



Foto, Matheus Chiaratti

2019 the Califórnia is one of those buildings in the centre of São Paulo that assume gigantic proportions, with a commercial gallery as a prelude, connecting two pedestrian street entrances, right at the heart of the *República* neighbourhood.

In front of its shops, with their internal floor-to-ceiling windows, a large mosaic of small glass tiles, signed by Portinari, attracts the gaze through the right corner of the eye as one enters through the Barão de Itapetininga entrance, diverting the view from a descending stairway that hides a large, inactive, padlocked theatre.

For those who enter the building and go up, the sameness of the floors is confusing a window facing the elevator opens an enormous grid of other windows: law firms, English, driving, and preparatory schools, comercial depositories and art studios.

I get off on the ninth floor and turn left to face a low-light, apathetic corridor lined with, always closed, white doors. I walk to room 906, where my key finds the entrance. Martin is there, sitting at a table in front of the big window, embroidering a red textile while yerba mate cools a little in the calabash.

Thais, on the opposite side of the room, balances glasses filled with salt, collected stones and imaginary, finger moulded pebbles. My wall is the first wall-section of the room, within an imaginary partition. Martin shares this wall with me.

On his side, there are stretched and joined textiles, like quilts, some papers framed by bright blue masking tape, and a large leaning folder. On mine, a thinner-stained ordinary easel shelters medium and small sized paints, a light Pebeo pink predominates, and a diptych canvas marks where I start.

Martin sips yerba mate.

Ateliê. Foto, Matheus Chiaratti



São Paulo/Itália, February 2021.

MARTIN LANEZAN Matheus, we shared this studio in the Califórnia for approximately a year and a half... I would like to ask you about your work, which ranges across painting, photography objects, and textiles.

I am curious as to how these different techniques emerged and what does each one represent to you? How do you choose the media?

MATHEUS CHIARATTI I think my work encompasses this range of practices because I see it as the realisation of distinct projects. Each project calls for a specific practice and I gradually adapt according to the research ... I started with painting and I think it occupies the central role in my day-to-day studio practice, but writing also plays an important role for me. Perhaps because it organizes my thinking and then disorganises it back in more poetic texts, via a literary language research which I, modestly, carry out. The diversity of practices is the challenge of being an artist. For me, it would be tedious to have to always work in the same way because I am very inquisitive, and I like to take risks in the fields where I have no calling. Whether I succeed, is another story.

ML Within your corpus of paintings I see a difference in process between, on the one hand, the smaller ones, full of medium, dense and with the brushstrokes more evident – generally these paintings have titles that refer to writers, if I'm not mistaken, and are more abstract, but there are also landscapes and portraits – and on the other hand, the larger paintings, with references to classical sculptures, vases or masks where drawing has a greater presence. Do you agree? What is the process for each? How does literature enter into dialogue with painting, the choice of colours and shapes, etc.? And what about these everyday images painted on clay vases (I remember a reference to Largo do Arouche)?



MC I am moved by the mixture of mythologies and my own narratives, mixing my own stories, generated by the city and its affective relationships. I like the Greco-Roman references, all those objects and artefacts, because they have survived until today to tell

us stories. Those Greek vases that carry mythology in the form of drawing are absurdly complete. It's in this sense that my clays and larger paintings, in a way, attempt to organize mundane stories in order to make them last in the same way. For example, in the Abetardas series (the painted raw clays), I wanted to place João Gilberto's drawing on a phone-shaped vase because of his paranoia of phone calls being part of the

MATHEUS CHIARATTI. *Abetardas*, 2019



artist's mythology, some say he spent hours talking to people on the phone. I wanted to imprint on this object the story that lingered in my head. I think the logic of these pieces revolves around that: homage. But the Largo do Arouche appears as a space of desire: for those who don't know, this area is in the city center, an area very close to the Califórnia, where there are LGBTQI bars, nightlife etc. in short, it's a historical place of expression and also resistance, right? And I wanted to portray this on the vase.

The small paintings are the freest pieces and I have the most pleasure making these because I get lost in them – I erase, redo, recapture, rework, until they are stable; and then I name them according to the references that “blessed” them and which guided their poetic triggering.

MATHEUS CHIARATTI. *Adriano encontra Antínoo no Largo do Arouche*, 2019

ML I believe our origins in the countryside are a significant reference for us. How are they present in your work? And how have they influenced the changing landscapes?

MC Yes, I began to notice this after one of our conversations. I think that in the beginning it was inevitable to name paintings after the places where I grew up, where I was born: Birigui, Coroados, or my grandfather's nickname Niquim, because those paintings somehow answered a nostalgia for home. Not to mention the sound, imagery and literary power of these names. There are many cities in the countryside with indigenous names whose meanings we don't even have a clue about: Braúna, Birigui, Araçatuba, Avanhandava. I think this rural and mystical countryside will always be present within me, even though I cannot rationalise right now how it influences my choices.

Regarding other places, I believe the main thing is the construction of affective, temporal bonds in these spaces so that they become creative material. However, here in Italy, during the pandemic, I don't go out much; it's no fun to see the empty streets and squares. It's like a hiatus now lives within me and everything I've done here falls more towards a nostalgia for São Paulo than a homage to the Italian spaces. I miss walking in the city centre, leaving the Califórnia and walking towards Liberdade, that was my favourite walk. The pandemic changed everything, right? And for you, what is the relationship between your work and the countryside?



MATHEUS CHIARATTI. *Niquim*, 2015

ML I think the imaginary in my work emerges from my experience growing up in the countryside and then leaving Madariaga.

As a child, I used to go to folk festivals with my mother and sister, where she danced. The sale of handicrafts with a rural theme such as ponchos or leather work, wood carvings, etc., was common at these festivals. After a few years, the festivals started to include other musical genres, such as melódicos or cumbia, and the sale stands included imported products such as posters of singers or the typical holograms of horses galloping on a beach. This was my cultural environment from childhood to adolescence, in addition to the annual exhibitions at the Casa da Cultura, which included painting, embroidery, leather work, sewing and ceramics. When I started at the university of fine arts, it was very instinctual to begin by reproducing this imaginary. I started painting images based on rural myths, characters with animals or plants, in a dialogue which I associated, some time later, with various folkloric lyrics or texts.

The palette of these paintings was inspired by the colour variations of the landscapes between Buenos Aires and Madariaga, in the photographs I took from the bus every time I returned home.

MC I find it very interesting how you take on the conditions of the medium without worrying about aesthetic preciousness, I think the work surpasses the medium and uses its imperfections to gain strength. For example, in the small pieces made with wire, the constructions of the masks gain power, respecting the openings and looseness of the arch. Also, the wooden planks carved with a landscape that uses the splinters, or the unfinished, as potency. The magazine pages do the same thing. How's that for you? Why is it important to work with these almost found, semi-discarded media? What is this transformation process?



MARTIN LANEZAN. *Sem título (M.L. 01)*, 2019



MARTIN LANEZAN. *Sem título (M.L. 03)*, 2019



ML For me, the choice of medium is 50% of the work, I typically use media I find casually such as wood, or scraps either purchased by the kilo or donated. I like the idea of transforming the medium while slightly following the shapes and peculiarities it carries, as if I were assembling a puzzle. The same happens with magazine pages in this process of modifying an everyday object and changing its meaning. I think I include in my work some of the aesthetics common to my city in the countryside of Argentina, where you find in homes, objects loaded with meaning regardless as to their material value or origin, and I think this also happens here in Brazil. On the other hand, I can mention the works of other artists that have been references for me in this sense: Marta Minujin's mattresses, Grippo's tables, Violeta Parra's embroideries, Schiliro's sculptures of stacked plastic buckets, Berni's collages, or the box of Pigeon juice etc. I like my work to reflect this resignification of popular and everyday things and the handmade aesthetics, with its imperfections and errors, which add an individuality to the work.

MC This is very beautiful and honest, and I think it is also related to Feliciano Centurión's work. He incorporated readymade objects – considered kitsch, bought at Once such as napkins, tea towels, blankets, etc. – to the practice of painting and embroidery. I think this means facing the textile as an affective medium, coming from other places, from memory (grandma's embroidered tea towels, for example). In my opinion, your work dialogues a lot with his.



FELICIANO CENTURIÓN. *Estoy Vivo*, 1994

ML My first sewing pieces are from 2008, making objects from milk sachets and leather, but painting had my full attention until 2016 when, here in Brazil, I started to embroider on old clothes. Sewing and embroidery work had, and still has to this day, a very significant charge for me. Not only because it means a return to painting in a different way, but also because the repetition of the gesture has an introspective aspect: for the symbolic fact of sewing as if closing a wound or joining two borders. From this place, I think the object becomes laden with the affective, in addition to the presence of the manual work and time dedicated to the medium which endows an additional meaning to the objects. I think when I see Centurión's work I am touched by these details and the fact I am being invited by him to share in this intimacy.

MC In conclusion, I would like you to comment on your experience at the Califórnia studio, which is, in a way, the subject of this interview. Do you think the centre of São Paulo has crossed your work in any way?

ML Thinking specifically about some of these pieces, I think the rhythm of Centro entered the process, perhaps in terms of faster finishes, the overlapping of textiles, pen drawings and padded volumes, in addition to the incorporation of more characters and contemporary references in the pieces. And for you, how was it?



MARTIN LANEZAN. PICNIC, 2020



MARTIN LANEZAN. PÁSSARO, 2018

MC For me, I think it was fundamental. It was from this experience that I created arte_passagem (and then Ilê Sartuzi joined) because I saw those living places, full of history, full of people and thought "it's impossible to leave this untouched". Did you know that Araçá Azul, by Caetano, was recorded there, on São Luís Avenue? And that Barão de Itapetininga was one of the courses in Flávio de Carvalho's action? And that the Teatro Municipal, where the Semana de Arte Moderna de 1922 took place is there a few meters from us?! These spaces are too energised, it is impossible for them go unnoticed! And so, I built these stories in my head in order to respect and poetically respond to this space.



MATHEUS CHIARATTI. Carta da Abissínia, 2019



Galeria Aura is pleased to announce the project "In conversation with", in which periodically two artists, either represented by the gallery or invited, present a virtual exhibition on the Artsy platform. The second guests in the series are Martin Lanezan and Matheus Chiaratti.

<https://www.artsy.net/show/galeria-aura-in-conversation-with-number-2-osso>