

1. You have been doing editions and diverse forms of prints since the seventies, and those prints took the form of sculptural (the porcelains) or even performance pieces (*Corredores para abutres*, *Pronto para Morar*, etc). In more recent years, you have gone to laser-cut vinyl and similar techniques in order to be able to achieve the imprinting of large architectural surfaces. Does printmaking continue to inform your artistic process?

– This graphic mark has always been detectable, even when I was making the short experimental video films in the seventies. This mark is certainly related to the continued exercise of printmaking, which I practiced and taught for a long time in my professional career, even though in this practice – and also in my teaching – I have been quite unorthodox. For me, printmaking has always been a field open to graphic experimentation, much more expanded and flexible than painting, since it could include practically everything. When making prints, my favorite operations have always involved the hybridization of traditional procedures with techniques and resources from industrial graphics, as well as printing on various supports. But coming before all this, including the printmaking, is what I believe lies at the very basis of my means of operating, which is this strong predisposition, this response, or, if you prefer, this poetic “graphic” approach, of configuring by producing graphic marks – whether on paper, walls, porcelain, interiors or large-scale architecture, even on the urban fabric. Also the performances were always intermediated by a graphic element, as the *Pudim Arte Brasileira* [Brazilian Art Pudding] that I distributed at the entrance to the subway, back in the seventies; the flyer *Pronto para Morar* [Ready to Live In], a parody of the real-estate flyers, handed out to people in cars waiting at a stoplight at one of the busiest corners in São Paulo, in 1994; and the Volkswagen beetle with the vinyl adhesive in the image of a zipper, which went through the downtown region of the city, interacting with street vendors, as registered in the documentary *Blindagem* [Bullet Proof, 2002]. Actually, it appears that the graphic icon comes either prior to or together with the first ideas for my artworks, as if the insight itself were graphic, no matter what medium I choose afterward. I believe this explains my almost exclusive preference for the color black. In a commentary to my recent installation *Tropel (Reversed)*, a large graphic splotch that I made fictionally invade the internal architectural space of the Koege Art Museum, in Denmark, I was pleased to find the use of the expression “black art,” not in the sense of contemporary African art, or even Gothic art, but to designate graphic manifestations, letters or illustrations made in the color black, traditionally linked to the old typography or derived from it. I got to thinking that my installations with plotter-cut vinyl could also fit within this lineage of black art... this rubric could include the silhouettes, the tire tracks, the animal tracks, the human footprints, and this entire family of black, indexical images that have occupied my imagination for so long now, and which I have used to re-signify objects, spaces and architectures of many kinds.

On the other hand, the inclusion of digital practices in my work starting in the mid-nineties fully reinstalls the notion of the matrix, now with the potential for repetition, of identical copies without any loss, or with an opening for variants and nearly topological adjustments. This was above all important for the recovery of the undesired ephemeral condition of some previous installations, including large-scale ones, in most cases constituted by illusionist silhouettes that I painted, slowly and rigorously, on various architectures, from the eighties onward. The use of the plotter for cutting the vinyl adhesive was a good alternative, and also quicker than the results of painting, since the adhesive could be removed and later cut and placed again somewhere else, even in other geographies, almost like a canvas is removed from a wall and can be sent anywhere at all – but with its permanent existence maintained as a potentiality, impeccable and precisely the same, in the matrix, saved in a file.

Besides reinstalling the notion of the matrix, the digital graphic resources brought me greater control, especially in regard to the scale and planning, when the work involved covering large architectural surfaces with graphic images, in projects that were many times negotiated and realized from a distance. Within these new parameters, my first adventure of having a graphic work of significant size involving external architecture, commissioned, treated and sent by Internet, to be executed abroad was *Ex Orbis*. This piece occupied a large element on the façade of the National Museum of Aviation, in Ottawa, at the exhibition *Passion for Wings*, in 1999. The largest and riskiest, at least up to now, was *Irruption: Saga*, much more recently. Without a doubt, the saga was also mine and the museum's, to realize and assemble that huge flow of human footprints, with 1400 m<sup>2</sup> of cut vinyl, applied to the external architecture of the Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, for the 6th Taipei Biennial, in 2006.

2. In works such as *Irruption* you take the footprint – the archetypal imprint – as the basis for large-scale installations. What led you to footprints and tracks of animals?

– The first provocation came with the invitation from MCA San Diego to dialogue, poetically, with the design of the entrance hall conceived by architect Robert Venturi for the museum's remodeling completed in 1996. This was when I imagined *Gone Wild*, that pattern of coyote tracks in perspective climbing the walls, as a specific response to the beautiful pattern of dalmatian-dog spots that had been installed recently on the entrance floor.

The political motives for the allusion to coyotes in that conflict zone along the border with Mexico gained further annotations when the tracks of those wild canines were intermingled with those of many other animals, from different latitudes and incompatible with each other – prey and predators – when I created the image for *Tropel*, in keeping with the theme of Anthropophagy at

the 24th Bienal de São Paulo, in 1998. The anthropophagic voracity of cultures made me create *Tropel* as the vestige of a fictional event: the escape of those animals out of a gap in the façade, to become lost in the park surrounding the building designed by Oscar Niemeyer.

I think that the introduction of this paradigm of footprints and animal tracks is an expansion of my wide-ranging interest for enigmatic images that serve as indexical signs, such as shadows, photographs, and footprints: enigmatic because they are marks left by light, by events, and because they denote time and absence. The footprints simply pertain to this family of indexical signs I had already explored when doing anamorphic shadows, in many of my objects and installations.

When I appropriated the graphic designs of tire tracks, to couple and form patterns that would invade interior settings and façades – as did the *Frenazos* in Puerto Rico and the *Derrapadas* in Montevideo – the configurations of those tracks were more urban, invasive and chaotic. Certainly more playful as well – the tracks of animals were always more “fierce”...

The human footprints, which migrated and grew in size, from *Intro* in Brussels, to *Irruption* at MFA Houston, and *Irruption (Saga)* in Taipei, actually originated in the footprints of many children that I printed on sheets of paper in the early nineties, after they had dipped their feet in shallow basins filled with black paint. The footprints printed in black resulted from my negotiations with the children (who also painted their feet other colors) for making a future work – a tapestry that I never managed to execute. These activities were part of a workshop carried out with dozens of children, to compose paths and trails with colored footprints in the spaces and gardens of SESC-Itaquera in São Paulo. Only many years later were these footprints in black scanned and digitally treated to compose the splotches of accumulated footprints that began to occupy the architectural surfaces placed at my disposal for the creation of site-specific installations. Brought together and juxtaposed, they functioned for me as the marks of an uncontrolled event or an invasion, looking like insects, in spatial situations that were completely absurd, or at least unlikely for real footprints.

Some days ago I read in a scientific publication the news that ancestral footprints were found in Kenya, which researchers believe could belong to *Homo erectus*. That photo of the isolated footprint, published in the magazine science, in all its details, is the most moving trace I have ever seen.