

The Bird and the Stone

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My eyes look for that which
Makes us take off our shoes
To see if anything else is supporting us from beneath
Or to invent a bird
To find out whether air exists.

Roberto Juarroz

In all interior journeys we hear the unbridled flapping of wings of flight in our dreams. Besides the mere beauty of the bird perched on the branch, the drawing made by the bird in the air startles us. If birds could speak, if their words weighed to tell us about love, they would be cold stones in the bed of a river instead of fleeting flames burning the air. The bird and the stone are two poles with the same amount of gravity in Pamen Pereira's oeuvre. The flight overcomes our desire for greater freedom that will enable us to advance towards light. The impulse of that long awaited lightness is what guides the pen of Emily Dickinson when she writes: "'Hope" is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul.'¹ We soon learnt to revitalise that desire. In the early years of this century, the figure of a bird carved in ivory by the first human beings who colonised Europe over 30,000 years ago was found in the Jura Mountains, in southern Germany. Bound as we are to the earth's gravity, we've been forced to fight for our lives in a natural world often hostile, while birds above us created drawings in the air to obtain that alchemy of lightness that has guided our dreams from the very beginning of time.

¹ Emily Dickinson, "'Hope" is the thing with feathers', from *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson (ed.), The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983.

To paraphrase Gaston Bachelard's *Air and Dreams*, a book that has accompanied Pamen Pereira on many of her travels, the French author reminds us that if birds are the pretext for the great flight of our imagination this isn't because of their bright colours. What is originally beautiful in birds is their flight — flight is a primary beauty for a dynamic imagination. The flight that leads us towards this original beauty brings meaning to works that are solved dynamically and that, at the same time, calm us, restoring beings to their primeval serenity. For Pamen Pereira, self-knowledge involves knowledge of the world through nature, hence emotion appears along paths less trodden by human beings.

To ensure that art distances itself from artifice, to ensure that it dwells in its truth, to ensure that what is already known doesn't refract the light that illuminates it, we must unlearn what we have learned and return to our origins. Pamen Pereira has written: 'This self-awareness of being a part of nature leads me to enter it as one who enters wild, unspoilt nature, untamed by man.' So, retracing our steps is therefore what fuels our emotions. There's no point in leaving thinking that we know what we're looking for. Revelation always awaits us in a place still unknown. Sometimes it lies in the contemplation of the most humble of things: a disintegrated root suddenly unearthed, a lichen sprout that dwells in the silent rock cavity, the tiny fly escaping the William Blake poem and alighting on the question of eternity, the cocoon that the silkworm flees before becoming a butterfly. In her oeuvre, Pamen Pereira neither searches nor copies, but heads towards a new path of knowledge in which it is necessary to reformulate the world. If, as believed by Paracelsus, 'All things on earth have been given into the hands of man,'² the task of artists should consist in generating a new way of being in nature from their discoveries that will enable them to 'see beyond what is perceived by our senses.' Only then that which remained hidden will be revealed. Only then may we obtain that alchemy of lightness that reaches out to us from the remotest and most forgotten of our dreams.

² Paracelsus, *Selected Writings*, Jolande Jacobi (ed.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1979, pp. 176-177.