

holding nothing

1.

I asked a photographer: “Take my portrait holding nothing”. She did. Then I asked another photographer to look into that image and to produce another image, without knowing the initial request. Then I asked a third one to react to the second, and so on until the sixth photographer.

At the end there was something.

Portraits are only good if they capture something that is absent.

The pinhole camera was the precursor to the camera obscura, first mentioned in the writings by the Chinese philosopher Mo Ti (470 BCE to 390 BCE). He referred to it as the “locked treasure room”.

Each text is a photograph. The library is full of treasures.

2.

Last week, after I finished to perform the “Rites of Augury” at the Swedenborg Society, still a bit trembling with the live music of the Japanese band Bo Ningen, I walked barefoot outside to smoke a rollie.

There was another man, rolling also a rollie. He hesitated to speak with me, but when I offered him my lighter, he said:

-I have enjoyed what I have just watched. I am studying esoteric sciences and everything has come together in this performance. But I don't want to interrupt you.

-No problem. I am Indeed just slowly coming back from it. -I answered.

-Are you portuguese? Do you know Fernando Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet*? – Every time someone associates Portugal with the poet Pessoa instead of the football player Ronaldo, it's the beginning of a good conversation.

-Yes, not only I know Pessoa, but somehow he guided me out, since I came from a really small place.

-“My head and the universe ache me.”-he quoted.

-Yes, exactly.

3.

It's 10:20 am in Brighton and 5:20 am in New York. To keep this difference in time, our hearts move within the same distance.

4.

Some years ago, I was an apprentice of performance, trying to unravel the secrets of composition in space. I was working on “Dimmemory”, based on a short story of Jorge Luis Borges “Funes the Memorious”, about a blind man that remembered everything in such details, that in order to retell what happened in a day he would take the duration of a day. The idea for the performance was how to turn a single compressed action (space, text, sound, light, and embodiment) into a single performance image. The action was the making of a paper box, repeated *ad eternum*. The sound, paper folding and falling.

There was a chair and a mountain of boxes, made with A4 sheets of white paper. I worked on the choreography that resembled a man lost in an infinite archive of memories. Weeks later, I had a score of movements that was based on this sense of loss amongst this same archive. But something felt rather artificial and forced. A blind man dancing in the darkness amongst his memories? The evening before the performance I had realized that the man was still and in his stillness the universe was dancing with his voice. Therefore, I remained sitting.

5.

Qin Shi Huan was the Chinese king that built the first version of the Great Wall of China. In his time he decreed the burning of books that had mentioned the reigns of the past. He wanted to start his Empire from nothing, making himself *the first* (Shi) from a new era. He attempted to erase the past and simultaneously to create the biggest sculpture for an unforeseen future. Some people said he just wanted to be immortal, by dealing with the nothingness that lies behind destroying and creating.

6.

The understanding of *Nothing, void, nothingness, no-being, mu or nada* has been a central theme in western philosophy (from Parmenides, passing through Aristotle, Newton, Hegel and Heidegger), eastern schools of thought and quantum physics. You can lose yourself in the library of thought, deciphering books. On another other day I saw Borges and Pessoa rooming around in the chambers of this library. Without speaking they were mumbling, doing gestures that seemed like they were writing in circles. The library was slowly moving in the dark. As they were laughing, something happened. The pages of the infinite number of books had only mirrors, and reflected in them was the universe, uncapturable.

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Bruno Humberto