

## **Magma**

Reconstruction and reinvention. For Lara Viana, these imperatives are in the centre of her practice, presented for the first time in a solo show in Brazil. Magma comes to the Adelina Instituto to showcase a new series of paintings by the artist from Bahia, whose art education and development took place in the United Kingdom. The references in her work are so distinct from Brazilian painting – however, they now suggest a movement of returning, since Lara has now moved back to her hometown of Salvador.

Improbability seems to be another decisive poetic aspect in the small works presented in São Paulo. The second edition of the *Perímetros* project (after the exhibition of João Trevisan's multifaceted work) now focuses on panel painting, with layers of introspection, poured delicately on what has already been built, but also offering spectators – with a less obvious and ostensive appeal – powerful flashes of painterly vigour, interspersed by an enigmatic atmosphere with lower hues, opaque, almost silent.

“This process of deconstruction/reconstruction or pursuit/observation sometimes results in more abstract or more figurative aspects. I think that, often, it is between one or the other.”<sup>1</sup> The artist's own concept on the interstitial elements of what she creates is relevant for understanding an exhibition like Magma. Leave overly-didactic approaches behind. If in earlier series, figurative elements are clearly present – stairs or fountains, for example – today, documenting three-dimensional objects may have been the point of departure of a persistent, continuous and strongly engaged development into the pictorial realm, which, possibly due to the small scale, demands an even greater ability to reach the desired result. The density of the oil paint associated with the specific way wood absorbs it brings about even greater difficulties for creating this “chamber” series.

That is, Lara moves away from endeavours that advance into grandiloquent and definitive features, using procedures that relate to analogue images – if, metaphorically, attributes such as granulation, physicality and continuity could be transferred from the photographic language into painting, almost as a reaction to the immediacy of the dry and authoritative digital medium. “Thoughts also become analogue when they are materialised; when transmuted into lines on a paper or marks on a picture”<sup>2</sup>, states Tacita Dean. “‘Analogue’ suggests a continuous signal – a continuum and a trajectory –, whereas the ‘digital’ constitutes what is (...) decomposed into millions of numbers.”

Through adding, erasing, depositing sediment, scraping, cutting and other actions, the artist employs that which is singular about painting. At the same time, the openness, instability and the suggestion of impediment – not the dissolving, dilution and the process of decomposition of what originally were pairs, couples – relate to the post-modern era of fragmentation, of uninterrupted flows of anything you can imagine, of maximised circulation and speed, of global hegemonies.

“Three slivers of time. My own time in slivers: a piece of memory, this unwritten thing that I try to read; a piece of present, here, under my eyes, on the white page; a piece of desire, a letter to be written, but to whom?”<sup>3</sup>, asks Georges Didi-Huberman, a key thinker in contemporary times. The vestigial realm described by the French thinker helps us when we are faced with the mystery of what Lara builds. It is as if idealised moments, eternal loves, paradisiacal places and utopian experiments – not by chance a critic associates the visual proximity of Tatlin's 1920 unrealised monument to the Third International and her production – gained new destinies. At this point, we could go down pessimistic perspectives, but there are different points of escape that are visible. The golden, yellow and clear tonality suggests that Lara's palette has been fed by her native land. Obviously, this “tropicalism” creates new visual frictions with her oeuvre, something very peculiar: in the global south, it is far from blindness something in white from the landscapes of Reverón or the simplicity of the pau-brasil from painters filled with Brazilian-ness of different times. It is no coincidence that her work has a solid international standing, orbiting important names such as Melanie Smith and Andreas Eriksson, for example (both presented in the *Málverkasýning* collective show held at i8, in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 2017).

Lara Viana builds panoramas that encompass living and constant battles between dreamlike states, the material and concrete matter, idea and representation. Something like David Lynch's surrealistic photograms – on celluloid, with its own existence in risk – passed through the baroque ruins of the capital of Bahia, through underground corridors of historical buildings hidden by masses of stone, dusty sacred images, around omnipresent sounds from the city. “I try to make the image not be what it once was but become something new”<sup>4</sup>, she states, having reached enviable results through equally striking processes.

**Mario Gioia, September 2019**

1. Interview with the artist, via e-mail, on August 2019.
2. ESPADA, Heloisa, TITAN JR., Samuel (org.). Tacita Dean – A Medida das Coisas. Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, 2013, p. 63
3. DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges. Cascas. Revista Serrote, Instituto Moreira Salles, São Paulo, 2013, n. 13, p. 100.
4. Interview with the artist, via e-mail, on July 2017.