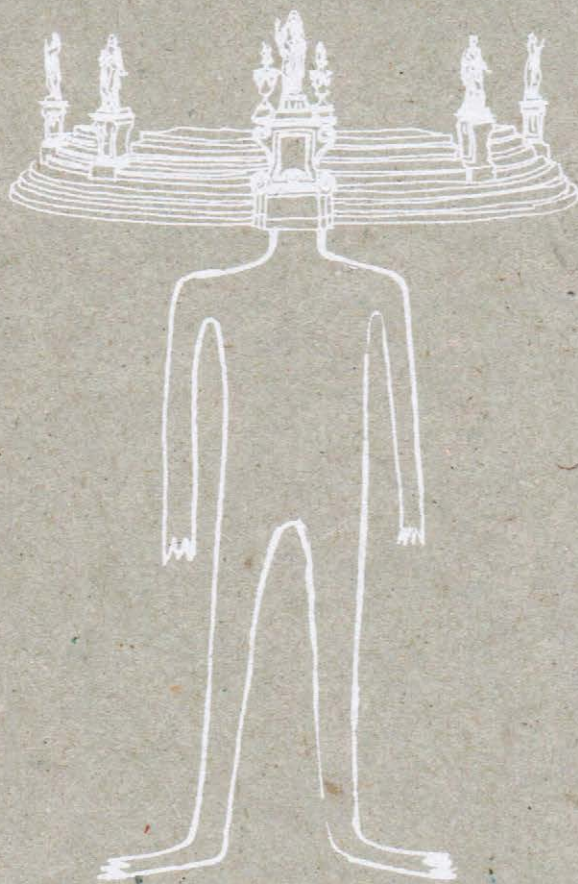


Carlos Bunga  
**A temporalidade do espaço**



ATHENA

# Nomadic Geographies

Cecilia Alemani

Perhaps less known than the rest of his production, Carlos Bunga's works on paper constitute a vital part of the artist's creative process, expanding the dimension of his sculptural interventions, while at the same time providing a more intimate, personal space. It is in this dialectical tension between expansion and concentration that lies the power of these small collages and drawings: as musical scores for fractal symphonies to be played out in space, Bunga's works on paper serve as notations for imaginary geographies.

By overlaying fragments of buildings onto found photographs of masterpieces of contemporary architecture or by integrating natural shapes with human artifacts, Bunga's drawings and collages compose a form of visionary landscape that is a projection of one's own fantasies and fears. Bunga's drawings are *capricci*, to borrow the term used in the 18th century to describe the imaginary vistas created by combining various elements of existing architectures with panoramas of invented constructions. Unlike the original *capricci* though, Bunga's drawings seem tinted with more pessimistic undertones: his are not witty exercises in the art of combinatory fantasy. Instead they can be described more accurately as attempts at reconfiguring the ruins of architecture: they have a post-apocalyptic feel to them, as though Bunga were working in a not so distant future in which all human constructions have been reduced to dust and ruins. In this sense, perhaps Bunga's drawings are much closer to the darker fantasies of Giovanni Battista Piranesi and his "Imaginary Prisons".

And in fact domestic space often seems compared to a sort of cage or a form of imprisonment in Bunga's work: the house is clearly attached to the idea of origin and beginning – it is a root, an organic form embedded in the ground – but it is also an enclosed, almost suffocating space that needs to be cut open and exposed. The work of Bunga is often crossed by incisions, cuts, fractures and gestures of separation: the artist literally takes space apart, he cuts it open and recomposes it in new imaginary forms.

In some cases Bunga grafts architecture directly onto organic materials, imagining a new promiscuous coexistence of natural and artificial. In the series "Nómada" (Nomad), which the artist started in 2008, nine drawings on vellum represent a human body

whose head has been replaced by an architectural form, either a building or a blueprint of a construction. The body is very simply sketched, almost as a child drawing or graffiti in a cave, traced with one single pencil line. The creature appears to be almost unfinished, its gender undecided, suspended somewhere between female and male sexuality: it's almost a primordial status of being that has something vaguely magic about it – a homunculus that recalls the anthropomorphic shapes of Ana Mendieta.

Some of the drawings from this series, like "Nómada II", "Nómada IV" and "Nómada V", depict bodies whose heads have been mutated into elongated buildings, which resemble modernist constructions from 20th-century architecture: with their multiple floors and vertical shapes, they surge to the sky with utopian optimism, one that seems to belong to a distant time and a distant place, by now completely alien to Bunga's sensibility. Other works depict more classical buildings, while the body on "Nómada III" supports a Rococo structure: a staircase with vases and statues – the relic of a mysterious folly from an unknown time. "Nómada VII-IX" instead explores more abstract dimensions: the shape supported by the body are a map of a city ("Nómada VII"), the floor plan of an ideal house and the blueprint of what appears to be a stately home. In these three drawings the artist adds a physical layer to the work by applying a different piece of paper held with tape onto the head of his creature: like gauze laid on a wound to protect it, these collages betray a sense of fragility and precariousness that recurs throughout Bunga's work.

The drawings in "Nómada" remind me of Louise Bourgeois' early series "Femme Maisons". In this works from the late 1940s, Bourgeois combines female naked bodies with images of houses that replace the body's head, as the title – woman house – suggests. Overlapping intimacy with architecture, Bourgeois created a visceral connection between female identity and domesticity: in Bourgeois's drawings, the body becomes literally "home", but the space of the house is in turn tainted by domestic violence and a sense of un-homelike fragility or of eerie unrest. Unlike Bourgeois, Bunga seems more concerned with architecture as a discipline and less with its biographical undertones. In Bunga's work, it is not the body of the artist

that turns into architecture: it is rather the opposite movement that seems to animate his practice. It is the architecture that grows legs and limbs, as the buildings come alive.

Just as in his sculptures and installations that vibrate and crumble under the pressure of biomorphic forces, so in Bunga's works on paper we witness the transformation of architecture into a pulsating organism. It is in this never-ending dance between the mobile and nomadic energies of the human nature and the intransience of architecture that Bunga's work oscillates.