

RIVET

Surface Density

Sculptures—so the Thinker, Lady Liberty, or the Cristo on the Corcovado tell us—deal with volume and scale, with a three-dimensional reality, with space for the sculptural object to breathe and for my own perceiving, ambulant body to make sense of things.

Density describes the relationship between a substance's mass and its perceived volume. In essence, it has to do with atoms, with their size and arrangement. That also means that a thing can weigh less or more than it appears. Adjectives like dense, thick, opaque or smoggy are often used to describe the atmosphere of a particular place. They suggest that there is actually more than the eye can see. Visually lost, we breathe the deepness of the invisible—are we taking a risk? A cocktail of adrenaline and excitement. Feeling and touching the density of the atmosphere is to be aware of the present.

Now imagine a sculpture in a tropical forest, where there is no 'breathing space' to walk around a particular thing, to acquire visual perspective, or even more, for clear-cut object-subject relations to unfold. This environment forces its dense surface onto the eyes, making the sculpture melt into a lush wall. At best, my eyes can climb and descend, but not walk around, or through. For all I know, ants are crawling on me, like I am a surface to be explored. If I want to see and read the way I did outside of the forest, it will require intense physical exercise, leading me to a point of angry exhaustion. There's a need for another grammar.

Surfaces allow for touching, for being touched, for sensing and being sensed. A surface is therefore a space of knowing. On the exterior of things, the surface is the outer face and an area that can explore, read, translate. It is always at hand. A surface is, in that most literal sense, superficial. But there's more to it than mere appearances: a surface has to do with contours, skins, borders and frontiers. It defines the interaction, engagement with and understanding of the environment.

‘Sculpture’, in this system, is the sunlight that suddenly pierces through the foliage, or it is a metal cable forcefully strung between two trees by a land measurer (or film maker) —Bicho de nariz delicado (2013) or 16mm (2009-2011). Or maybe the sculpture is the dirt road. In this ecosystem, the forms and movements known from drawing support seeing.

Or maybe the discarded woven basket along that road is the sculpture. That basket left alone is my key. It was used by fishermen last night. It’s an object that exists thanks to two perpendicular vectors coming together and forming a tight surface, strong and dense enough to keep the fish trapped, but just porous enough to let the excess water out. During its short usage, the basket is optimized, mobile technology; afterwards, it’s mostly a fascinating topographical fact.

The metal monochrome curtains (‘ (2014) and ~ (2013), each with a doodle-like gateway, and Kiti Ka’aeté (2011), a double-sided collage with 7 crisp diagonal slits, depart from the topography of such baskets: there is a density of interlinking elements that gives the impression of solidity. But their translucent character betrays any sense of mass. Light waves can make a way through, while our seeing bodies are inhibited because they can’t move in their default circumferential manner to perceive the thing in the environment. We must engage in a mental exercise to create the object based on negative space, and on the information that the light gives us. We operate like photographic film or scanners. From the confrontation with an overall object, we go to a flat concept striving to distinguish part from whole/object from field, and then again to the object, now an aggregate of singularities. It feels like trying to see the actual raindrop in a rainstorm.

‘Surface density’ might sound paradoxical. The whole of the body navigates through this space, the surface density is exactly that moment where the I and the rest meet. It starts on the floor and finishes above the eye level. In my case around 1.54 meters high, in your case probably higher. Imagine a city where plants, trees, and fruits grow from below and above. Imagine the tasteless light. The ice-cold beer tastes better than water. Imagine that banana you like and

have eaten all your life, and that tastes more intense than ever. Imagine that you see a sunset in the same place and since it is in fact never the same, the emotions are different each time around. Imagine Rio de Janeiro. This sunset, banana, beer, light is Rio de Janeiro's surface density. Knowing that you have it all, there with you in that moment, but that minutes, maybe hours, later it will probably disappear.

Works like Systemic Grid #22 and #23 (2014), metal floor pieces that bring to mind a woven pattern or an aleatory, reconfigured geometry, do the inverse: they let us see a puzzle of a flattened jungle or basket from above. This time, we can walk around them, and we're inclined to make a drawing of the suggested pathways, but now it's our eyes wanting to move more, walking over the terrain like the phasmid on the cover of *Animal That Doesn't Exist*.

A branch, a walker, a drawing, a book: all collapse into a placid rectangle, like a hologram waiting for a set of animating eyes—*Holograms* (2013).