

The rough warmth of woods

Nora Kimelman, blends into a fertile Uruguayan trend of sculpture in wood with growing personality. This sculpting trend was founded on the schemes of Joaquin Torres García, and some of the celebrated followers of his school, particularly Francisco Matto, Gonzalo Fonseca, and Manuel Pailós early work. This trend later finds unique offshoots in Salustiano Pintos and , even more closely, in Wilfredo Diaz Valdez, Claudio Silveira Silva, Fernando de Souza, Ricardo Pascale, Juan José Nuñez, Gustavo Fernández, and Pablo Damiani. This sculpting trend has expanded techniques sawing and slashing, artisanal carving, sheeting, variants of assemblage. Other creators, maybe the most outstanding being, Germán Cabrera and Octavio Podestá, have conceived timely fusions of wood and metal, or of wood and stone, as found in José María Pelayo. The artist thus blends into a lush and plentiful trend. This blend does not take place due to more or less personalized fidelities, but due to her puissance to generate her own space, with clear signs of identity. She approaches those by ways in a very liberal and personal manner. A referent to be pointed out is the celebrated American sculptress, Louise Nevelson. The proximity involves and concludes in the work of fitting found pieces from a repertoire that exceeds traditional, anticipated materials. Nevelson collected carpentry wastings, pieces of wood working, all kinds of moldings, almost always new. Nora Kimelman, on the other hand, extricates old woods charged with history, pieces of machinery, even older moldings, crackled forms covered with layers of crackled painting, sometimes of undefined purpose fullness.

Nevelson introduced them in boxes, in a kind of detailed smithwork, and with them she elevated pieces of mural style, of decided front-like appearance.

Kimelman looks for an assemblage that ends up being conceived as a sculpture, where the pieces blend in such a way that is almost impossible to determine where one ends and the next starts. Very often, she intercepts cylinders or narrow prisms that add the efficacy of the artifice , making a hard to determine any prior autonomy . Nevelson tended to render her assemblages some uniformness through monochromatic painting in black, white or gold . Kimelman on the other hand, tries not to alter the original colours too much. Sometimes she resorts to mild smoothing in order to subdue tones or the presence of excessive painting. At other times, she renders a patina that tones down the original colour to break visual monotonies , to reaffirm volumetric play. Still at other times, she allows for the silky, natural wood flesh to cast the spell on its own and appear in its quiet purity, displaying the skin chiseled by the sun power.

Volumetric play has just been mentioned. The playful character seems to be a determining strategy within the process that wraps up in Nora Kimelman's assemblages. She plays with volumes, textures, natural or deliberate patinas, embroidery, hollowings, rythms and counter rythms , with designs that are narrative physiognomy-constructions, sculptural architectures, that decide to take root in fanciful territories. A free play, very open, without explicit codes, defended by the gracefulness of forms that barely suggest, insinuate, forms that attempt to seduce without allowing the beholder to rationalize to much as to what produces this allurements that stops and captivates him/her. She tries not to look for resemblances; she chooses to escape the possible mimesis that approaches objects of everyday life.

The starting game has to do with choice. The artist explores sites that preserve antique industrial remains, carpenter workshops, gutters, demolition warehouses. She shapes the remains into a sort of archive, that she sometimes classifies or that she deploys into a messy arrangement, across her atelier. Then the artist chooses a piece that serves as starter and she continues a successive series of experimental sketches. She makes changes again and again, until she finds a piece that communes with the first. Then others are added. The assemblage grows vertically or evolves carefully onto a horizontal display. Finally, she must make decisions that establish subtle or distinct hues, all based on brown shades, with occasionally stressed reddish tints, the presence of orange-like areas, and if only rarely, traces of black.

There is an essential need to value the sensitive finesse with which a display of combinations is handled, always, with absolute independence of narrative atmospheres. It is so in those which expose powerful densities, even in a contended dramatism, as well as in those that choose soft fondling formal poetic combinations. For example, assemblages where grids, or better yet say, wickerwork frames, are coupled with different essential sustainable forms. In this succession, options go from the accuracy of orthodox symmetry to the audacity of dangerous composition challenges solved with elegant skilfulness. Stretched helmets circular sections of trapezoid perimeter, search a precise balance over the sturdy as well as stalky columns that start as clear axes. In a few pieces, that symmetry is generated by an irregular shape that contradicts any regulating axis. The columns, at the same time break their excessive calculation diversifying diameters, exhibiting varied hues.

In works of large vertical totemic bearing, it is enough that one piece dominates the upper part, with the formal qualities that the piece conveys. Below, the worth of the assemblage of crackled pieces is explored together with other pieces of virtually silky hides; the honesty of –natural tone, barely broken by a small metal square, with the dark hue of a thick hexagon of worn-out edges. Other times, she chooses the expressive simplicity to be allotted to the foundations while overhead a quasi baroque set put together speaks of opulent narrations, of warm sensitive wealth, two-fronted bas-relief that awakens the avidness of sight, touch, even smell, of the rare perfumes that protect the different woods.

An assemblage, can reunite a couple of elements, a great curved form, marked by a decoupage in layers, with a different signing personality, with an air of Japanese design. Another assemblage can imbricate pieces and their volume attains a paradoxical sensation. Each one of them seeks to stand out independently, exhibiting their curious reliefs, their bodily complexities, and in spite of all else, can only stand out by relinquishing to the set concerto.

It is necessary to point out that not everything boils down to formal enchantments.

For sure the observer solely wants to remain at the level of the virtues of a formal language may do so. The primitive virtually archaic beauty of the assemblages thus allows. However, it is worth undertaking the fight of fancy and unveiling other readings, other fable-like adventures.

The pieces that exhibit a clear vertical predominance advocate a gentility of deprived and epic totem.

An overlapping of liturgical codes belonging to unknown urban tribes seem to refer to profane rites, to rhythmic deities of a probably pre technological, pre-metallic cult, to bizarre religions practicing an old machinism , invisible nightly dwellers condemned to perpetual inxile.

In still another set of assemblages, the whispered language instills a machinery of incredible warmth, imbued by a melancholic sensuousness, machines brought to a standstill in narcissistic self-compliant abstractions in a contemptuous evocative exercise , useless machines lying on the abandonment of their compliance. In other assemblages, openly frontal, ritual trails that celebrate unintelligible facts protected by conundrum. Altarpieces that lack icons, only a small piece that seizes its condition of secret symbol, of elusive code, of primordial key sheltered in silence.

But the distinctive trait has to do with the ambivalence of the work, with the flowing sensations that awaken the tough warmth of the volumes in wood. Nora Kimelman gets to imbue sculpture-assemblages of astounding life experiences; stamina and gentleness, earnestness and lightness, spatial density and gracefulness. These expressive encounters are not articulated as tensions of opposite direction but as a thickly woven fabric of solidary dialogs .

The sturdy dramatic formidableness of some pieces, seeks the assistance of others to establish a surprising choreography of sculptures, a dynamism that enables the identification of threads of stern and fragile lyricism. The powerful strength, the heaviness or Romanic reminiscences, lessens with the intersection of rhythms and cadences, of modulations that soften the roughness of those outbursts.

The massive of a pedestal or that of some large piece that tops off the totemic elevation, is balanced by the gracefulness of the subtle pieces, moldings that are intended to stimulate the preciousness of silky lace. Ambivalence, then that should not be taken for ambiguity. Ambiguity supposes a lack of meaningfulness, imprecision and doubtfulness. Ambivalence, on the contrary, supposes the simultaneous and egalitarian development of different traits, even of those traits that were preconceived as antagonistic. The ambivalence publicly announced by the moderate beauty of these assemblages leads us through the fertile coexistence of distinct sensations, of the ever unexpected convergence of opposites.

Alfredo Torres.