

AZOL: CALLIGRAPHY OF ANCESTRAL NARRATIVES¹**AZOL: caligrafias de narrativas ancestrais**DANTAS, Márcio²**Abstract**

O ensaio explora a obra do artista Azol, destacando sua abordagem experimental e narrativa. Formado em Cinema e Artes Gráficas, Azol trabalha com pintura, colagem, videoarte e fotografia, sempre desenvolvendo séries que contam histórias visuais. Seu processo criativo busca tanto o conhecimento histórico quanto a introspecção humana. Uma de suas séries, Sagrado, ressignifica santos devocionais da Igreja Católica, aproximando-os da estética do mito e do imaginário coletivo. Já O Sertão Virou Mar inspira-se na arquitetura do Castelo de Zé dos Montes, utilizando elementos góticos e árabes para compor uma linguagem pictórica única. Na série Estética do Cangaço, Azol retrata a simbologia dos cangaceiros, explorando cores, texturas e formas que sugerem movimento e profundidade histórica. Em suas fotografias, usa manipulações digitais para destacar a aridez e a luminosidade dos sertões, criando composições visualmente marcantes. A série A Natureza Íntima das Coisas investiga a subjetividade humana por meio de formas abstratas e cores intensas, evocando sensações e mistérios internos. Já em seus Últimos Trabalhos, ele revisita temas como o sagrado e a geometria, explorando a figura humana com um olhar simbólico e introspectivo. Azol constrói uma linguagem visual que transcende regionalismos, promovendo um diálogo entre tradição e contemporaneidade. Sua obra se destaca pela riqueza estética e pela capacidade de despertar reflexões sobre identidade, memória e a própria essência da arte.

Resumo

The essay explores the work of artist Azol, highlighting his experimental and narrative approach. With a degree in Cinema and Graphic Arts, Azol works with painting, collage, video art, and photography, always developing series that tell visual stories. His creative process seeks both historical knowledge and human introspection. One of his series, Sagrado (Sacred), reinterprets devotional saints of the Catholic Church, bringing them closer to the aesthetics of myth and the collective imagination. O Sertão Virou Mar (The Backlands Became Sea) is inspired by the architecture of the Castle of Zé dos Montes, using Gothic and Arabic elements to compose a unique pictorial language. In the series Estética do Cangaço (Aesthetics of the Cangaço), Azol portrays the symbolism of the cangaceiros, exploring colors, textures, and shapes that suggest movement and historical depth. In his photographs, he uses digital manipulation to highlight the aridity and luminosity of the sertões, creating visually striking compositions. The series A Natureza Íntima das Coisas (The Intimate Nature of Things) investigates human subjectivity through abstract forms and intense colors, evoking internal sensations and mysteries. In his Últimos Trabalhos (Latest Works), he revisits themes such as the sacred and geometry, exploring the human figure with a symbolic and introspective gaze. Azol constructs a visual language that transcends regionalism, promoting a dialogue between tradition and contemporaneity. His work stands out for its aesthetic richness and its ability to provoke reflections on identity, memory, and the very essence of art.

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Azol: Calligraphies of Ancestral Narratives

*It inhabits time, not space.
Its tunic is seamless,
not woven of gold or purple:
of simpler matter.*
Henriqueta Lisboa

INTRODUCTION

Azol (Natal, November 25, 1964) has a degree in Film and Graphic Arts from the USA. He has lived in São Paulo for over 30 years. He almost always works with acrylic on canvas or Hahnemühle Photorag 308g paper. With a restless temperament, he is not content to work solely with painting. Restlessness in art always prevails in people with technical mastery and a reflective awareness of what is being organized, such as a new series or the momentary forgetting of what we might call diction (remaining with the same style for a lifetime); however, Azol makes his work a kind of laboratory in which many ways of shaping artistic expression come to light, such as: collage, video art, photography, and sculpture.

It's worth remembering that he always works with series, shaping implicit or explicit narratives. Even though the canvases don't lose their autonomy as a separate work, standing on their own merit, it is only by juxtaposing the set of works in their singularity that we arrive at the totality of a narrative. This way of elaborating his works, with a strong awareness of what he portrays—he knows very well what he is doing—gives his work in progress a precious source of knowledge.

I mean two ways of accessing reality: art as knowledge of a historical event, something external, and also as a way of accessing the deepest regions of humanity. Therefore, art is as valuable as myth, science, and religion in terms of knowledge. This is what happens in these thematic obsessions that visual artist Azol uses to frame his work in a movement of opening and closing cycles; that is, each series narrates a theme. For a reader/viewer with greater insight and penetrating vision, certain content will hardly be missed. In some cases, if they belong to the Northeast region of Brazil, their talent will understand the series as traditional narratives of that region.

But that's not all. It draws its influence from atavistic forces that remain in the collective imagination or unconscious, dormant due to the anxious and swift trot of Cronos. Leaving nothing standing, rapidly transforming the spirit of the age and imposing its yoke on new ways of being and behaving. The best example is our own time. In just a few decades, everything has changed; not only human behavior, but nature itself has not escaped unscathed.

It's good to remember, as I've already said, that each series comprises a narrative, regardless of whether it's presented in fragments. In other words, one must retain a very observant eye to understand the totality of an account belonging to an event or to recount a particular sequence of events, whether they have occurred or are part of a mythological narrative. The narrative contains these elements, though not always all of them: who I am, where I am, what I want, what prevents me.

Although dormant in the oblivion of contemporary generations, it is worth mentioning the history of a place or country. If everything has been forgotten, it doesn't matter; it's not up to the artist to defend it through engaged art. One can continue building their art, in complete absence of reality, creating from what gestates or throbs in the meanders of their psyche, exorcising through creation one or another epiphany that appears or is felt. In Azol's case, it is a deliberate awareness, a kind of inner mathematics that belongs only to him, shaping his works through a knowing of what he is doing.

(Let's see how the ancient Greeks represented Narrative. The nine muses inspired artistic or scientific creation. The muse Clio, "she who makes famous," "proclaimer," was the muse of History, creativity, and eloquence. Calliope, muse of epic poetry.)

Regarding Azol, by organizing each series in a monothematic way, narrating a story submitted to the protection and inspiration of the muse Clio, the narrative, whatever it may be, will be subject to the languages of his inner self, flowing in internal rhythms that seek to shape themselves into art. On the other hand, the muse Clio also pours forth her fluids, insofar as she is responsible for rhetoric or eloquence. A series seeks to narrate a story in the best way possible, through the gift of rhetoric, of eloquence. In the case of poetry, it is merely a narrative poem (Camões, *Os Lusíadas*).

Finally, it is worth mentioning the importance of this mode of expression, knowing how a particular narrative is organized, with its form of being, through an abstract or figurative style. In some series, the forms are arranged in a fragmented way; however, one must pay closer attention so that the parts become segments of a body, leading the reader/viewer to establish a design that is found in fragments or parts of a whole, as if it were a puzzle. So, here is a figure portrayed as part of a story, of a narrative.

1. SACRED

Although I have associated the sacred with an institution, the Catholic Church with its saints and patron saints, I believe that this happened (perhaps) because of the possibilities of portraying icons with their ornate vestments and hieratic character, evoking much more the way of representing the Orthodox churches.

Even knowing about the decline of the Catholic rite, currently full of controversies and scandals, it matters little to us, since it adds nothing to our hermeneutics. What interests us is the referent and its methodology until it finally arrives at a new configuration, a new form, a singular expression, a new appearance.

Finally, what arrives to coexist with its peers also possessing unusual configurations and full of aesthetic character. Adding new conceptions to what already holds more than 2000 years of history, and seems to gasp with exhaustion. It is good to remember the importance of what refers to new means or achieving success from how certain so-called sacred images were elaborated, explicitly showing their difference from the other. This juxtaposition of visual artists, in an aesthetic coexistence, casts its vectors towards what differs from the ways in which the Catholic Church made the saints appear with their attributes.

I think that this series, titled Sacred, is much more about exercising a primary coexistence with its antipode, the Profane. This sense of the profane strips away the sacred, replacing it, for didactic purposes, with Myth, which in our time has converged into literary works (Iliad, Odyssey), cinema (Troy), painting (frescoes in the tombs of ancient Egypt). In short, to be interpreted and understood as to how certain peoples exercised their organizational principles, seeking to understand how they felt or acted, as well as the functioning of the intellect. In this way, myth integrates the history of all peoples.

This is the point I wanted to make: Myth hasn't disappeared ("Myth is the nothing that is everything" – Fernando Pessoa), but it integrates the Imaginary, having been superseded by beliefs and objects considered sacred. In this way, the Sacred occupies the place of the ancient gods and their narratives (Egypt, Greece, Rome). The Spirit of Time alters forms of coexistence and replaces them with other ways of representing and feeling. What was once Myth no longer makes sense, becoming part of the substratum of Western civilization.

First of all, certain actions, even involuntary ones, but not devoid of a meaning similar to the customs of yesteryear, like an underground river, valid in many aspects, but not in others, because Cronos devours everything and disintegrates the years and decades, giving rise to a new Spirit of the Age, with different ways of being or existing. This is tangible; one only needs to be a good observer. Let's see, our time is a transitional frontier, considering how we occupy our time,

how we relate to each other, how we dress, or how the sensitive dynamism of representation occurs, or the discourses distributed by the media and social networks, determining quite questionable values.

Azol's Sacred series is characterized by its frank originality in portraying devotional saints of the Catholic Church. As a rule, the figure in focus receives the treatment of a frame, since it is in the center, although almost no saint possesses its respective attribute, as is usually the case (a palm, for example), for the necessary identification by those who make the sign of the cross in an act of faith. Roses or branches, crowns or halos appear, as if they were merely to adorn or highlight a play of colors, forming beautiful contrasts.

Almost all the subjects portrayed have some kind of frame or wall as a backdrop, largely to create a pictorial effect, elaborating a play of colors with the cloaks or halos that surround their heads. Overall, there are few scenic elements; perhaps that is precisely where the plastic beauty emanates—that is, it is the result of a minimalism of colors and contrasting elements. It is well known how difficult it is to extract pictorial beauty from an art object; I mean, in the sense that simplicity can become something very complex.

Let's return to the myth. (Thus the legend slips away. / Entering reality / and fertilizing it, it flows. Fernando Pessoa). Note that the Portuguese poet inverted what we are accustomed to reasoning, thinking, or recounting in a story. It is not reality (History) that enters through mythical discourse, but rather the legend that supports the discourse or events that have occurred, slipping into the realm of myth. Therefore, we can understand that the Sacred is not an eternal truth; it is a duration according to the survival time of peoples who made their way of life last. Consider the mythological organization of ancient Egypt with its trinity (Osiris, Isis, and Horus). Now, the Catholic Church holds its trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). This leads us to reflect on the entire ritual and pomp of the Catholic Church, with its heritage from the rituals of ancient Rome.

Let's change the subject matter and talk about aesthetics. Azol painted a series of saints belonging to the Catholic Church. Almost all of them receive the treatment of a frame, as they are located in the center, in a bilateral symmetry. There is a Virgin Mary, recognizable by the two colors of her clothing, white and blue (coincidentally, these were the colors of Venus), surrounded by a red speckled with black spots.

Indeed, there is a strong evocation of the Baroque, employing its ornamental ethos, since the depiction contains no functional or utilitarian elements. What could be more beautiful in the color palette? The contrast between a dark red and a flag-green, not always easy to juxtapose and capture beauty. Even if we compare it to the icons of the Orthodox Church, it is difficult to find a comparison, as it is based on a hieratic style resplendent with gold.

Azol rejects the Neoplatonic notion of inspiration; like any sensible man, he aligns himself with the Aristotelian school of thought. His series are the product of a previously studied methodology; thus, he employs knowledge acquired from masters or schools.

It is worth remembering the French anthropologist Gilbert Durand, in his book **The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary**, in which he also endorses the nature of myth as an invariant of the Imaginary. That is to say, with this assertion, the importance and vitality of the realm of myth. In other words, myth may be the primary cause present in the dynamics of the grammar of a given society, including its ways of feeling and reasoning. It is enough to perceive how much our time has anchored a new way of thinking and acting. Much more is happening through a civilizational mutation (Marilena Chauí).

2. THE BACKLANDS TURNED INTO A SEA.

This series has a rather unusual history, as it was inspired by the artist's contemplation during a visit to the Castle of Zé dos Montes, located in the municipality of Sítio de Novo, in the interior of Rio Grande do Norte. Amidst the vegetation, under a rocky outcrop, stands a castle with strong remnants of traditional Byzantine and Arabic architecture, as well as the Gothic tradition, which for a long time predominated in the churches of the interior backlands (DANTAS, Márcio de Lima. The persistence of Gothic forms in the religious architecture of the backlands of Rio Grande do Norte. *Revista Barbante*, Natal, year IV, no. 15, p. 72-78, 2015).

It's curious how a retired military man, with little or no contact with any castles, perhaps only through photographs, would decide to build one near the town center, claiming it was at the request of figures from the Catholic Church. I believe there can only be one possible explanation: imbued with inner strength, with the symbolism of what they call sacred, he acted as a chosen one, not unlike what happens with artists or scientists.

I believe it's best to use the notion of the Collective Unconscious (Carl Gustav Jung), since the builder probably had no contact with symbols related to castles, especially when we consider the presence of a symbolic system with many of the rooms facing vertically upwards (obelisks, domes). However, this also serves both explanations, given that every human being possesses this inner pelagic region. All cultures share the same myths, the same responses to the demands of nature, the same relationship with agriculture and herding (Neolithic period), the same religious practices, and the same forms of social stratification. In short, why couldn't Zé dos Montes be selected to erect a particular architectural building? Maria do Santíssimo had no idea what she was doing when she painted her roosters and flowering branches in her aniline drawings.

Let's see how Zé dos Montes' castle is organized. Basically, it was built of cement with a roughcast finish and the white of the lime to create a contrast with the roofs. Featuring only two colors, found in the houses of modest people, it nonetheless resulted in a structure imbued with mystery and beauty. We find two basic forms: small rectangular niches, like guard posts, and these same cylindrical forms, all with domes at the top.

In these small rectangular or cylindrical niches of exposed cement, crowned by small domes of pure lime, there are small openings simulating arabesques. These small constructions are arranged in tiers, levels that ascend upwards, as if they were terraces or contour lines, rising towards the sky, until finally reaching the last tier, in which everything is white, as if wishing to highlight the crowning of the castle. A series of small white obelisks also rise upwards, strongly evoking the Gothic style, in which each and every element converges upwards. In this way, an aesthetic effect of beauty and simplicity is obtained, using few elements, both in colors and in the set of geometric forms.

Let us consider Azol's mimesis during his encounter with the castle and his ways of contemplating the whole and then the parts. Now, mimesis is not merely the depiction of something belonging to reality, as it is, like a photograph in a traditional pose. Mimesis is transfiguration through a gaze; that is, it must be subjected to our inner self (Aristotle, *Poetics*), like a filter, retaining from the external object what is a necessity for the subject who creates the art. Indeed, it is necessary that oneself be another, without ceasing to be oneself. The important thing is that the object of art has passed through the entrails of a subject, extracting what it projects from the contemplated object, adding to reality yet another element, almost always worthy of being seen, enjoyed, and awakening enchantment.

Azol decided to transpose the non-functional dimension of the castle onto the screen or paper, opting, like Zé dos Montes, to select a limited color palette. Thus, the colors are sparse, and even then, indecisive, such as red juxtaposed with ochre and yellow. There is also black and white and some of their nuances.

Let's see how to interpret constructions when transformed into art. Without using perspective, it presents a series of ogival drawings and other arches, overlapping as if they were simulacra of dwellings, but with nothing to do with utilitarian purposes, but with the objective of representing stylized parts of the building.

This preference for choosing a particular arrangement for one's own castle had already been found in Zé dos Montes: it's not for living in. According to him, it was an order from Our Lady, but simply to be, standing in the middle of the world, building something that says a lot about what was going on inside this retired military man, as if it were a power capable of revitalizing his spirit, as he added another guard post, another ogive, another tower.

Some of the paintings, if we were not familiar with the Sítio Novo Castle, could be labeled as geometric abstraction, even though some are frankly figurative. This ambivalence leads us to appreciate these paintings even more, prompting us to deeply question the enigmas and questions raised during our stroll through the corridors of an exhibition.

Nevertheless, there is a whole array of triangles, mostly in reddish-ochre, juxtaposed on ogives bearing other hues, contrasting with the black and white. It almost seems as if Azol went around slicing the entire body of the castle in cross-section. In other words, a canvas forged from the geometry that appears before him, as a particular characteristic, engendering a meticulous work and a unique arrangement.

This type of cropping not only causes the phenomenon of the artist being unique, but also imprints a number different from his own, making it difficult to distinguish. Although it does not occur in all the works of the series, some are frankly reminiscent of the design of the castle's framework, in its arrangement of ogives with white domes, guardhouses with open, perforated doors and windows, and small pyramids rising towards the sky.

Now, this arrangement of all the vertical elements gradually rising towards the summit, where a completely white structure crowns the castle, evokes elements present in Gothic architecture, a historical style that flourished in the Middle Ages and still persists throughout the Northeast in religious architecture. Azol was inspired not to portray the castle's unique structure verbatim, but, as almost always happens, to emphasize the parts in order to evoke the whole.

Two arches, usually symmetrical, rising to meet at an intersection at the top. These architectural forms originate from Byzantine and Arabic architecture; migrating to the West, where they reached their peak in Gothic art, in cathedrals, and even in everything related to verticality, in an unmistakable medieval style.

What we can see on the screens is a juxtaposition of small guardhouses or cylindrical towers, a kind of miniature dome in ogival shapes. Superimposed in strong, luminous colors, with openings that suggest windows or doors (I believe we can point to this "figure of speech," Metonymy, as the manipulation of the part for the whole, just to give an example). This structure integrates all languages, becoming the Syntagmatic axis; it is a horizontal axis organized by the relationship between words that can be combined to form phrases or statements. The Paradigmatic axis, on the other hand, is where the selection of choices is made; it is the vertical axis, as if there were n possibilities to compose a sentence, for example; it would be the place where elements that can be replaced without losing meaning are found. Bringing this to our reading, the paradigms would be the elements selected by the builder: pointed arches, guardhouses, pyramids, openings in niches. The syntagmatic axis, on the other hand, is the form, the grammar, the syntax of how he arranged the elements, configuring the whole, shining under the sun.

José Antônio Bento (1932-2020)

Serra da Tapuia, Sítio Novo.

Agreste region of Rio Grande do Norte

According to Zé dos Montes, the first vision of Our Lady occurred when she was eight years old.

3. AESTHETICS OF THE CANGAÇO

What at first seems like an excess of information is simply a way of inscribing elements related to the cangaceiro's attire, creating an interweaving of drawings and colored lines. It is up to the viewer, in this series, faced with an aesthetic event, to conduct an interpretation that carries the history of the Northeast region, full of atavisms related to the constitution of what still subsists in the oldest region of Brazil. I mean a subsistence in the symbolic realm of the Imaginary. What has resisted, ingrained in the intricacies of the intimate, without our awareness, coming to the surface whenever life in society demands it in its customs or forms of representation.

I'm talking about the Spirit of the Times, what predominates in the habits of a given society, and which gives the term a naturalness, emerging in speeches, in the press, on social media, so that certain social hierarchies can accommodate their yoke and command. In truth, this is called Ideology, how we should behave, how we should be, how we should endorse the needs of those in power. That's why I referred to the term naturalness; I meant that everything is socially constructed, everything is convention, habits, ways of representing, how to act or think.

Therefore, we cannot forget these fragments of a historical narrative, which are part of what concerns us as a social group, telling us of a sense of belonging with its natural memory.

That being said, it is beneficial to move beyond regionalism, so as not to repeat discourses and works that use the Northeast as a reference point. What is far more interesting is to speculate about the universality of the work of the artist Azol. Beyond this geographical point, we must observe its singularity and its power, allowing it to be seen and appreciated anywhere, in any country or city. Recognizing his value as a remarkable artist, capable of elevating a historical event, within a specific time and space, to the status of a universal work of art, resulting in empathy from anyone, anywhere, provided they allow themselves to enjoy the aesthetic present in a painting or in one of his series.

The main reason for understanding and naming Azol's work as universal concerns how it moves through various aesthetic media, demonstrating a unique talent manifested in a domain possessing an unparalleled aesthetic grammar. As soon as we encounter one of his series, our

inner selves tell us that we are facing something unfamiliar, no matter how often we frequent art openings or artists' studios. The talent is unique and almost prevents us from comparing it to what we know, something quite different from what occurs in contemporary art.

Another thing to remember, faced with a group of visual artists who delight in repeating the myth of the cangaço and the cangaceiro, whose pair Lampião and Maria Bonita is the greatest icon, repeating the same old thing on their canvases, with common sense endorsing this primeval and fantastical discourse. Azol arrives and circumscribes this event through metonymies, to, in the end, hold in his hands a beautiful metaphor (characterized by the fact that there is no need for any degree of belonging when making the comparison. Paradigm is the axis of selection. Metonymy is the axis of combination). The free will of our imagination organizes language aiming to make the discourse creative and poetic.

Despite this, inventiveness was achieved through a multifaceted and heterogeneous expressive resource. Even so, the overall harmony of this series, full of multifaceted elements, remains. The Aesthetics of Cangaço possesses a craft in which a supreme blend does not diminish the rare beauty of a work of art that stands out when dealing with a general theme presented in almost everything related to the subject.

It is rare to find a visual artist handling this theme without slipping into caricature or merely highlighting the picturesque aspects, leaving tedious forms for posterity.

Azol dared to bet on difference, maintaining only gaps, so that a potential viewer might inquire about what is being veiled in view of disparate elements. If attentive, one will perceive an integrality, scrutinizing the handling of light, an invariant of this series. Recalling the transparency of light in most of the Northeast, causing the houses, the waters, the cattle, the vegetation, and the numerous profiles of cangaceiros to appear in fullness, with their true, limpid colors, spilling out without the interference or filter of anything whatsoever.

The art of organizing the paintings through gaps, omissions, and otherness, in the sense that nothing is complete when it comes to the phenomenon of cangaço (banditry), but rather presents independent parts, even while acknowledging that the presence of these gaps is, in its totality, an address referring to a historical event that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century, leaving a trace that resonated with a substratum present in the collective imagination of the Northeast region, a place where disputes were resolved through revenge by death. There were also the cowboys with their leather clothing (gibão) and a popular religiosity, quite hybrid and which did not always follow the precepts of the Catholic Church.

A more lingering and scrutinizing look is necessary to extract elements that are juxtaposed, such as small rosettes, mandalas, a series of crosses, the rifle, the mandacaru cactus, the xique-xique cactus, revolvers, and crosses. These invariants may or may not appear on a canvas; what matters is their symbolism, when the canvases are revisited, pausing slowly to extract an understanding considering the totality.

Few figures are depicted in full body sketches; profiles predominate, with striking eyes, as if alert to something that might get out of control. This behavior was the norm during their wanderings through the caatinga, never the exception. We can also find leather hats with Stars of Solomon or Stars of David and mandalas. The presence of these symbols served to protect the cangaceiro from vicissitudes or surprises while wandering through the bush. They are cabalistic signs of universal value. These symbols can be found in all religions, whether in architecture or rituals, or as part of the adornments to which an individual is always attached, for reasons of faith or family traditions.

These figures distributed throughout the body, in fact, function as metaphors relating to a characteristic of the cangaço: their clothing or accessories, crafted during rest in their hideouts. The men also sewed, and the art of darning or embroidery was an attribute of both sexes. Thus, the painter extracted details from the objects or printed a miniature, converging on an aesthetic inherent to the bandits that differentiated them from farmers or the attire of city dwellers. Protecting themselves through deities represented by adornments was more than necessary for those who led a hostile and wandering life. Now, it is very curious how these wandering bands of men and women represented themselves: it was a way of life like any other.

I want to talk about the obligation to have control over one's body, insofar as hesitation or indecision could lead to death. Agility in making decisions was essential, always requiring reason combined with intuition, knowledge of enemies, casting out insecurity, uncertainty, and fortitude of spirit, as components of reason and the ability to recognize, through premonitions, the accomplices, the police, the farmers.

Mister maintained an intrinsic relationship with the caatinga and its oracular possibilities, leading the cangaceiro to very quickly select the right path to take when confronting the police patrols. So much so that there were not a large number of casualties on the side of the bandits, only in the final confrontation (there was a betrayal of their location), in the Grota de Angico, when Lampião died, did the massacre of eleven dead occur, including the end of Maria Bonita.

Let's return to Azol and his pictorial syntax, capable of daring to encompass an expression imbued with multiple nuances and its lights, capable of ordering a painting whose light can come from the sides, from behind, or even from the figure in relief.

The color palette left nothing out; it is pure luxury, due to the painter's mastery and his "scientific" knowledge—after all, he studied in the USA, having the painter and engraver Serge Fingermann as his master. His work stands as the antithesis of monotony, reinventing his series based on his travels.

On the other hand, it presents and reiterates the symbols of the people of certain places, nourishing, through the image and its signs, fragments of a brilliant constellation, making the painter just another individual attuned to images that emerge from within.

This prodigality of lights and colors corresponds to the location where the phenomenon of banditry occurred. They walked along the trails or even made their way through inhospitable vegetation or thorny plants, crossing which required ever-present courage.

I want to say that the light emanating from the canvases refers to a scorching sun with its heat and humidity found in the Caatinga, especially when entering the backlands. This dazzling light refers to what is considered content (if we can speak didactically in this way, since art is form and not content). After all, the artist vibrates his brushes and sketches with this alternative way of life in mind, which was the *cangaço* (banditry). He makes it valid and surrenders to what he considers the immanence of this narrative.

4. PHOTOGRAPHS

Another means of expression for Azol is photography. Like his paintings, it is a form of expression that preserves singularity and dissonance in relation to his peers who also use this expressive medium. To obtain the color effects or contrasts between the elements present in the photo, he manipulates several techniques, such as the Snapseed, Blend Editor, and Dramatic Black and White apps. Through the use of these apps, he achieves unforgettable beauty, almost always using the same themes: the inhospitable places of the backlands, a presence that escapes the commonplace, unlike how the media represents them.

The vegetation is almost always treated as an ornamental element, in the sense that it forms part of the framing to create contrasts, usually in the foreground, consisting of dry, gnarled branches rising upwards, obliterating other plants of the caatinga, such as the Mandacaru cactus, but also occupying the plane closest to the viewer an animal, an abandoned mansion, a wooden fence and its gate, a stone fence. It is worth remembering that colors almost always appear in one part of the photo: intense red, yellow, blue, also with the aim of highlighting or framing the subject.

Indeed, in other photos the sun is faint, hiding behind scribbles. Interestingly, there is no human presence, although most of his work is marked by this void, valuing what is barren and survives without the need for humans to mark their presence or pose.

We can list some photographic experiences with the intention achieved by the photographer, I speak in the sense of an immanence that will not be repeated, extending indefinitely. For the Greeks, this right moment, unique or sense of opportunity, was called *kairos*. Even if the photo receives the interference of digital programs, what was framed and presented as a photograph will still not be repeated, not relegating to any place the opportunity to surprise, to admire, to be amazed. In the end, Photography is subversive, not when it terrifies, disturbs or even stigmatizes (Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*).

Let's look at the photos. Zé dos Montes' castle reappears in the photos, possessing a yellowish luminosity or a blue background, a beautiful light royal blue. There are also small chapels found in the remote backlands, almost always on the edge of roads, whose colors stand out to delineate their small constructions; then we have red, green, with scribbles imposing, almost always on the left, a concealment that hides the reference.

Another thing, now rapidly disappearing, are the stone fences that were once so common, whose tradition dates back to their origin: the Iberian Peninsula. The abandoned mansion, lost in the middle of the *caatinga*, is situated in the distance, revealing the splendid red foliage; the outline at the four corners is black, making for a beautiful photograph, starting from something so simple, with few elements framing the scene.

Finally, it seems that in almost all of his work, the human being is not portrayed with any resemblance to realism (when features appear, they are distortions), neither in part nor in the whole. The uninhabited image of individuals prevails. And if a whole face appears, it is covered by a cloak of vivid colors, concealing it, as if out of modesty.

To conceal what cannot be found in reality, but which is commonplace and banal, raises a question from the depths of the viewer/reader. Why cover the human element with colorful garments (I know it generates an aesthetic voltage, but it doesn't stop there) or show only fragments?

However, depending on the type of absence, this can be a presence that demands attention. What they call the cries of silence. As if it were a cry that never resembles or bears any resemblance to the state of happiness, it is nevertheless sheltered in a taut, hard silence, in a bristly immobility, without demanding completeness, advice, shelter, or even the slightest appeal.

The work is shaped by an individual. One must seek the answers to the countless questions in the one who built the object, perhaps adding to it by denying it, by not feeling comfortable, or even because he is marked by the forces of destiny to question what we are obliged to live with.

I believe it is sufficient to contemplate the painting or the photograph; there is no need to inquire into the reasons why it is proposing new ways of representing, of being, of occupying its time, of feeling full within itself.

Finally, unlike traditional photography, whether black and white or color, it's important to note that the event only occurs once (unless it interferes with computer apps), petrifying what was captured, whether by pose or snapshot, relegating to the past what will never be repeated. This phenomenon of the so-called "portrait," after the tyrannical advent of social media, that is, with a cell phone in hand, has expanded countless ways of executing new means of expression. It's quite clear that not everyone will be called a visual artist.

There is a need to master the handling, which is not always simple, of techniques that have emerged in recent decades. Essential is a feeling, an interest, an understanding of what photography was and what it is: a profound reading of the past and a tamed art passed down to posterity.

5. THE INTIMATE NATURE OF THINGS

The set of canvases that make up this series suggest more than they explicitly state. Not that they raise any kind of enigma, but they demand a greater effort from the viewer/reader to find the underlying referent (the point it refers to) within the sinuous lines through which a light originating from the interior of the forms is disseminated, elaborated by the boundaries of an amorphous black, yet managing to divide it into parts, configuring compartments that provide a kind of dismemberment so that the light reverberates and fulfills its role of flowing while interacting with marked black lines.

Even so, a discernment emanates from within, subtly revealing the colors blue, yellow, and ochre. As soon as we encounter the title and the representations, we are immediately tempted to classify these expressions as belonging to expressionist abstraction. However, there is no uniformity in the series; that is, it does not bear the same fingerprint. All that remains is to carefully scrutinize the parts in an attempt to juxtapose fragments. Even after questioning, the challenge persists. Are they profiles of figures? Faces evoking Picasso? An attempt to give form to the entrails of a being? As I said, the series is not homogeneous.

It turns out that a mixture of sinuous forms can be considered partly cubism, insofar as certain resemblances to eyes or teeth (if indeed they are), profiles suggesting a nose or mouth, and the absence of bilateral symmetry and the visible restlessness that seems to move, seeking to find comfort or something in which it feels spacious in a certain way.

Therefore, it evokes something tragic, both through its forms and the use of black ink with extremely strong marks.

The sinuous lines suggest the interiority of elements composing the whole of the interior, as if they were seeking the essence of the formless and impatiently generating transmutations. As could not be otherwise, the strange or that which is out of proportion predominates, only holding an idea of the causes and effects inhabiting the inner self, revolving in a futile search for solace or well-being.

If images possessed forms that existed in the place of metaphors, perhaps there would be less doubt in pointing out what makes our inner selves something in which parts merge, gradually juxtaposing themselves like pieces of a puzzle. But it is anything but that, far from it, deeper and more meandering, raising questions of extraordinary complexity. Is it an idea of how things work, tracing the causes and effects of what organizes us internally? Is it a persistent search for a probable essence, resting in the deepest parts of our being?

Finally, the dust of questions remains on the ground, reverberating its dull ochre color, for this is the color of the earth, of skin, as opposed to blue, which is the color of imagination, of the unattainable, of that which is intangible.

6. UNTITLED (LATEST WORKS, OTHER PAINTINGS)

The series does not deny the memorable impact of Azol's visit to Zé dos Montes' castle. In almost all the works in this series, it is possible to find traces that refer to the arches, ogives, and dark fissures, as if they were openings present in the geometry of this construction, built in the wilderness of the interior. Even so, organized with simple materials, such as cement and lime, it ended up harboring enigmas, because we cannot find answers for all that its elements, inherent to the culture, but woven into an enigmatic warp, due to the way in which the elements that compose it are arranged.

The exercise of capturing the human figure through aesthetics includes not only form, with its lines curving to reveal a drawing, which, in turn, requires geometry and the necessary color palettes. With the palette present, one can judge the intention of the aesthetic record as its final function.

But capturing the human figure also involves inquiring about its essence, relating to the complexion of how the body behaves in space or in interaction with another. I mean the body and its gestures and mannerisms in the act of interacting with others. What do the eyes say? Speech and its tone? The way of entering and leaving a room?

This series by Azol simulates being present in everyday life, although the figures are portrayed frontally or in profile, it does not denote the bustle of a lively conversation. We have already had the opportunity to evoke this being in the world without significant interactions with one's fellow beings. One of the paintings suggests a conversation, without enthusiasm, as if it were syntactic periods full of gaps, leading to something that has no value.

A large part of the series features men surrounded by color, seemingly posing for portraits, with small constructions in simple geometries (we can find compositions reminiscent of Zé dos Montes' Castle: pointed arches, small obelisks, cubes with domes). Interestingly, many frontal or profile portraits are crowned with tiaras or crowns; only a fleur-de-lis evokes royalty.

Another way of presenting his characters is through stylization, which gives them a symbolic character, insofar as they are presented in terms of metaphors extracted by the viewer/reader, given that one thing stands in place of another. This is what metaphorical language means and how it is organized. He never presents it through academic realism or anything similar. That is, he does not present a faithful portrait, caring very little about idealization driven by blatant emotional appeals.

Finally, the crowned figures are enveloped by a hieratic quality that permeates any discourse, remaining still, silent, indifferent to their surroundings. Indeed, in a silence that is deeply mystical, as if they belonged not to our world, measured by a ray, but resided in districts predominantly inhabited by forms inhabited by beings vibrating at other frequencies. Farewell, brothers!

















