

DUARTE, Paulo Sergio. "Para reler o vermelho e o negro" [Rereading the red and the black]. In *Rosângela Rennó*, folder de exposição/exhibition folder Rio de Janeiro: Laura Marsiaj Arte Contemporânea, 2001

Rereading the red and the black / Paulo Sergio Duarte

translated from portuguese by Stephen Berg

The word and the image; or rather, the image and the word. After all, that was how things began. First we looked and then we spoke. Images were fixed – Altamira, Lascaux. Tens of thousands of years later words were captured through writing, probably with images – hieroglyphics, ideograms. Today, all that distance has vanished. History has been erased. And it is in this shadow, in the near-darkness of a time in which we no longer think or feel, a time without a before or an after, one in which things happen all at once, that the words and images of Rosângela Rennó appear.

Whether it announces day or night, any twilight worth its salt contains red. Such are the twilight of the image and the night of the word that Rosângela delivers to us. Her eye is skin-like, tactile, able to touch words and images. She offers us blind words and muted images. Words need not be seen, they must be read, and this is what Rosângela wants. To such a purpose they are submitted to an inversion: embossed ornaments of meaning hiding in the dark to awaken our curiosity. / *The image of her jailer she remembers is that of a man who confounded his interlocutors during interrogation with his cold, determined and highly objective behavior. Twenty years later, E. M., aged 41, a former militant of the MR-8, trembled when she saw the recent photograph of commissioner D. P. and did not hesitate to declare: "It's him alright! I'll never forget that face".* / Drama and tragedy are reduced and contained. They exist simply as parts of the world. One soon realizes that they are political. / *Y., the country's favorite mystery man, only allows himself to be photographed wearing a mask. His most well-known features are a prominent nose, shining eyes which some reporters describe as green and others as light-brown, and a talent of writing. To date, all attempts to uncover his identity have ended in frustration. On Monday, when peace talks between the government and the*

guerillas began, Y stole the show. Wearing his perennial ski mask, with his cartridge-belt slung over one shoulder, Y stopped up and unfurled a national flag upon the table, creating a fascinating image of patriotism for the guerilla. Words read are not words seen. Our world, the world of advertising, all speed and swiftnees, has confused things; we who write phonetically have come to see words rather than read them. The concretist poets appreciate this. Still, words read are not words seen. / The dismissal of the minister who, for seven years, stood by the president at various public functions was tringgered by a photograph published last month in News magazine. In it, the balding, white-bearded M., a 49-year old former member of the Supreme Court, was nearly unrecognizable, his younger face clean-shaven, his right arm raised in clear salutation to his childhood idol. M. made no attempt to deny accusations that he had belonged to extreme right wing organizations wich, during the Sixties, committed over one hundred attacks jews and communists. He ask only: "Who does not make mistakes at fourteen?" / Seen words miss their target. Beyond that, they splinter – they are perverse, rudimentary bombs. A word read is the Zen archer's arrow: it is the target. It has no trajectory, only departure and arrival. The more eager among us might say: a quantum certainty. I like Rosângela's words, vigilant as they hide in shadow, awake in their sleep, sure of been targets. These nocturnal words, selected in the fait divers, awaken in the images.

After the night of words, I see young military students posing in a twilight bathed in the color of blood. No one forgets the discipline of posing. Before a camera, we are all military for an instant, a swastika on one arm, uniforms in the photographer's home studio. A gentleman in uniform poses proudly yet without affectation, as though his gold braid were paintings on the skin of the authentic Indian warrior chief. The modern anthropologist knows, too: after the seduction of structures, meaning is not transposed, history does not repeat itself, embroidery will never become tatoo.

In black, we have clippings of texts, news. In blood, poses of clothed men. The red and the black again. The colored clothing - mourning and blood – in wich Rosângela has dressed them, texts and images, has undressed them. Whith great modesty, behind the viel of colors, the artist delivers to us the nakedness of text and image. Yet there will always be someone who believes it is merely a matter of engraving of photography. If

that were so, what could be the reason for such poetry? For ten years, intermittently, I have observed the artist's experiment and this is why I think that Rosângela offers us (now that all the barriers between genres have been broken down) a possible novel. And all this is only part of a big little novel of encounters between texts and images: the magic plain that rereads the red and the black.