

Presentation of the individual exhibition: Paintings Décor Gallery, Rio de Janeiro, 1970

Jayne Maurício

Athos Bulcão – Masks and Images

It is difficult to say something precise and clear about Athos Bulcão, at a time when he resolves to reappear with only a fragment of his personality, so varied and rich in expressive values. His name evokes so many memories of the moment of initiation into a free and fecund world – a time of boldness and perplexity, when spiritual life was more intense and the renewing process unfolded trying to embrace multiple manifestations of artistic creation: theater, literature, cinema, visual arts, music, and poetry. In the bars of Castelo, Cinelândia and Lapa neighborhoods information was exchanged, ambitions were consented, and clarification was attempted.

However, this is not the opportunity to insist on memories of a time so lively and crucial for us. What matters now is to say something about the Athos Bulcão who was affirmed and established.

Athos is situated among the artists who seek to give continuity to what was created by the predecessors of genius. For him, art is an objective, in the sense of his personal contribution and fidelity to his masters – he would say himself, fidelity to his gods – Ensor, Léger, Miró, Klee, and a few others. With the elegantly discrete mark of his way of being and living, he created very individual drawings and paintings, bravely resisting the somewhat voracious teaching of Portinari. His contact with the contemporary vanguardists, and in some aspects deliberately ignored by him, occurs mainly through his efforts to integrate the arts, maintained since the beginning of his career. He constantly created in intimate contact with architecture. The drawing of tiles, for example, is only one of his forms of collaboration in the designs by Oscar Niemeyer. Brasilia is definitively marked today by Athos Bulcão. For the theater, Athos also contributed greatly through scenography and wardrobe. Many years ago, in an almost prophetic and pioneer work, he created a series of remarkable photomontages inspired by surrealism, which still have not been given the publicity they deserve. He also worked with lithography, perhaps starting at the time of his first long stay in Paris.

Brasilia ended up achieving the phagocytosis of this creative and obscure, mystical and refined temperament. Notwithstanding, Rio de Janeiro, could still reclaim it; and it is mainly Rio de Janeiro that owes him, not only for this exhibit of an aspect of his multiple activities, but beyond it a great exhibition depicted with his multiple talents and integrity.

What the Décor Gallery now exhibits is the Athos seeking a deeper profoundness and rediscovery, without concern for innovation. His masks and theatrical images appear in a moment of density, in a strange form of depersonalized expressionism. Strict discipline transpires through the bizarreness of his forms. The balance of the gesture

and general composition are evident in the most minor details of each work, not only being restricted to his masterful contours. Elaboration and refinement are the fully met objectives in these works – whether in the pathetically frozen images in an environment of mist and witchcraft, or in the masks that float and undulate in the gloss and color of the acrylic paint.

As usual, the serene creative tumult of Athos Bulcão has an almost classicist result.