

TRABALHO ARITMÉTICA SUGIO OFE WWW - LOGICA DOCURA WWW - RETÓRICA PUREZA MMMM - GRAMATICA - DISTICA



IMAGO AGENS: MEMORY, FORGETFULNESS AND INVENTION

## **ARTWORKS**

Bruna Penna Mibielli

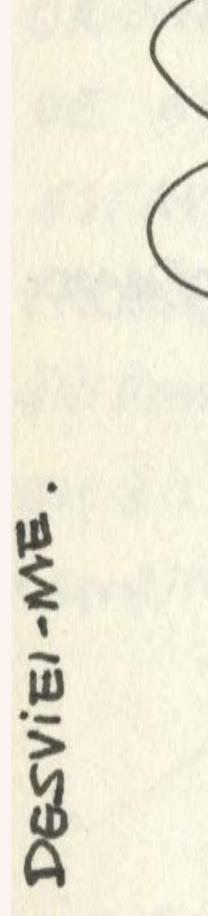
Artworks presented by Bruna Penna Mibielli in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master degree in Arts offered at the *Institut für Medien - Program Visuelle Kommunikation (Schwerpunkt Fotografie*).

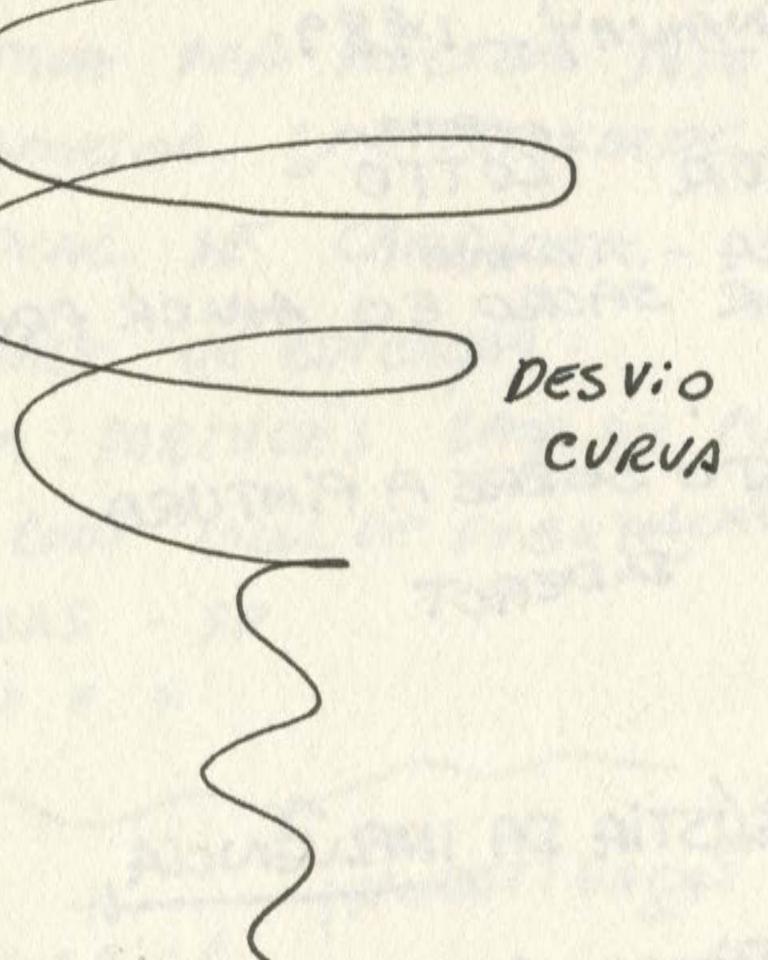
Universität für Künstlerische und Industrielle Gestaltung Kunstuniversität Linz

> Art Supervisor: Univ. Doz. Johannes Wegerbauer Philosophy Supervisor: Dr. Martin Ross



# THE PALACE OF MEMORY





My artistic production is the fruit of many influences concerning memory and the images I've been collecting throughout the years of research and this latest one, as expected, is also born out of – and is transforming itself due to – artistic production. Both perspectives of study – theoretical and practical – feed from one another without a delimitation of what theoretical and artistic product should be. That is why I present, on this second book, a collection including images, notes, drawings, all of which identify a model or a methodology in artistic practice that is not enclosed within the work itself, but rather extrapolates the limits to conquer new territories, to inspire and to structure itself in numerous materials, which can be artistic, poetic, literary, architectural, etc.

Since 2011, I've been searching for cities, as a visitor, where I can find the elements for the construction of my images, architectures and landscapes that would evoke certain places of memory. First, in Brazil, I went to Diamantina, a city of large, smooth stones paving the sidewalks; of large colonial houses with narrow balconies enclosed by baroque grillwork with colored pieces of glass; of country landscapes where grey decayed stones sprout here and there creating walls among vegetation. In the small abandoned town of Biri-Biri, near Diamantina, huge crooked palm trees swing back and forth in the wind. In the old fabric factory, the spool of thread is still in the grimy big black machine; sheds are filled with rags and give off a numbing smell of oil. Still in Minas Gerais, in the warm soil of Três Marias,

runs the large river, the São Francisco one. Its strong currents drive the boat down the river, noonday sun and the muriçoca flies disturbing the peace. In Paraty, Rio de Janeiro, colonial houses face the sea spray, walls made of wattle and daub move up and down following the undulating floor. Mangroves surround the city, the vegetation raising its roots and the water bringing into downtown streets that strong smell. These were the places where I made my first images of my Palace of Memory and where I built, with each stone and tree photographed, the garden that spreads in front of the imaginary architecture.

When I moved to Europe I included in my collection images of many other places I visited, and those kept improving the architecture of my palace. This production points not only to personal fantasies but also to portrayals of western myths, identifying that which is still remembered and things which have actually been forgotten. I perceive the surroundings, the architectures, the allegories, the sculptures and the images presented to society throughout human existence and then I mix them up, while creating my images, to theoretical concepts concerning memory and forgetfulness.

In Aquileia, northern Italy, I found the assumed second biggest city of the Roman Empire, its ruins reaching from down the earth, as if they wanted to expel the new Aquileia from down there. The wonderful temple faces the road where cars run by. Everything seems out of place. It is uncertain whether the temple is emerging in the wrong place or the road is cutting mistakenly the ancient architecture. The magnificent waterway of yore, spread everywhere in the ancient city, is, today, excavated, and while resurfacing to the eyes of contemporary men, it places its labyrinth of stones full of green swamp among the houses in the village, which seems to retreat and contort to shelter the two architectures in one place. Nearby, I visited Udine, filled with statues, statuettes, sculptures, arches, columns,

and whatever can originate from stone. An impressive collection that seems to represent all of the culture from the European civilization spread in just one place. Following way up north, I found inspiring places. I believe my biggest collection was made in Poland, in Kraków and surrounding cities. The walls made of stones and bricks, the Jewish cemeteries where tombstones sink beneath the ground overloaded with collections of little stones left over them by visitors. It was also there that I visited the vast and depressing architectures of the extermination camps. In Austria, I visited the little Hallein, near Salzburg, and the salt factory with wide open windows up and down, staircases that lead from one hall to another confusing the floors amid the hooks hanging from the central span. But it was in Graz – southeast of Austria, where I've lived since 2012 – that I faced my biggest fears, and for that reason the place I least photographed, having only few images of the whispers of loneliness from personal and urban perspectives.

With each column, sculpture, wall or structure photographed, I aimed to build a unique landscape, one that coming from real cities creates in my work imaginary places. I also aimed at creating agent images capable of evoking memories like an open window, images that do not document a specific site, but rather allow the spectator to imagine and to cross to the world of the work, taking along her/his personal imagination and developing her/his own ideas about the presented elements. For this reason, it makes no sense asking where such photographed place is — my images do not depict a specific monument or a certain city. The result, many times, is a mixture of different places.

Photography was the main media to help me build the visual aspect of the works presented in this book. In previous years, I also worked with other techniques, such as painting, serigraphy, sculpting, collage, installations, among others; but for the latest works I had to be in perfect harmony with one technique so as to extract from it the images that were

closest to me, images that would come from my memory. That is why I chose as instruments the two cameras I inherited from my dear grandfather: an Ikonta and an Ikoflex. I have absolutely no idea how they ended up in his hands and, even more incredible, I have never seen a single photo taken by him with any of these cameras. There is nothing left to tell me about the origins of these objects, or the context they were a part of in my mother's side of the family. But as soon as they reached my hands they were a part of me through the close ties from my relationship with my grandfather. I wanted to discover everything through those lenses, as if they were not only an extension of my eyes, but also an emotional extension; as if I were not only able to see differently, but also feel differently while using them.

In the beginning there was in fact a big mystery behind the use of each camera, which attracted me immensely. Since they had not been used for a long time, or maybe not even used at all, I had no idea of what could come out of them. I suppose they might not have been used because I myself never saw my grandfather taking photos and he, as any good collector, might have bought them due to a personal interest and not a functional one. The Ikonta was in the farm, where my grandfather spent his last years. All dusty, it was standing over a 'limping' tripod, its bellows were torn and its lenses filled with fungi, so blurry it was as if it suffered from cataract. The Ikoflex was better preserved. It rested in a wooden shelf in the big living room at the farm, in a leather box with beige velvet fabric protecting her from the inside. Despite the care of its beautiful case, the click button was stuck. So I started restoring them one step at a time, bringing back to life not a perfect new camera, but a unique object, and one that worked while keeping the singularities I found when I inherited it. I sewed Ikonta's bellows from the inside using a very thin black thread, and used a cardboard paper structure glued to the inside of it to block the light that was still penetrating the stitches — that way I recreated the camera obscura and left all the rest as it

was. Ikoflex required being taken to a repair shop in downtown Belo Horizonte, where the old man who used to own the business (having passed it to his son), Mr. Zuza, was hanging around that particular day just to meet other business owners who were old friends. Due to that lucky encounter, I learned from him Due to that lucky encounter, I learned from him how that camera worked, how to load the film and reset the counters, and he helped me clean it and unstuck it, saying emphatically at the end: "This is a German camera, young girl, you have to do everything correctly from beginning to end, or else it gets stuck and nothing will work." So I grabbed a notepad and took notes of all instructions. As I used it, I found that it still needed some polishing in the film rollers, and that was all I did.

What fascinates me the most about the Ikonta is the possibility of multiple exposures, and the soft and granulated images that the lens with fungi along with the effect of the film produce. I also like the fact that it is too old and nobody thinks it actually works, so there is an inherent discretion to its use. And the blurry contours the images carry because of the improvised cardboard paper structure I inserted inside it. When it comes to the Ikoflex, I like the square images with harsh aspect, which are at the same time hugely deep due to the optical quality. The blurs provoked by the open diaphragm are beautiful, bringing a multiplicity of balls that juxtapose creating an infinite chaos, and there are also vertical gusts made by the rusty rollers and the dark yet soft shades of black.

Two heavy full-bodied fading-black cameras, which touch my body near my stomach to show me with their blurred lenses the world around me; which introduced me to unknown places, intensified the beauty of certain architectures and softened the fear in face of bleak, horrible sites; and which made me build images of ethereal, cloudy and evanescent atmosphere.

But even with the intimate connection between these two cameras and me, I could have never given up the digital one, nor the pencil, the ink or the collage. For each image I used the tool and the technique that the image demanded, and that is why the series presented here must be seen individually, as complexes irradiating parts of a certain place inside the Palace of Memory. Most images present, nevertheless, one element in common: multiple layers. It is that which propels them into the movements of time, going towards the past in the memory of each person and bringing it back to the present — this juxtaposition frees images from reality, allowing interpretation to become loose, flexible and mysterious. Even though that is a common element in many photographs, it is not a rule throughout all series, since at times I had to define some contours and shapes better to open the spaces of my thoughts.

Finally, I encourage you, reader, to enter this Palace of Memory and see, feel and penetrate these rooms, gardens and temples as if they were created by your own imagination. Let your images come from the past to inhabit these places, assume that those are the columns you saw somewhere, a known place or a common one, of which you barely recall, or one you think you recall vividly. It doesn't matter — with the collection I present here, invent the places you would like to have been to.

MAGNO ANTIAE PESQUISAR TUE RETORICA FORENCE

**Emblems** is an artwork inspired on Andrea Alciati's book of emblems. An Emblem is a work divided in three parts: title, image and text. In this work, the photographs construct new emblems to the contemporary civilization. The text is neither a moral definition nor a description of the elements you could find on it, like it used to be in Alciati's work as well as in Caesar Ripa's emblems, but it is more poetical, conducting the reader through an imaginary trip to the emblems of humanity, architecture, civilization and time.

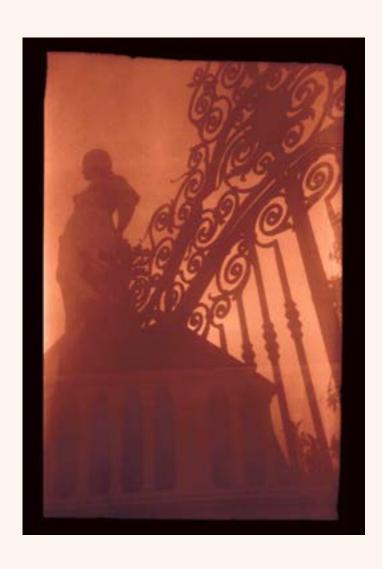
Details: Analogue photography Digital print on Acryl

Format: 45x30

## **Emblems of Humanity**

I enter the temple. Sumptuous and monumental. I stay a few moments looking at the images which surround me. I contemplate them with devotion. Were these great heroes from history or mythology? They walk above me and point their rigid fingers to the sky. They seem to announce some kind of truth and I believe without hesitation.









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## **Emblems of Architecture**

I walk over stones of the past. They were sleeping quietly until they reborn in front of the eyes of the crowd. I get lost in the endless labyrinth and my feet get wet. With difficulty I drag the humid vegetation and proceed. The city was sunk by time and now raises its aqueducts and its river Lethe of forgetfulness.







## **Emblems of Civilization**

On a trip to an unknown place one can find many wonders. The man built many of them. He constructed and deconstructed. As soon as I entered through the arches I came across a theatre and I made my last performance on the stage. The cities are all imaginary and are located in a special place: the memory.

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## **Emblems of Time**

The sand slips through my hands and I realize its roughness and heat at my already cold skin. The melancholy takes my spirit. At this place rest the silent rocks and the grass grows wild. It is an oblivion place, where I feel the relief of not having to remember.











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**Transeuntes** (Passersby). Movements in every new instant. Overlapping between real and imaginary world. In the photos you see the residue of the city, of the people and their path. The present is confused with the past between the layers, and the result is a moment that nobody lived or saw. Therefore this is a creation, constructed in the reality but travelling through time to find its elements. Transeuntes is an artwork that involves time. It is related to the studies of memory because these photographs try to put past and present together into the same frame. "Estimating time lapses. Remembering involves estimating time lapses. Different time lapses, like different spatial magnitudes, are represented by differing small scale models in one's thought." (Aristotle in *De memoria et Reminiscentia*).

Details: Analogue Photography Digital print on Alu-Dibond

Format: 70x50

## Residue

## (Carlos Drummond de Andrade)

From everything a little remained. From my fear. From your disgust. From stifled cries. From the rose a little remained.

A little remained of light caught inside the hat.
In the eyes of the pimp a little remained of tenderness, very little.

A little remained of the dust that covered your white shoes. Of your clothes a little remained, a few velvet rags, very very few.





From everything a little remained. From the bombed-out bridge, from the two blades of grass, from the empty pack of cigarettes a little remained.

So from everything a little remains. A little remains of your chin in the chin of your daughter.

A little remained of your blunt silence, a little in the angry wall, in the mute rising leaves.

A little remained from everything in porcelain saucers, in the broken dragon, in the white flowers, in the creases of your brow, in the portrait.



Since from everything a little remains, why won't a little of me remain? In the train travelling north, in the ship, in newspaper ads, why not a little of me in London, a little of me somewhere? In a consonant? In a well?

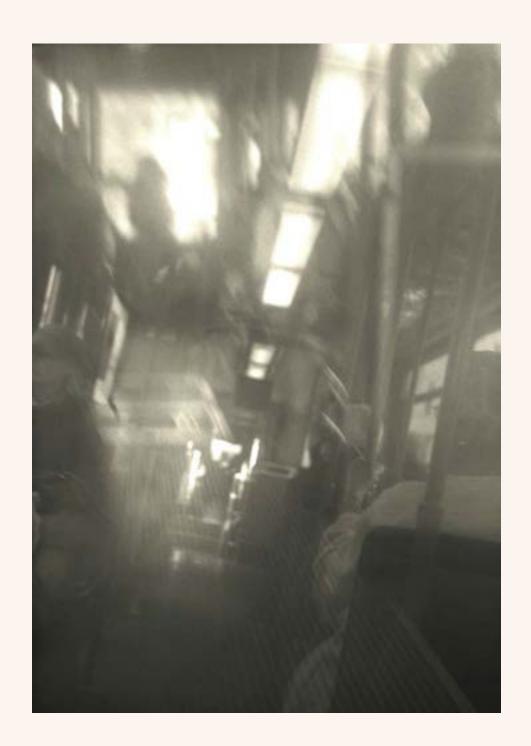


A little remains dangling in the mouths of rivers, just a little, and the fish don't avoid it, which is very unusual.

From everything a little remains. Not much: this absurd drop dripping from the faucet, half salt and half alcohol, this frog leg jumping, this watch crystal broken into a thousand wishes, this swan's neck, this childhood secret... From everything a little remained: from me; from you; from Abelard. Hair on my sleeve, from everything a little remained; wind in my ears, burbing, rumbling from an upset stomach, and small artifacts: bell jar, honeycomb, revolver cartridge, aspirin tablet.

From everything a little remained.





Oh, open the bottles of lotion and smoother the cruel, unbearable odor of memory.





Still, horribly, from everything a little remains, under the rhythmic waves under the clouds and the wind under the bridges and under the tunnels under the flames and under the sarcasm under the phlegm and under the vomit under the cry from the dungeon, the guy they forgot under the spectacle and under the scarlet death under the libraries, asylums, victorious churches under yourself and under your feet already hard under the ties of family, the ties of class, from everything a little always remains.

Sometimes a button. Sometimes a rat.

JANVENGAS JNUEN WONE INVENTARIO A JAKENGST E OF PRITCHE

**Open Place** series intends to be the gears of *machina memorialis* or a passage to a place where the remembrances live and are stored. They are open, like the title says, to the imaginary of the beholder, as gates to a place where it is possible to remember, to forget and to invent. "Those wishing to reminisce (i.e. wishing to do something more spiritual and intellectual than merely to remember) withdraw from the public light into obscure privacy: because in the public light the images of sensible things (*sensibilia*) are scattered and their movement is confused. In obscurity, however, they are unified and are moved in order." (Alberto Magno, in Yates)

Details: Analogue Photography
Digital print

Format: 130x194





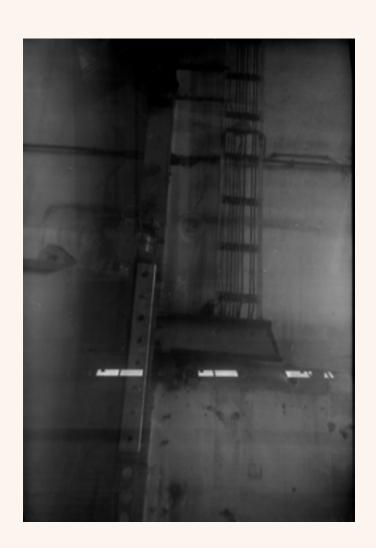












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À Sombra (In Shadow) is related to the dark areas of our mind and memory. The overlapping texts and drawings made by the people who lived in this place and by the relatives and others who have been there all over the years are, for me, the presence of time in layers, memory in each signature, almost vanishing like a palimpsest. This site is also related to forgetfulness. The marks left by so many who have been there are silent and sad screams. There is no other place in the world that is more related to forgetfulness than this one. The railway has its end in the middle of the field. This is the end of the line.

Details: Digital photography
Digital print on Acryl Format: 75x50













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**Place of Oblivion.** Following the hints given by architecture one will find this location, constructed to vanish with memories, to force people to forget and to lead culture into oblivion. If one has in memory a place where forgetfulness takes place, it probably looks like this one. Dark and full of shadows that veils remembrances.

Details: Mixed technique

Fine Art print Format: 130x90





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