

Isabel Cordovil

The Enigma of Arrival

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In his speculative exegesis on being and becoming, Plato states, in Timaeus's monologue, that "it will be necessary, at the outset, to distinguish the following. What is that which is existent always and has no becoming? And what is that which is becoming always and never is existent? Now the one of these is apprehensible by thought with the aid of reasoning (λόγου), since it is ever uniformly existent; whereas the other is an object of opinion (δόξη) with the aid of unreasoning sensation (αἰσθήσεως), since it becomes and perishes and is never really existent"¹. By drawing a distinction between time and eternity, Plato conceives the former as an imperfect echo of the world of ideas, a fleeting breath in the great order of the cosmos. Illusory by nature, time has neither an authentic origin nor a definitive resolution, unfolding instead in an incessant flux between states of being, between that which endures and that which becomes extinct.

Its passage is inscribed in *The Enigma of Arrival*, Isabel Cordovil's new exhibition at Galeria Pedro Cera. Here, traces of transience settle into the interstices of a time that is but a reflection of the inevitable contours of eternal return, a space where the moment lingers, caught between departure and arrival.

Immersed in shifting states of transgression, this circuit plunges into the abyss of perpetuity, structuring itself through cycles and numerical sequences that mirror the intelligible order of ideas. In a place where time loses its measure, rhythm is dictated by the solemn chime of a music box, its echo tracing the contours of an instant that fades. Unlike the image, which can be stilled and repeated, sound reveals time in its most ephemeral condition, resonating only to vanish into silence. The warm melody of a forgotten song reverberates at the edges of memory, carrying with it the oblivion of Joana Benedita de Faria Pinho, a romantic composer confined to the diminished status of the feminine, with no descendants to extend the living memory of her work. Like a celestial body governing the cadence of transition, its fleeting harmony sets the tempo of this microcosm, where discordant durations define a temporal order distinct from natural prescription. Emerging from darkness, this temporally ambiguous object lingers at the threshold of a journey without resolution, where sound warps and dissolves toward the climax of a day that extinguishes – on the endless brink of a tomorrow that is always arriving, only to repeat itself once more.

In *physis* (Φύσις), the perennial reality from which all things arise and to which all things return, time manifests only as an appearance. Untethered from the world of substantial ideas, it dissolves into the illusion of its own flow. Yet, if in Platonic thought, time is merely a virtual reflection of the eternal, in lived experience, it unfolds as an unpredictable duration, shaped by ruptures and deviations. The space it occupies takes shape only through its measurement, existing in cycles, in repetitions, in the standards that define its order. It inhabits, arrives, and dissipates in the traces it leaves behind, in the letters left unopened, in the unmade bed of a youth in progression, in the fixation of what survives as a specter. Departure and return, two faces of the same enigma, emerge through their self-declared narrative, in the structures that falter in the attempt to grasp the ephemeral. In this ceaseless clepsydra that guides the illusion of rendering the concealed tangible, artificiality bears the marks of an uncontrollable and silent obsolescence, unfolding in gestures that accumulate without leaving a trace.

1. *Tim.* 27D-28A. Translated by R.G. Bury, Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1929.

The body, a sensitive threshold, participates in this process of disintegration, a site where presence is indistinguishable from imminent erasure, a point of friction attesting to the certainty of an end, even as its arrival remains elusive. Bound to units of measure, the body registers fragility and pause, capturing the resistance of a time that runs incessant. Like an exoskeleton that both supports and transmits the experience of perishability, the weight of tangible continuity extends to a constructed refuge, a shelter that offers the possibility of inhabiting the interval, of drawing meaning from that which, like sound and shadow, is always slipping away.

Within the patterns that govern being and the world, allowing them to be made legible, time remains an empty vessel, shaped by abstract and universal units. It exists independently of what unfolds within it, without beginning, without end. Yet it endures, perpetually, as an imprint of passage, perceptible in the world of forms through mechanisms regulated by rhythm (ῥυθμός), by recurrence, by the enigma of appearance between what begins and what ends. *The Enigma of Arrival* inscribes itself within this suspended temporality, where passage becomes visible only in the traces that resist dissolution. Between departure and return, between what is exhausted and what endures, Isabel Cordovil's works unfold a universe of hesitation – a place where time is measured and intuited. In the end, in the fragility of gestures and in the resonance of contours, what has been forgotten remains, persisting in the flow of recurrence.

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Isabel Cordovil has completed her studies at Central Saint Martins, University of Arts, London and HEAD Geneva University of Art and Design, Geneva, Switzerland. Exhibitions of her work include Culturgest, Porto, Portugal; MACE, Elvas, Portugal; Lievre, Basel, Switzerland, and Appleton Box, Lisbon. Her films have been screened at Doclisboa and Queer Lisboa and are included in the Coleção de Arte Contemporânea do Estado, Lisbon; Coleção António Cachola, Elvas; Coleção Norlinda e José Lima, S. João da Madeira, Portugal and Coleção Santander Artistas Emergentes, Lisbon.

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