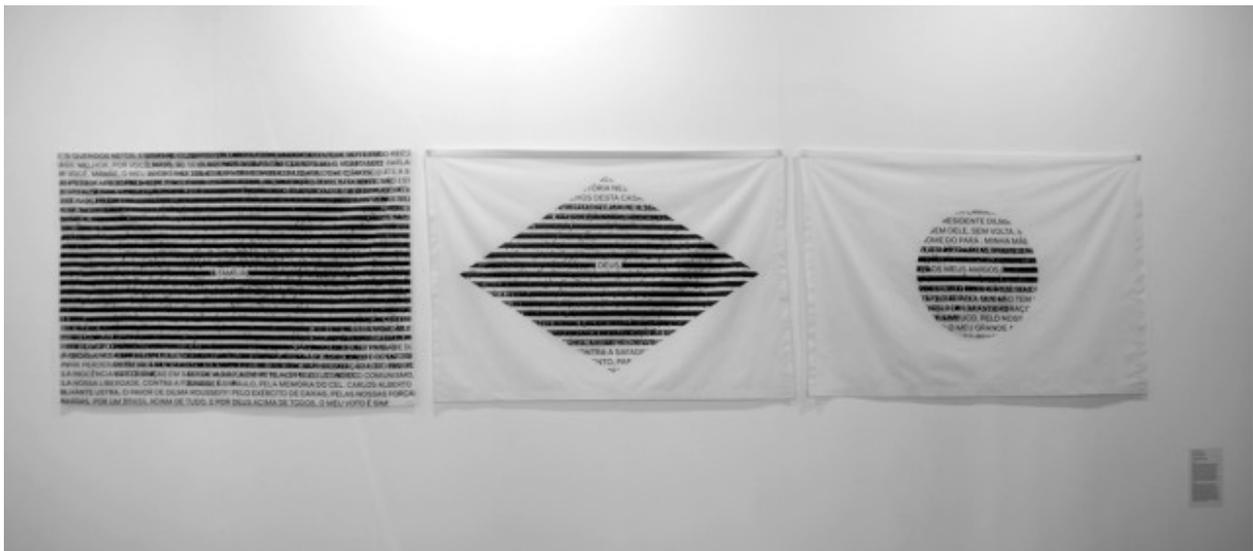


Notes on *A República* by Marilá Dardot (2016)

Three rectangular cotton fabrics, one different spot of black text on each, three different shapes. The materials used by Marilá Dardot on her *Republic* (2016) are strikingly simple in their materiality, leading an untrained political eye to simply witness the beauty of three formal elements side by side, in the spirit of the minimalist aesthetics often pointed both as a compliment and insult towards certain works of contemporary art.



A closer look demands that the viewer attempts to read the words written into the shapes. “*Residente Dilma*”, “*sem volta*”, “*minha mãe*”, “*os meus amigos*” among others, spaced by other expressions, unreadable due to the black ink that saturates them or to a high number of other words that are juxtaposed. The texts allude to an oral production done using the first person: they are excerpts of the speeches that were pronounced during the impeachment process of Dilma Roussef, motivated by an alliance of powers scandalized by the socialist and modernizing policies that the President was leading¹. They are defined through the use of possessive pronouns: it is not about the country, but rather the little lives and egos of the 513 deputies that lead to the impeachment of Dilma Roussef, in their egotistical and absurd use of any argument to justify their vote and make themselves shine on the spotlight of one of the most watched moments of Brazilian television. Dardot’s work registers a grief, that of a country in which an democratic elected President was taken down without any jurisdictional process but rather by a cloudy trilogy of opposing, demagogic, superficial, ambiguous and effective arguments: “God”, “Family” and “My Friends”.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/aug/31/dilma-rousseff-impeachment-brazil-what-you-need-to-know>

Dardot creates a powerful visual decomposition of the Brazilian flag into its most basic shapes, producing colorless tissues unable to come together and produce a flag, much like a country that is undergoing a crisis beyond apparent remedy. The speeches that were delivered by the 513 members of the house of Deputies work as a set of comebacks of the most backward forces against democracy: a over-*mediatized* display of politics, a return of the dictatorial drives that marked Brazil's early 20th century (similarly to other countries like Portugal) and the triumph of the logic of kinship logic over the logic of openness, that is, the dominance of corruption as a mode of collective political action. The three pieces of tissue become a trilogy of a separation that is there to last² and is effectively and rapidly reversing one of the most astonishing human progresses that were made on the late 20th Century³.

The risk of producing such a work is in line with Dardot's honesty as an artist: we know how the art market considers political artists as unreliable assets and often pushes them into isolation, since the political stand implies a necessary alienation of those consumers that find the political message unattractive, which are, often times, those that dispose of more income to invest in art. Dardot, currently based in Lisbon, takes the problems of social reality courageously, unveiling the core of a problem through a demanding poetical process that, rather than purely displaying pessimism, creates a possible starting point for discussion to occur. The process of conviviality is at the center of Dardot's generous practice and turns this piece into a hope for a possible future where, through a miracle, rationality or both, several shapes can inhabit the same canvas, as one.

² <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jul/19/people-getting-poorer-hunger-homelessness-brazil-crisis>

³ cf. Baer, Werner (2008), *The Brazilian Economy: Growth and Development*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.