. The chosen works presented important forms and themes from the evolution of the artist's career, from her first experiments with screen installations and videos, from her more complex compositions to political statements, it showed how as of the 1980s, Belli already represented human beings through anatomical fragments or empty items of clothing. For example in *Tejos* (1997), a group of nylon stockings hanging over from their garters spoke of absent women, of lives carried out under the pressure of an imposed system of values.

In her use of simple, used and worn materials, Belli reveals political attitudes towards art and poetry, understood as genuine, personal forms of expression. We also perceive feminist convictions in her process of combining, sewing, stitching, and darning cloth remnants in abstract, highly expressive compositions. The *Brown Cosmos* (1996) conveys both pleasure and pain through its cut-up bras and corsets—with their torn—remnants of nose-and-eye clasps—assumed to cover the other-like cracked vermilion. In addition, it alludes to Frida Kahlo's aching self-portrait with the same title. Just as Belli reconstructs fragile female beauty, we watch the back of a woman's head as she goes from stroking her hand across to unveiling her head as the wig slips away. And for those who still believe that "bassy must suffer," Belli offers her dark, symbolic high-heeled *Shoe* (1998) with a worn-covered inner sole.

Belli's surreal objects also include anthropomorphic furniture. The assemblage entitled *Prayer* (2001) consists of a small wooden dresser with four drawers that resemble gaping mouths. Proceeding from the back of the dresser are two long stuffed cylinders with three-dimensional feet that resemble the legs of a giant in humble prostration. In *Confused* (2000), a long-legged stool protrudes horizontally from high upon the wall. It has a cushioned seat from which long arms with open hands reach down to the viewer. Belli makes reference to people within domestic environments, but also to daily functional human relationships.