

« A Ausência (The Absence) » by Jacques Benoit

At the end of 2012, I was listening almost exclusively to the musician and jazz singer Melody Gardot's «The Absence» album.

Her music accompanied me when Oscar Niemeyer passed away. Except for the very day when the architect said goodbye to this world, that is when «Nenia», by Italian jazzman and trumpeter Paolo Fresu, played in my home. Rarely, some music's soul ever matched so perfectly the circumstances.

To me, the death of Oscar Niemeyer gave birth to a polyptych. Gardot's music was the backdrop for this birth. Gardot tinged the compositions of «The Absence» with the colors of Portugal and Brazil. It is probably by pure chance that the paintings evoking Niemeyer's disappearance came to my mind as Gardot's «Lisboa» was flowing in my ears. Pure chance, again, that «Lisboa» happened to be a love song addressed to the capital of a country which approached the shores of a new world once, this world becoming Brazil then, the capital of which later becoming Brasilia. Undoubtedly it has to be by pure chance that this love song for the capital of Portugal inspired some paintings dedicated to the capital of Brazil and its architect. Pure chance again that «Lisboa» begins under some church bells' sound - some cathedral's? Finally, it has to be only by pure chance that the last brush strokes to «A Ausência (The Absence)» were given when the last notes and words of the last track «Iemanjá» in Gardot's album played :
«I wanted to stay, I gotta go, but I'm coming back one day «

I do not know if Oscar Niemeyer will be coming back one day. But anyway, in order to get back, you primarily have to be gone. Just look at his œuvre, everywhere.

He never really left us.

Excerpt of the text related to the polyptych «A Ausência (The Absence)»

Brasilia has already been orphaned twice, when Juscelino Kubitschek, then Lúcio Costa had left her. And last year in 2012, before Christmas, ten days ahead of his hundred and five years birthday, it was the turn of the architect with a child's sad smile to part company to the city. Since then, Ceschiatti's angels in the cathedral cry.

He had written on a wall in his studio in Copacabana, with this writing of his that was a pure drawing and would become a work of art whenever he would hold a pen : «Life is more important than architecture.» Indeed, life brings us friendship and love. He said: «I'm not providing to others the architecture that they expect from me, I make the one that I like.» Too bad for those who don't -who cares! What a lesson.

Of all these works, and of all these moments that I spent painting Brasilia, which should I now remember, if not above all paying credit to the architect with a child's sad smile ? Life is more important than architecture, and more important than painting –of course it is.

And you, Oscar Niemeyer the master architect, when you left us, I did as the angels did in this cathedral that you created in the heart of Brazil. And today, master architect, you do inhabit this painting. I know you are there, for sure. I believe in fact that you just went away on a trip, a journey towards the Dawn, that will not end.

So, whenever I think of you, it is not of your departure.

It is only of your absence.