

## A PRENSAR É QUE A GENTE SE ENTENDE

2/10

### *In loving memory of the pearl diver*

It is essential, sometimes, to explain artistic creation, especially when the Asian and Western cultures have been crossed. My passage in Japan, for one year, provoked such a deep influence that, for some reason, it is difficult *to get rid of* completely, if it is a question *to get rid of* or *if I have to get rid of*. In fact, cultural influences are not something that we *can get rid of* like smells, people, computer problems and anything else you can think. Not only for this reason, but for other millions of reasons, some of them I cannot even explain or consciously understand, I have decided to continue on traveling. I have decided to continue on absorbing other cultures. Also for this reason I have decided to write this little essay in English, to be understandable by a bigger range of people in the world, considering that this language is *almost so-called* universal. As a Portuguese woman, I have been caring a cultural background which makes me proud of being Portuguese. It is not a question of Nationality feeling, but as a personality which carries inside some special symbolic characteristics such as adventure feelings, risk-taking, explorer curiosity, somehow romantic, somehow dreamer, somehow tragic, somehow sad, somehow exotic and as a consequence, a solitaire traveler.

Through poets and writers I also find inspiration, as well as a written explanation about mental and physical states which sometimes I cannot express it with words, but with visual language, such as lines, colors and graphic visual images, in particular through Printmaking. Although this turns out to be my main way of expressing the above cited *matters*, the techniques explored (Sculpture, Painting, Photography, Video...) will always depend on the available materials, as well as the real human and economical possibilities to create them.

When I have decided to apply for this challenge project “A prensar é que a gente se entende”, I was inspired, at first, by a passage from Jorge Luís Borges (1998) “I cannot walk through the suburbs in the solitude of the night without thinking that the night pleases us because it suppresses idle details, just has our memory does”. Memory, dreams and people that I have met in traveling were and still are my main focus. As soon as I have started to deal with the materials...while totally forgetting the conditions of the paper measures (25x25cm); I have started to print in a compulsive mode, images related with people...and also aspirations that that people were reflecting through themselves. In that images, are included dreams, memories.

After 2 weeks of part-time work in the Grafiikkan Paja (Jyväskylä, Finland), and after 220 passages with the silkscreen squeegee on 55 papers...I realized that the measures were totally wrong, I mean, there were different from the ones that were asked to the

project. This is that kind of happening that is really normal when our mind is thinking in so many things at the same time (maybe aging can be also an excuse for misbehaviour?)

After this, I had another idea, an image configured somehow in my mind and suddenly started to research and work on it. Again, almost impossible task to do: An edition of 55 prints, all the same...with 3 different layers of colors (this means 165 prints – mixed media).

For the first layer, linoleum was printed out in Japanese paper. The used motives are representing abstract and stylized image from the ocean and/or clouds, initially created by Japanese artists and later used in *Kimonos*, as decorative patterns. For the second layer, I have made an etching and aquatint of a Japanese cherry blossom flower detail, named by Japanese *Sakura*, representing somehow, the coming of the Spring and my passage in Japan...as well as evoking traditional Japanese painting. In the last layer, I used the same technique. In this plate, I have decided to interpret a detail from a Japanese *Ukiyo-e*, the artistic movement that was represented by *Shunga* prints (a form of erotic Art), initially made by an important Japanese Printmaker called *Hokusai*.

It is not my intention to direct the interpretation of this Edition (55 prints titled *In the loving memory of the pearl diver*) to the following brief historical interpretation of its original print. It also should be noticed that probably, the Edition will be seen mostly without an associated text, which I am also aware of. Although, I consider important to explain *what may be* behind of it, in behalf of the project: *A prensar é que a gente se entende*, Prensador Editions (a result of a collaborative project involving 10 international young Printmakers in the beginning of their artistic careers, in the present year 2011), its interpretation should be left open.

### ***Brief history of Shunga***

The meaning of *Shunga* prints is related with the old Japanese way of representing a simple *joyful union of the sexes* (Rawson, 1968. p. 283), in direct opposition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century western *view* and moral stigma attached to these kind of images representing explicit sex. *Shunga* prints arose already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and are referred has a union of science and art, where conjugal compatibility seem to be also related with *natural or divination-like forces*. They reflected somehow the cultural taste and manners at the time. (Lenehan-White, 2003) During the Edo period, these prints were supported by the middle class, which was *open* to the recreational aspects of sex and contributed for the spreading of erotic literature and art, making it even fashionable. Among these images, there were represented women associated with sea creatures and that's where we can find the history of the *Tako to ama* Hokusai's print.

### **Brief history of *Tako to ama***

These kind of *Spring Pictures and Pictures of the Floating World* (Lenehan-White, 2003), were related with erotic images. They belong to a three-volume collection first published in 1814, during the Edo Period (1600-1868) and named as *Kinoe no Komatsu*. The interpretation of this specific print, originally an untitled woodcut, is known as (蛸と海女) *Tako to ama*. The meaning of *Tako* is octopus and *ama*, a shell diver. However, it has been translated in many different ways such as *The dream of the Fisherman's wife, Girl diver and Octopi, Diver and Two Octop*, among other interpretations of the Japanese language.

In the minds of contemporary scholars, the story behind the image is known as the Princess *Tamatori* tale. It explains the adventure of a modest shell diver who marries with the emperor *Fujiwara no Fuhito* (Edo Period), who is searching for a pearl that has been stolen by the Dragon God of the Sea *Ryūjin* in his underwater Palace. The Princess sacrifices her life by diving to the underwater palace, but the *Ryūjin's* army of sea creatures, including octopuses, pursued her. It should be noticed that scholars also interpreted this image without connecting it to the text in its original print. In this particular case, one of the multiple layers applied was exactly the explanation of the dialogue between the octopus and the shell diver, expressing their mutual sexual pleasure and that *the big octopus says he will bring the girl to Ryūjin's undersea palace, strengthening the connection to the Tamatori legend*. While she tries to swim faster and escape, she cuts and opens her own breast, placing the pearl inside, but soon dies after reaching the surface. (Talerico, 2001)

Jyväskylä, 03 of March, 2011.

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Fig.1. *In the loving memory of the pearl diver*, A.P. (artist proof) IV/VII, 2011.  
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