

## CLAIRE DE SANTA COLOMA

Guia prático para fazer uma escultura  
básica de madeira

*Practical guide for making a basic wood sculpture*  
24 JAN – 15 MAR 2014

Tocar no que se vê *Touch what you see*

The artist that chops wood, hits the metal, moulds the clay, carves the stone block, make us revive the past of an old man, without whom we would not exist "

Henri Focillon, *Elogio da Mão* 1

Instructions : Before you read this, and before seeing this exhibition, have a look at the sculptures of Brancusi. They talk about the essential importance of the actions made by hand on a material and question the importance of the plinth or pedestal in their relationship with the public. Then if you can, without anyone seeing - as is not allowed to touch works of art, try / risk touching what you see.

Inside the gallery: 12 wooden sculptures of different shapes, carved from logs or different qualities of wood; walnut, holmoak ... arranged on plinths reinstated, in different sizes, with different heights, constitute an intriguing composition on making sculpture. On a shelf, a manual written by the artist - *Practical guide for making a basic wood sculpture* - systemizes a working process that, in a utopian and essential way, makes accessible to anyone who wants to make a sculpture, in the logic of a culture or project-oriented way of thinking. Here, in this context, *wanting* and *doing* are key words. Exposing her personal experiences, weaknesses and way of overcoming different obstacles, Claire de Santa Coloma seeks to demonstrate that ideally what we seek is not for sale, is not to be traded, and that art can result from a situation that depends from what exists naturally in nature, from the personal relationships we have, our body, the natural light, the basic tools, and above all, of our ancient desire to *do* (faber *lat.*), to form matter, respecting or searching until one reaches their fundamental node, to a place of primordial knowledge : Look at the branches of a tree, undress the tree. As realized, in the writings by Maria Gabriela Llansol, "*what is splendidous, around the tree, is its formlessness*"<sup>2</sup>. We know that life forms are interwoven. "*At the base of the wood internalizes a node, an egg, that will eventually be a town on my horizon*"<sup>3</sup>.

In the studio: With an exhibition proposal, overall, subtly ironic, about the system of production and circulation of art; what we see in each of these sculptures, presented in a curious device and theoretical framework, is the virtuous effect of the hands of an artist on wood, underlining, critically, the essence of sculpture: surface and depth, distortion, volume, space ... Configuring a discourse that is based on a methodical and obsessive essential practice. For the art historian, Henri Focillon, author of one of the most important papers on life forms<sup>4</sup>, "*on an artist's workshop, are evident everywhere attempts, experiences, intuitions of hand, secular memories a human*

*race that has not forgotten the privilege to handle*"<sup>5</sup>. In several visits to the studio of Claire de Santa Coloma, in recent years, I have realized that consciousness is taking shape, perhaps because "*without providing a form, nothing exists to me?*"<sup>6</sup> Or because "*form is to humanize?*"

On her investment, very physical, on the material - on the wood, in this case - while respecting its inconsistencies, irregularities or idiosyncrasies, exploring the disasters of the hand, emphasizes the erotic dimension of the artwork. How? Now the erotic activity in view of Bataille, would be over and above all, an exuberance of life: his field would be essentially that of violence and rape<sup>7</sup>. Note that these sculptures by Claire de Santa Coloma try to reach in the material their own intimacy, through an action involving the repeated cut of a tool, by hand of the artist, on the body of the same matter. However, for Bataille, the entire operation of eroticism is to order the dissolution of the self and reach ones innermost point. By discontinuing it? What is at stake in eroticism would be then, the dissolution of forms. But as the French essayist recalls, in eroticism, life is discontinued not condemned to disappear. That is, life is only questioned should it be disturbed or possibly altered. So there is, in the work of Claire de Santa Coloma, and with this expository essay, a search for continuity, a willingness to enter, in a world founded on discontinuity, all the continuity that this world is capable, as Bataille refers to in his essay on the subject. By working time "I set out to make hand carved sculptures as a way of working time; as an act of resistance"<sup>8</sup> - the works by Claire de Santa Coloma create therefore, constant fissures that show us in an uncertain realm, which is neither space nor reason.

Conclusion: We can only wonder what no one seems to ask: This work, this experience, this sculptural essay are, after all, about what?

In response, the phrase by Maria Gabriela Llansol: "*We speak the conceptual bias of certain trees because we believe that there are trees that act mentally. The thought is not the reasoning, it is a bundle of reflections, feelings and visions which are linked together and lead to the path here*"<sup>9</sup>

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1 FOCILLON, Henri, "Elogio da Mão", in *A Vida das Formas*, Edições 70, Lisbon, 2001, p. 117  
2 Llansol, Maria Gabriela, *Um beijo dado mais tarde* - A late kiss, Rolim Edições, Lisbon, 1991, p. 69  
3 ids, Ibidem, p. 81  
4 FOCILLON, Henri, *A Vida das Formas*, Edições 70, Lisbon, 2001

5 ids, Ibidem, p. 117  
6 LISPECTOR, Clarice, *A Paixão segundo G.H.* - The passion according to G.H., Relógio d'Água, Lisbon, 2013, p. 11  
7 see: BATAILLE, Georges, *El Erotismo* - Eroticism, Tusquets, Barcelona, 2007  
8 SANTA COLOMA, Claire de, *Guia Prática Para Hacer Una Escultura Básica de Madera - Practical guide for making a basic wood sculpture*, 2014  
9 Llansol, Maria Gabriela, *Um Falcão no Punho* - A Hawk in the fist, Relógio d'Água, 1998, p. 39