

A Controlled Tropicalism

With fifteen paintings (large, medium and small sizes), all dated from 2015 and 2016, the Brazilian-born painter Fernando Barata confirms a pictorial approach in which the permanence and renewal, imposes the significance of the bright color, subtle transparencies and wash in a carved pictorial space where live the elements of a lasting iconography constantly revisited and diverse. Density or pictorial lightness he seeks for its space, using very diluted acrylics, watercolor background contrasts with various inclusions of media. In this latest exhibition, it is the choice of jute marouflaged to canvas which enhances the contrast of colors and conditions, the sensitive visual reading and textures of oppositions.

Jute has a "filtered" color by the frame that reduces their perception as pure color laid in flat areas which imposes a visual "shock", this opposition between two intensities of polychrome enabling a pictorial way of being characteristic of his perception of the world and painting.

In selecting the images he superimposed and juxtaposed in a space always open to new iconographic proposals, Barata continues its pattern of practice by merging images of distinct natures, sometimes accompanied by writings and collages as in his last exhibition at the Postal Museum in 2003. Recent paintings that tend to simplify shapes tell "stories" more plastic than sentimental and remembrance, with pictures of familiar wildlife (almost) as a snake, turtle or fish, and more distant as the seahorse, shark, octopus or parrot, adding abstract images, stylized or refined evoking plants (cactus) or seeds and organic symbols in the form of points, lianas, undulations and zigzag lines or circles.



Barata has built over time a real iconographic "writing", one could even speak of personal "calligraphy", expressing through the years the energy and sensuality of his painting, in a reasoned, mature and controlled "Tropicalism" having nothing exotic or folkloric, although the word "Tulum" and the skull appearing in several paintings evoke his last trip to Mexico. The virtual cutting of the canvas is characteristic of the way the artist organizes the space into compartments, like the Uruguayan Joaquim Torres Garcia, Latin American pioneer in the field, who made his space formatting one of the *modus operandi* aesthetic and conceptual and the essence of his "narrative". Barata approaches the area of the canvas and treats it as a kind of chessboard, the various images and layers of paint, burlap cloth and the new "glaze" that he keeps metallic gray for the background and reserves some of it, help raise different readings that build his entire plastic, visual and intellectual discourse. Connoisseur of the I Ching and the concepts of Yin and Yang, Barata works in the opposition as much as in the metaphor, that of the fusion of time and appearances where the game and the opposition between the pictures, colors and forms are only a pretext to communicate a desire and pleasure that have never left, the one remaining in a painting. The taste for experimentation, with a distance of popular culture, relate the work of Fernando Barata in the tradition of Latin American art of the twentieth century. His works are renewed in the interrogation of their own pictorial history. It is in this "devouring" where he becomes the own cannibal of his inspiration and its sources, the artist continues to regenerate.

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