

Young Figurative Painters Hit the Market at SP-Arte



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The 12th edition of SP-Arte opened to VIPs on Wednesday in São Paulo, bringing over 120 exhibitors—both international and Brazilian—to the city's Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion. While more established galleries brought the geometric abstractions that have become staples of art fairs across the country, a group of younger dealers are betting on paintings that are much more colorful, figurative, and in some cases hyperrealist—a radical departure from the more austere pieces on view. In a way, this new movement seems to be a bolder version of the return to painting that marked the Brazilian scene nearly a decade ago, when the group known as 2000E8 (which included now-established artists like Rodolpho Parigi and Marina Rheingantz) came about.



Camila Soato
Trans desde 1830, 2016
Zipper Galeria

In the opening hours of the fair's VIP preview, a collector at Zipper Galeria stood before a painting by the young artist Camila Soato, framing parts of the picture with his hands. Soato is among a string of up-and-coming Brazilian artists now headlining a return to figuration. Like many of these artists, her work takes the human body as its main focus. Her figurative pieces blur the lines between genders in compositions reminiscent of 18th-century classics, like the François Boucher piece that inspired the work at the fair, *Trans desde 1830* (2016). Priced around \$6,000, the painting shows an odalisque reclining on a sofa—nothing outrageous if you know the basics of Romanticism—but the bearded man by her side has breasts and is depicted while shaving his legs. With one of her paintings recently acquired by the Museu de Arte do Rio, Soato is slowly gaining traction in Brazil.



Daniel Lannes, *Vira*, 2016. Image courtesy of Baró Galeria.

Over at Baró Galeria, now hosting a solo show of recent work by German painter Norbert Bisky in its Jardins space, one finds Daniel Lannes, another key figure of the new painting scene. Lannes's work is known for its charged and hilarious depictions of sexual acts, as well as a later series that mixes famous characters from different periods in Brazilian history in lush, soap-opera style settings. His work at the fair, on view at Baró and Luciana Caravello Arte Contemporânea, is still strongly anchored in fresh figuration but hides some of the characters behind bold swathes of color—a possible allusion to Brazil's geometric movement of the 1950s. Lannes has become associated with a departure from the canon of geometric abstraction that for generations has influenced artists here. "Even though there is some resistance to [painting] among critics and collectors, I find we're standing on more fertile ground here than elsewhere," says Lannes.

“Unlike Europe, we don’t have the ghosts of Expressionism or Baroque or even the Renaissance. The most relevant thing we had was Neo-Concretism.”



Fabio Baroli
Sem título (da série Quando a seca entra), 2015
Galeria Superfície
Not for sale



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Fabio Baroli, shown at Galeria Superfície, has made a name for himself by moving beyond basic figuration to produce hyperrealistic paintings. His latest work, on view at the fair, reproduces old family photographs in minute detail—some stained and torn at the edges like the real prints—as allusions to both the fading of memories and painting’s ability to transform the banal into a monument of sorts.

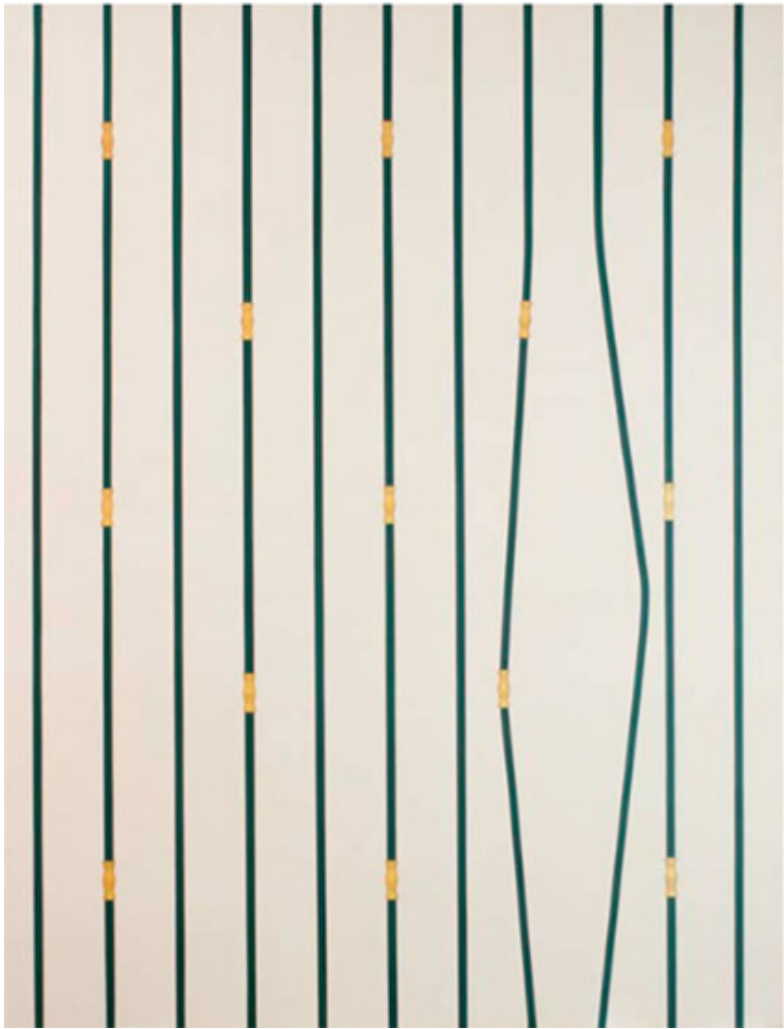
In this regard, Ana Elisa Egreja, shown at the fair by Galeria Leme, sheds light on the more trivial aspects of life by reflecting on the tactile pleasure of objects. Over-the-top and outright kitsch, her paintings (priced around \$20,000) are studious, millimetric reproductions of tiles, carpets, wallpapers, and interior scenes—bourgeois settings with gaudy décor sometimes inhabited by extravagant animals, from hot pink flamingoes to ducks, dogs, or deer. “Of her generation, she has perhaps the best technique,” says the gallery’s Camila Siqueira of Egreja, whose forthcoming September exhibition at Leme will follow an acclaimed exhibition earlier this year at the Instituto Tomie Ohtake.



Left: Ana Elisa Egreja, *Natureza morta com borboleta, abóbora, caju, flores e laranjas*, 2015. Photo by Filipe Berndt, © Galeria Leme. Courtesy of SP-Arte; Right: *A su imagen y semejanza*, 2015. Photo courtesy of Galeria Leme.

Egreja rehashes Fauvist colors with explicit references to Matisse. Her decadent, sugar-coated world may at times remind the viewer of Beatriz Milhazes’s exaggerated use of color and texture, but while Milhazes—who allegedly sold a painting at the fair at Dan Galeria for a staggering \$4 million—harks back to geometric abstraction only to drench it in vibrant hues, Egreja retires references to the period, finding her conceptual footing in references to old European masters and the Baroque.

This same tactile quality is also at the heart of work by young painter Tiago Tebet, whose four large canvases (each priced just over \$8,000) are on view at Luciana Brito Galeria’s stand. Tebet is known for his detailed reproductions of textures found on the streets of São Paulo; what may seem abstract at first glance is actually a near-photographic rendering of paint on a wall, the fabric of a curtain, or the metallic bars of a gate. It is his framing of these details, as though the viewer were standing flush against them, that makes his textures quasi-abstract. “There is always a reference to something outside the painting, like architecture,” says Tebet. “I’ve never painted anything disconnected from everyday scenes.”



Left: Tiago Tebet, *Invasão/Evasão*, 2016. Image courtesy of Luciana Brito Galeria; Right: Lucas Arruda, *Untitled*, 2016. Image courtesy of Mendes Wood DM.

While strikingly different from the work of Tebet, the landscapes by Lucas Arruda, who showed one of his stormy skies at the booth shared by Mendes Wood DM and Michael Werner, achieve a similar effect, framing diffuse horizons in a way that makes the ground almost disappear. Though deeply indebted to the tradition of landscape painting by the likes of Constable and Turner, Arruda’s paintings have a unique identity in which it’s hard to determine orientation. Relying heavily on light, they’re like small windows looking out on the world.

While still relatively inexpensive in comparison to pieces on offer by more established artists, the works by these young painters represent a push to place this new figuration on the market. “This kind of painting is having a moment,” says João Azinheiro, a director at Baró. “It comes after a phase when painting had kind of disappeared.”

—Silas Martí

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