

## bruno cançado: a menor distância

06.08 – 17.09.2022

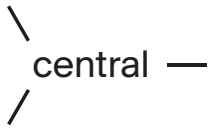
### Short Treatise on Ingenuity

In my one and (so far) only visit to Bruno Cançado's studio, an implausibly flat room on the ground floor of a building constructed on the steep streets of Belo Horizonte – those from elsewhere find this kind of urbanism that's keen on steep slopes odd –, what caught my eye was a shabby structure made of bare worn wooden slats. It was far-fetched, intricately and asymmetrically designed: a triangular easel supporting a square-shaped structure which comprised an ensemble akin to these home metal step ladders we occasionally awaken from its object sleep when in an out of service shower cabin or a sparsely visited corner of our laundry room, in order to drag it across the house for the pursuit of one of these tasks that are ordinary yet unapproachable to the unarmed body, like changing a light bulb, getting a suitcase from the top shelf of a closet etc. These ladders often feature a wider rung at their top, a plane that doubles as both a work area on which one can place the aforementioned light bulb, for instance, and a locking device, dispensing with the ancillary presence of someone whose former function was to hold it steady, making it safer for those who climbed on it. That's right, it was a ladder, a simple stepladder found at a construction site made by some quick skilful bricklayer/carpenter intent on solving a simple problem, that is, imbued with that everyday-challenge pragmatism. And with such formal intelligence! With such resource efficiency! That's what was instantly noticed by Bruno. I have no idea how he got that ladder, whether he bought it or found it in a construction dumpster, or if his interest in the piece has caused any kind of reaction from the construction workers. I really don't, and I choose to live with this blank. All I know is he took it to his studio and now it's featured in his most recent solo exhibition at Central Galeria, as its virtual masterpiece, actually as part of a 6'7" tall piece comprised of three other parts.

It should be noted that the ladder is 4'6" tall and 21.7" wide. Combined with the unexpected rectification of its proportion, its irregular geometry makes it into a genuine sculpture, a direct descendant of the constructive lineage, but not of the geometrically abstract branch and its often obsessive regularity, inheritor of the reputable "architectural orders" tradition. The sculpture found by Bruno, and by him appropriated and articulated to others as to make up a composite structure, belongs to the order of "twisted reason", which spitefully defies symmetry and follows after Yohji Yamamoto's lesson as stated in the Wim Wenders film about him – *Notebook on City and Clothes* (1989): "Symmetry is ugly. Human hands and actions are not symmetric." A statement that echoes Guillaume Apollinaire's poem "Be indulgent when you compare / To those who have been the perfection of order / Us who everywhere seek for adventure."

Bruno Cançado's poetics is in tune with the acute perception of a Celso Renato, whose raw material were wooden scraps provided by the city, with Helio Oiticica's openness towards the world as shown in his *Bólides* and *Penetráveis*, and it ultimately refers to all those who acknowledge intelligence wherever it's manifested, particularly that which occurs off formal schooling contexts and curricular standards, as manifest in Nelson Cavaquinho or Cartola's sambas, in the flawless paint work of a modest house assimilated by Anna Mariani, in Véio's sculptures, in the megalopolis-themed paintings made by Agostinho de Freitas, a peripatetic painter, while wandering around.

Bruno ventures out into the city on a quest for something he doesn't yet know, but recognizes as soon as he finds, whether it's something accomplished through the mere exercise of intelligence as incited by a need for improvisation or the lack of resources, as is the case of the



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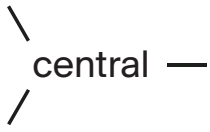
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ladder, or through coming upon stuff that trigger his ability to establish connections between seemingly disparate things. Twigs, vines, rebars, floorboard pieces, assorted tools – hammers, sledgehammers, bricks –, wire and rope to tie stuff to other stuff. Anything goes, anything can potentially be of interest, and actually serves to create weirdly disconnected structures, like syncopated syntagmas.

Other than material properties, which he examines as if savoring the objects' particular features, whether derived directly from nature or artisanally or industrially processed, the artist is interested in their purpose, in the purpose justifying their presence in the world, in the meanings that have been ascribed to them over time.

Despite its prosaic quality, due to its ordinary and naturalized presence, the ladder makes us forget that its genesis goes beyond the fulfillment of mundane necessities, as it harks back to the atavistic drive to rise above our own height. As part of the featured quadripartite sculpture, the ladder serves as support for another element: a reinforced concrete arch. It would be worth mentioning the history of the arch in architecture, its great invention by the Romans, its significance in structural terms, improving the trilithic system (two pillars and a beam). In view of the shortage of available space here, this will not be possible. But, focusing on what matters about this piece devised by Bruno, the arch – the Mother Cell of a dome –, leads to the notion of architecture and its connection to the sky, a lowered celestial dome reduced to our scale. Binding at 6'7" above the ground, the arch's triumph – just a narrow gray buttress when seen in profile – is reduced to 21.7 inches deep, still allowing for one to cross under it, but using their eyes only instead of their whole body, which does not conform to its narrow width. Going from wood to concrete, the arch ends in three clay vases on the other side of the piece assembled onto a pile of ceramic bricks of the hollow kind, which can be found in every construction site in our country.

Wood, concrete and clay pile up in an exercise in architecture, an antipode assemblage of minimalist frigidity, albeit strict and charged with empirical logic and actions, while equally full of remembrance and suggestion. Like the ladder and the arch, also the clay vases, earthenware seedlings and seed containers whose conical shape comments on the plants' growth, share the same upward impetus. Regarding the vases and ceramic bricks, a new opportunity is presented to this material thanks to the extraordinary treatment it gets from the fire, which provides it with the hardness of stonewalls. The magnificent art of stonemasonry creates precise long-lasting walls, unlike the ones made of bricks that crumble while being transported from the manufacturing facility to the construction site. The hardness of the ceramic brick dispenses with the solid structure of the ordinary brick. There are, instead, 12 vents carefully aligned into three rows, endowing walls with continuous alveoli that are used for wiring and airing, providing house walls with covert levity. The artist approaches these features in two different ways: by juxtaposing the bricks, playing with their constituent opacity and semi-transparency, and by stacking them, an ancestral gesture and also the starting point of architecture as a whole as well as the very constitution of being. After all, stacking makes us who we are. Isn't this what the caryatides (those anthropomorphic columns) teach us with their female features and human verticality? A couple of humans, topped by the sky, comprise a threshold. And so we're back to the trilithic system, and to the artist's fascination with columns, the *motif* of the *Column-stack* series (*Série Coluna-pilha*).



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Some would say even the most devoid of constructive ideas human being is better than a bee. And that's because the bee can only instinctively practice a single kind of architecture, to limited and laconic perfection, while human beings carry the very idea of architecture within, a notion they submit to whatever available material they may find.

*Column-stack (Coluna-pilha)* refers to two intertwined notions: 1. the human action of replicating their own body and their own body's verticality; 2. whatever is produced by stacking regular pieces of materials, in this case cylindrical pieces of assorted materials, such as concrete, iron ore, cement, wood, adobe, pebbles, tree trunks. Raw or properly processed material, it doesn't matter. The artist uses any kind of material to create his grammar, even some that have been molded into other materials, such as a concrete cylinder cast within a fiber basket, whose surface displays an embossing pattern that's a reminder of the previous material junction. Disturbed here and there by their own particular malfunctions and unbalancing actions, such as the wooden wedge interposed between joints, or the stone that outweighs the cylinder's bevel cut, preventing it from falling apart, the columns build up with these additions. We do whatever we can, we build and build ourselves up due to an insatiable urge, until the building comes down and we end up as mere debris. In any case, we rise again, says the artist. At least that's what the *Termite-relief (Relevo-cupim)* series seems to express. Square patches displaying a termite mound texture raised from the ground and installed on the wall, which, for what matters, reach 30 feet, are a result of the same unfathomable ascendant effort. They're built quickly, with a mix of saliva, excrement and dirt; a solid construction, built to withstand inclement weather and predators, however porous and open to the surroundings through its infinite tiny holes it may be. The artist presents them as intensely vivacious fragments, radiating plethoric organisms.

**Agnaldo Farias**

August 2022