



ON VIEW

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Valeska Soares at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo

Valeska Soares' installations appeal to all the senses. She works with sounds, light, and scents. With "Entrementes," the Pinacoteca de São Paulo is now presenting a comprehensive exhibition devoted to the conceptual artist, that is sponsored by Deutsche Bank.

"The tendency today is to read about visual arts instead of look at it," says Valeska Soares. The Brazilian artist, who works in New York, prefers it when people encounter her works in a completely unbiased way. "Each of these works is experienced personally." With this approach she is following in the footsteps of artists like Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, who back in the 1960s urged viewers to be active themselves and complete the work. Soares shares the Brazilian avant-garde's predilection for unusual materials.

And Soares likes to work with smells in her exhibitions. In the show sponsored by Deutsche Bank at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo, a number of installations play with olfactory stimuli. One of them is a work consisting of used coffee filters from her 1992 series *Private*. As the title suggests, this group of works relates to the private home. At the Pinacoteca, the coffee filters have settled on the wall of the exhibition room like a swarm of strange insects and fill the space with a slight coffee scent. Soares manages to lend a poetic aura even to things that are meant for the garbage.

By contrast, *Epilogue*, one of the most recent works in the exhibition, seems to be about party nights and excesses. On antique tables with mirrored plates, Soares arranged an opulent ensemble of various kinds of glasses and carafes. All of them are filled with different kinds of schnapps, liqueurs, and wines. The overwhelming smell of alcohol is in the air, evoking all kinds of associations. What happened here? What compelled this seemingly well-heeled society to leave the table so hastily that the people didn't even finish drinking what was in their glasses?

This invitation to free associate also characterizes Soares' densely atmospheric installations. For *Vaga Lume* (2007), she mounted long rows of light bulbs on the ceiling. Each is provided with a thin metal chain that can be pulled to switch the light on and off. So the "Vaga Lume," or "wandering light," only emerges with the help of exhibition visitors, who have to move through a thicket of metal cords.

The fact that Soares studied architecture, completing her course in 1987 in Rio de Janeiro before turning to art, is reflected by the precision of her sometimes almost magical spatial settings. *Meanwhile*, a work commissioned for the Deutsche Bank Lounge at this year's Frieze New York, also possessed this quality. She immersed the walls and floors of the lounge in an intense, cosmic blue on which golden spirals glowed. These symbols of endlessness consisted of text fragments that dealt with our perception of time and now reappear in the show at the Pinacoteca. Called *Entrementes*, the Portuguese translation of "meanwhile," it shares the title of the presentation at the lounge.

But not only text is an important motif in Soares' oeuvre. She often also works with books and book covers, and did so both in the lounge and now at the Pinacoteca. Literature played a big role for her even when she was a child. Soares grew up as the daughter of an artist (her mother) and a journalist (her father) in a very vibrant, creative environment in the large city of Belo Horizonte. Nevertheless, back in the 1970s she felt "like a prisoner." But books brightened up her life, whether the fantastic stories of Monteiro Lobato or crime novels by Agatha Christie. Today, she creates paths to imaginary worlds herself with her poetic artworks.

A.D.

Valeska Soares: Entrementes

August 4 – October 22, 2018

Pinacoteca de São Paulo

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