

## *Reflected Space(s)*

*The verb reflect has a double meaning. On the one hand, so the dictionary tells us, it means bend back or throw by its reflection, something in a different or identical direction that is at its origin; it is the sense we choose when we say the moon reflects the sun's light, for example. The other sense has to do with the act of reflecting, and in this sense it has become synonymous with the word think. In either of the two cases, however, there is a common Latin origin: a verb which in Portuguese [and English], has also given rise to flex or flexion. Thus, in the reflection whether it is a physical phenomenon or an activity based on thinking, a conceptual folding or bending back is always included so that someone or something establishes or is put at a distance; it lies at the very essence of the phenomenon's condition. Without distance, the moon is unable to reflect the sun's light, and without taking into account that something is different and removed from the subject who thinks, there can be no place for thought and reflection. Artists have always deduced this two-fold meaning intuitively but also in a more or less conscious way, and have frequently included mirrors in their work to symbolise the distance that allows one to obtain knowledge. We recall the "vanitas" seen throughout the Western tradition of painting where a beautiful woman is looking at herself in the mirror and the spectator, in admiring her, reflects upon the fleeting nature of beauty and its wealth; or nearer our day and age, the use Dan Graham or Pistoletto make of mirrors, implicitly inviting the spectator's body to become a physical part of the work of art, causing him/her to gain an awareness of the boundaries – of the distance between the here and the there – and the characteristics of the surrounding physical space.*

*Also composed of an installation and a mirror, is Ana Sérió's work in Reflected Space(s). Due to its architectural characteristics, the space calls up the memory of a primitive house which is bent back to us in the virtual images seen in the mirrored reflection and the room's lighting. The house, affording shelter and protection, is also the prolongation of the body. Just as any garment would, it establishes a barrier between what is inside and what is outside – the I who dwells within the house – and the outer world, strange, foreign. On the one hand, it marks a border; on the other, it is decorated, arranged according to the image of the one living in it. An intimate place, and also a place where distance has been cancelled out in a permanent act of bargaining and change between the space which is private and the space open to the Other, to others. In this installation, the mirror is an invitation for others to go into the artist's space, an invitation that is redoubled by its inscriptions in Arabic and Hebrew on two walls opposite each other. The symbolic significance of the inscriptions tells us in the last instance, that the division between the inside and the outside is also, and apart from anything else, political and historical. But this piece of work does not come decontextualised from the artist's other work which mostly has to do with painting. Now and again in her work, small wooden boxes holding mirrors establish a virtual connection between the painting, the spectator and the act of looking. The boxes are systematically built so as to hide their interiors where the artist delights in placing painted, folded, rolled-up or crumpled papers that are only glimpsed at by means of the interplay of mirrored reflections. There is no direct or immediate connection between the painted canvas and the spectator's eye. His/her vision has to go through the mediation of the mirror's reflected surface, in other words, visibility is conditioned by a rudimentary mechanism whereby images are bent or folded back to us. The spectator becomes a voyeur, and the painting, which is an object of desire of the one who sees, remains inaccessible just as it always does when it comes to desire. Although less paradoxically than what appears to happen at first sight, the boxes emphasise the intentions of the painting on the canvas.*

*The canvas is covered with heavily textured matter in brush strokes visible on the surface of the canvas or the paper, and is always folding back in historical time: to a specific era, the years immediately following the Second World War where the act of doubling back creates the very condition for materialising the painting itself; and that today calls up a time in which the whole of the artist's freedom has made all re-visitations possible. As a reflex of this historical era, a reflection upon the present conditions of pictorial practice, Ana Sérgio's work without a doubt leads us to query these and other questions.*

*Thus, returning to our beginning, the range of possible meanings offered by Reflected Space(s) ends up by revealing themselves in the real and metaphorical mirror that its presence establishes: on the one hand, the transitory or the permanent nature of history; on the other, thought about the body, its movement, the way of controlling this self-same body by culture and by politics. And at the centre of everything, is the house as a model, an image, a refection. Here, as with time, the hours and the visitors passing by, the presence of other bodies who peep in, desire and wait, is forever and ever open.*

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