

Where we are and where we are going

Clearly fascinated by the idea of progress, Alcides Pereira dos Santos, born in 1932 in the city of Rui Barbosa in the interior of Bahia, collected in his works images that reflect his charm for the good things associated with the idea of technological advancement. Among paintings of landscapes and plantations and others representing factories, there is a whole series dedicated to means of transportation.

Alcides, only Alcides, as he came to be known as an artist, painted several models of cars, motorcycles, boats and aircraft. Always on rectangular canvases of medium size, measuring about one meter high by one and a half meters long. This curious scale of large rectangles served enough to accommodate the design of the vehicle in question, whose figure extended to all four sides of the canvas, bordering the edges, taking advantage of the maximum limit of space. Besides the extremely detailed figure inspired by the language of technical drawings, but with invented proportions and intense colors, there is also the colored background. In these paintings of vehicles the ease and expressiveness of the gestures that make up this background contrast with the precision of the straight lines that construct the figures of the motorcycle, the car, the helicopter. The backgrounds are filled with dotted elements that suggest reticles, such as those in the pop paintings of Claudio Tozzi, Roy Lichtenstein or even Sigmar Polke, the latter having once declared about this symbol of graphic modernity: "I love reticle, I am a reticle!"

Having lived through the twentieth century, he witnessed relevant facts from our recent history, which, through ingenious technologies, pointed to a promising and fascinating future. He witnessed the appearance of several car models in the country, with the strengthening of the automobile industry under the Juscelino Kubitschek administration in the 1950s, as well as the launches of white and gleaming American rockets from the Apollo mission on the man's journey to the moon in the late 1960s. As well as having lived with all the mythology surrounding the submarines, popularized within the paranoid atmosphere of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain in the post-World War II or even in TV series as Voyage to the bottom of the sea.

Parallel to the paintings of locomotion vehicles, there are, in the set of his works, images representing places such as houses, squares, gardens and plantations, which form a moving portrait of the country he knew. In addition to Bahia where he was born and raised, he also lived in Rondonópolis in 1950 and then moved to Cuiabá in 1976, where he attended the Atelier Livre of the Cultural Foundation of Mato Grosso, and finally moved to São Paulo in the 1990s. In the same prism of futuristic wonder, he painted incredible factory buildings, equally filled with details of machinery, chimneys, and smoke. His poetics seems to revolve around the desire for an organized world, surely compartmentalized into categories involving leisure vehicles, war vehicles, plantations, and industries.

I share a special affection for the organization of the things of life that I seek to represent in my work by choosing archetypal images such as the road, the mountain, the house and the pond. Images of drops, waterfalls, cats and other animals are derived from the same repertoire as symbols of the times in which we live, based on the same mythology of progress and a supposed comfort that should result from the effort to reasonably order existence. A

comfortable world of mountainous landscapes with curving roads, lakes and pebbles. I have always loved cars and, like many of my generation, grew up watching the Formula 1 races, following and cheering for the heroes Emerson, Nelson and Ayrton. Thus, I developed a special taste for the racing circuit drawings and the sophisticated and colorful soil paintings that serve as signage. Thinking of the Alcides vehicles, I made Track 1 and Track 2, wood-cut object paintings with paved roads for cars, motorcycles and trucks and with rivers and lakes for boats, ferries and submarines.

Roads, vehicles, and travel suggest a metaphorical idea of change. Shifting from one point to another, moving from one situation to another, a new one. Thus, we can think that Alcides, who was a bricklayer, wall painter, barber and cobbler, has achieved through his art a new place. Synthesizing dream and desire in the images he produced, he changed his world in his own way, generously sharing his art with us all.

Leda Catunda, 2018