

Uninhabiting

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“I exist in life with only one condition that *I see*”, wrote Le Corbusier. The architect conceived of the horizontal window as a structuring element in his projects. Inhabitants would thus be constituted by this very limit, in that it alienates them from nature while simultaneously framing the latter and referring it back to vision. In this scenario, inhabiting follows from viewing. It is no coincidence then that Ana Holck’s work *Fuga* (2004) intervened on the window of a major monument of the Corbusian tradition, the Palácio Gustavo Capanema, in Rio de Janeiro. Assorted patches of vinyl film were applied onto a horizontal window, punctuating it with different levels of opacity. An evidence of how much Holck’s spatial coordinates unfold within the tension between covering and revealing, obstructing and making way.

In *Bastidor*, Holck continues to address the sculptural potential of a familiar part of the Rio de Janeiro urban landscape, the hexagonal paving block. But the autonomy of the sculptural object, which marked some of her recent works, is now exceeded as she returns to her earlier concern with the way the occupation of space can be derived from a formal dialogue with its limits.

Holck’s move is threefold. The starting point is a simple displacement: the unearthed block has its massive and surprising physical presence materially reaffirmed by the weight and the opacity of concrete. But the repetition of its hexagonal form in alveolar polycarbonate immediately upsets this state of things – the material is now light and translucent. It forms a screen that cuts through the room, demarcating our potential trajectory. But this screen is also punctured by the absence of numerous hexagons, which heightens the discrepancy between visual access and bodily obstruction. By the same token, the participation of light and shadow in the formal configuration of the work becomes evident. We walk the fine line between a solid sculptural presence and its disintegration. Vision is rendered uncertain, signaling our failure to fully inhabit it; a feeling of self-estrangement settles in.

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