

Na Lona (On Canvas) book presentation text by Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda. Aeroplano Publisher. Rio, 2001.

Absolute Realism

Dissatisfaction may cause anguish, but not disappointment. That is what happened when Rogério Reis, then a photograph reporter, dissatisfied with the spectacular routine of School of Samba's parades, abandoned the *Sambódromo* (the parade Broadway) and chose to cover the streets, during the Carnival of 1987. Even if it was not a premeditated action, at that moment, the reporter gave way to the artist and took on the challenge of creating in the borderline between photojournalism and portrait. Perhaps the gradual work, that mobilized him for the next 15 years, have started there.

I confess I feel a bit intimidated when looking at the photos of *Carnival on Canvas*. Let's say I find in these photos an excess of reality that both attract and disturb me. It seems Rogério is able to verticalize the tragic relation between photography and reality.

Let me further explain: the great portrait always causes some uneasiness. Perhaps the photographer and his model, being accomplices, keep a precious data for themselves. Both know this is an experience of simulation. Both know the portrait defines an affective relationship, an unfulfilled meeting, an instant of time, on its surface. And never the one being photographed. It's the acute perception of such hermeneutic of portrait that makes Rogério Reis one of the most important artists in Brazil's contemporary scene.

In this work with Carnival, he improvises a quasi-studio with the help of a portable background, and thus is able to isolate and to transform the excess of information of the streets onto a "clean support" that receives the sight over the person being portrayed. On the canvas background, the artist-reporter allows himself to be in the midst of the Carnival's tumult and, at the same time, to be confined, solitary, pure adrenaline, eye to eye, radically near and far from his model, exploring yet another borderline situation for photographic creation.

It doesn't seem to me that what motivated Rogério Reis towards this work was an anthropological interest or even a special taste for Carnival. That's not what his photos say. Such wouldn't intimidate me while looking at his exceptional work.

On the contrary, I would dare to say that his relationship with Carnival is a functional one. The Carnival – and its infinite possibilities of simulation and fantasy – is elected by the photographer only as the diabolical studio for his portraits. It is not possible here to find images that meet the standards at a journalistic or aesthetic realism. On the contrary, in this decisive work, Rogério Reis exposes himself, and us, to the absolute, original, insane realism of a photographic astonishment before reality.

Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda

Essayist, writer, editor, literary critic and researcher