

Brishty Alam

Parallel Art Fair

2019

We are driving up towards the hills in the north-eastern part of São Paulo state. My paperback calendar shows the year 1974. It takes us quite a while to reach the border of the city, as São Paulo just developed into a bustling metropolis during the last four decades. We want to escape the city for a while to visit a friend's place in São Francisco Xavier, about 150 kilometres away. It is the mid of Brazilian summer and the air around us is hot and sweaty. We hope time will pass quickly during our ride in the packed local buses.

Half a day later we finally arrive. The surrounding area is characterised by extensive cattle grazing; yellow rolling hills as far as the eye can see. Our friend is already awaiting us in front of his inn – Pouso do Rochedo – approaching us with a big smile. We are excited to meet him again after quite a while. He has become pretty restless lately, as he just bought the land here. I can feel his vivid memories when he talks about the forests, springs and waterfalls once characterising the area. It was only some months ago that he had moved back to the countryside, to work on his vision to reforest the property. Extensive agricultural use dried out the region, diminishing all his memories. His hope is that the trees will bring the water back; a mammoth project and a real-scale experiment.

Forty-three years later the motto on the Brazilian flag – *ordem e progresso* – has lost the shine of its allure. The claim of innocence that drove modernism turned out to lose credibility. Science as a persuasive utopian force reached a limit in its attempt to detach from material and nature. Brazilian forests were transformed into agricultural land, turning the climate hot and dry. It reminds me of something I heard a while ago: *If you come to the willow tree in the summer you feel rain.*

Water molecules dispersed in the air, evaporating from the leaves of the surrounding trees. A delightful, cultivated oasis that Brishty Alam selects as a stage to perform a ball-and-stick model of a water molecule. The spheres limit her sight and touch, making movements on the irregular terrain of the Brazilian rainforest a rather difficult task. Trapped between her bodily movements and the model movements, her *mise-en-scène* tells manifold stories, comprising not only individual experience and scientific measurements, but also the intertwining of institutionalised historiography with fictional apparatuses.

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Brishty Alam's sculptures, 'Variations of white solids', appear rather introverted, releasing speculations of internalised processes. The shapes provoke bodily associations, occupying a space in-between a humanoid and an architectural capacity. Flasks that are part of bigger apparatuses, containing liquids involved in a constant metabolism. Like the urban plan of Le Corbusier's Chandigharh they seem to be artefacts of a pulsating modern organism, giving the whole exhibition the ambivalence of incorporated exclusion.

by Jakob Rockenschaub

Excerpts from exhibition text '*Formed into a soft mass*', by Brishty Alam & Matthew Verdon, 2018, *Foundation*, Vienna.

www.brishtyalam.com