

# 3 + 1

O único espectáculo é o da espera | *The only show is the waiting one*

Tiago Baptista

14.01.22 – 05.03.22

Opening 2pm – 8pm, 14.01.22

*The problem (simultaneously insoluble and attractive) with Painting*

In a brief exercise of historical flashback, we can recall that never before has the relation with visual practices and generically with visual culture been subjected to such severe transformations, namely when it comes to images with pictorial characteristics, as with photography and its invention in the 19th Century.

The prospect of the death of painting was, as we know, publicized and announced in different stages during the 20th Century and the strategies for its sustenance and survival took different approaches. A series of artistic movements focused their attention on painting, and in a first phase we can focus on the ones that defended its reinvention, steering away from the paradigm of proficiency and technical rigor, anchoring their practice in a research about the subject's own identity, through a critical analysis around its formal, material and conceptual specificities. It can be said, that this settling in the territory of characteristics that made painting unique in relation to other artistic typologies, and the interest in a self-reflexive practice that questioned and commanded the pictorial "making" itself dominated all the modern period.

With the arrival of post-modernism, we see a rupture with prior models, and artists, particularly painters, advocate a clear interest in the way painting could build itself as a vehicle — contradicting earlier positions — for a particular idiosyncratic relation with the outside world, with the real.

In his essay "Modernist Painting", Clement Greenberg seems to already point to a contradiction that occurs due to the dual condition that painting carries within, very reasonable and obvious in its condition as an object: the fact that it takes on an existence simultaneously representational and presentational. Let's see:

"Flatness, two-dimensionality, was the only condition painting shared with no other art, and so the Modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as it did to nothing else.

(...)

The Modernists have neither avoided nor resolved this contradiction: rather they have reserved its terms. One is made aware of the flatness of their pictures before, instead of after, being made aware of what the flatness contains. Whereas one tends to see what is in an Old Master painting before seeing it as a picture, one sees a Modernist painting as a picture first. This is, of course, the best way of seeing any kind of picture, Old Master or Modernist, but Modernism imposes it as the only and necessary way, and Modernism's success in doing so is a success of self-criticism."

(...)

The flatness towards which Modernist painting orients itself can never be an utter flatness. The heightened sensitivity of the picture plane may no longer permit sculptural illusion, or *trompe-l'oeil*, but it does and must permit optical illusion. The first mark made on a surface destroys its virtual flatness (...)"<sup>1</sup>

The author — bringing to mind one of the most significant quarrels throughout the 20th Century, that opposed old and modern, and was centered in the duality of figuration/abstraction — seems to point, in fact, to the unavoidable issue of presence. A painting is always a representation (even when its content is distant from the territory of the recognizable) and it is simultaneously always a presence, an object in the world that takes on a group of physical characteristics.

In a dialectic relationship, permanently tense, within this dual condition of painting, Tiago Baptista has been developing an interesting process of listening carefully to images and their implications in the world, to mechanisms that are innate to the conception and the perception of images and to painting as an assisted practice, duracional, highly present and that demands that presence.

Recently, we have been witnessing a clear expansion of his repertoire of motifs, of formal and compositional solutions and expressive methods, the result of what seems to be a more and more firm belief in the autonomy of the work of art and in an investment in a stylistic practice purposefully disperse, in a kind of painting iconoclasm, that at the same time allows it to deny itself as image and also enrol in an uncontrollable quest for individual and creative freedom. With great freedom in

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<sup>1</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1960), in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (orgs.), *Art in Theory 1900-1990. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Cambridge, 1992, pg.754-760

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associations and profoundly disconcerting, his painting explores relations between symbol, signifier, legibility and invisibility — between what can and cannot be named — questioning mechanisms innate to the construction of meaning in the viewer and permanently testing the setting of space and time that are part of those processes. The artist doesn't work about the verbal condition (nameable) of the image but in fact about its limits, testing the frontiers of language as an approximation to the visual environment and the exploration of the set of possibilities where painting operates (following its internal logic) and searching for representations that for their natural heterogeneity will always escape total comprehension functioning almost as traps.

Working with pre-existing images — that can contemplate the most diverse origins (from art history to comics; from advertising to photography; from punk, pop, and DIY culture; to his own visual experiences) — the artist builds a kind of mental models that are the result of the visual relationships that keep establishing themselves in his imagination between these different references. An idea slowly takes shape until it can become an image, which might end up as a painting. For this process several issues familiar to the pictorial practice are summoned, and those, blended and occurring simultaneously, bring the viewer closer to that juxtaposition between illusionism and realism, figuration and abstraction, modernism and post-modernism, representation and presentation.

Let us go back a little bit, and emphasize how much the question of time is significant in Tiago Baptista's work. Not only is it signalled by the presence of symbolic elements — the candles that mark the quantity of time that has passed and the duration of the moments within the temporal flow, or certain animals (snails, slugs, turtles) that besides taking on a slow performance in the world (they move slowly), they have (in the case of the turtles) an age, experience and evolutionary condition that surpasses human life — and that is directly present in the way the viewer reads the artist's paintings. This is always a reading by accumulation that results from the sum of the details that are perceived in each painting and also the sum of the perception of the several paintings in an exhibition. Unlike other methods of perception (as hearing, for example), visual perception is grounded in an idea of succession and not concurrence. We visually perceive one event after another. But this period of time, the duration of this process of perception is itself marked by two types of temporal experiences: a distended time that happens during the reading of each painting and the successive moments of recognition, illusion, and the recognition of that same illusion; and a time condensed in the way its execution (the long process of edition, preparation, decision and selection to which it was subjected to) is contained within itself even though it is hidden from the viewer.

Therefore, different times co-exist within the same representational system. And that is a fact that allows us now to get closer to the observation of the space.

One of the more intriguing issues in the pictorial practice of Tiago Baptista is the way several spatial dimensions are summoned to the realm of painting, and simultaneously several systems of spatial representation.

Inside and outside spaces, recognizable and unrecognizable, of distinct scales, present themselves simultaneously here and there, suspended, seemingly coexisting in the rigorous following of the rules of concordance defined for each one of the paintings in particular.

Through the overlapping of layers, another idea of space is created, one that is situated beyond the two-dimensions of the pictorial plan — a kind of suspended, interstitial space, that seems to hide between this one and the several layers of figuration, and whose existence is confirmed by the presence of layers of colours, patterns and textures that result of a certain treatment of the matter (paint) or the representation of certain elements that indicate it (like the projected shadows or the modulation of shadows themselves). According to Deleuze (paraphrasing Francis Bacon) “[...] in the domain of Figures, the shadow has as much presence as the body; but the shadow acquires this presence only because it escapes from the body; the shadow is the body that has escaped from itself through some localized point in the contour”<sup>2</sup>. How providential! This interstitial liminal space seems perhaps to be where this (also suspended) body escapes to, as Deleuze tells us. And, it is exactly through the representation of the shadow that this three-dimensionality of the pictorial space is created, inside which a discreet deepness is perceived/sensed, where moments of suspension of space and time seem to be able to occur.

Each painting is a painting. And each one solves, with their internal autonomy, their own technical and compositional details, so the result is fair and that ultimately it can function. Beyond any blame or lament (as Luc Tuymans states).

For title of this exhibition, Tiago Baptista chose the inspiring expression *The only show is the waiting one*<sup>3</sup> (quoting Deleuze once again, in his reflexions about Bacon). We believe that this choice resides in the proposition that we understand it as a metaphor for the role of the viewer (that will perceive, read and produce meaning from the exhibition) but also as a metaphor of the process itself of thought and conception of painting that is operated and takes place in the artist (before, during and after).

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<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation”, pg.16. Translated from the French by Daniel W. Smith.

<sup>3</sup> idem. In the English translation the sentence reads: “The sole spectacle is in fact the spectacle of waiting or effort (...)”

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What are we talking about when we analyse these paintings, and more broadly, this exhibition? Of painting. Precisely painting. Just painting. Its insoluble and attractive problems. And of how much it can fill seconds, hours, days, months, years, decades, a whole life.

Ana Anacleto, December 2021

Translation: Susana Pomba

**Tiago Baptista** (1986, Leiria, Portugal) lives and works in Lisbon. He studied Fine Arts at the Escola Superior de Artes e Design das Caldas da Rainha. His painting is "At first glance (...) like a sequence of landscapes that confront us with images with a powerful cinematographic component, in the sense that each painting is like a moment in a narrative within the spectrum of other narratives." (João Silvério, 2017). Tiago Baptista has been an artist resident at the Zé dos Bois Association in Lisbon since 2010. He participated in other residential programs at António Duarte Atelier-Museum, Caldas da Rainha (2008-2009), Culturia, Berlin (2013). Tiago was awarded the *Aquisição Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso* (2015) and selected for the *Prémio EDP Novos Artistas* (2013) and *Prémio Fidelidade Mundial* (2009). Regularly exhibiting since 2007, selected solo exhibitions include: *Febre*, curated by Natxo Checa, Galeria Zé dos Bois, Lisbon (2021); *Desenho Sumido*, curated by Alexandre Baptista, Espaço Santos + ESTGA, Águeda (2020); *Véu sujo, um outro*, Projectroom, Art Gallery - Bank of Portugal, Leiria (2019); *Atrás do pensamento*, 3+1 Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon (2018); *A luz em si*, A Montra, Lisbon (2014), and *Dysfunctional*, Atelier-Museu António Duarte, Caldas da Rainha (2009). Collective exhibitions include: *Works from the Collection of Norlinda and José Lima*, curated by Luísa Soares Oliveira, Centro Cultural de Cascais, Cascais (2021); *COSMO/POLÍTICA #5*, curated by Paula Loura Batista & Sandra Vieira Jürgens, Museu do Neorealismo, V.F. de Xira (2020); *RED LIGHT: Sexualidade e Representação na coleção | Sexuality and Representation in the collection of Norlinda and José Lima*, curated by Sandra Vieira Jürgens, Centro de Arte Oliva, S.João da Madeira (2020); *Trabalho Capital*, from the collection of Norlinda e José Lima, Centro de Arte Oliva, S.João da Madeira (2019); *Wait*, Berardo Collection Museum, Lisbon (2019); *Do Tirar Pelo Natural. Inquérito ao retrato português*, National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon (2018); *Variations Portugaises*, CAC Meymac, France (2018); *Quote / Unquote. Entre Apropriação e Diálogo*, Galeria Municipal do Porto, Porto (2017); *Questionamentos*, Palácio Vila Flor, Guimarães & Sala de Arte Joven, Madrid (2015); *Atlas Secreto*, Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, Coimbra (2015); *Prémio EDP Novos Artistas*, EDP Foundation, Casa da Música, Porto (2013) and *Anteciparte '08*, Museu da Cidade, Lisbon (2008). His work is represented in the following collections: Lisbon City Hall; Coleção de Arte Fundação EDP; Coleção PLMJ; Coleção Norlinda e José Lima; Coleção António Cachola, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Elvas; Colección AR2A, La Coruna; Colección Navacerrada, Madrid; amongst other Private National and International collections.

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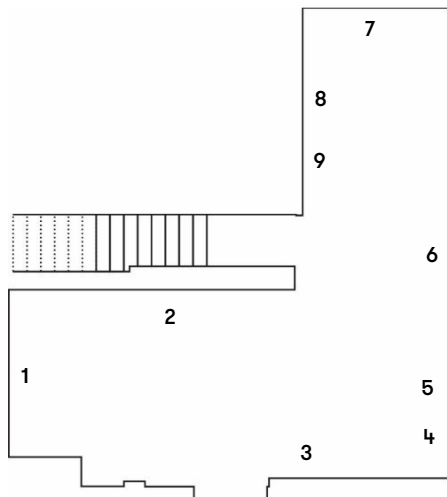
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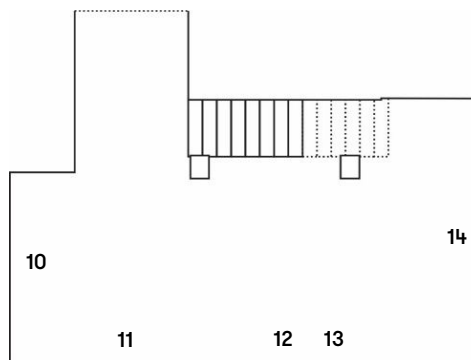
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## GALLERY 1



1. *Lesma errática*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 29,5 x 23,5 cm
2. *Entendes?*, 2022, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 175 x 250 cm
3. *Ermita*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 65 x 50 cm
4. *Untitled*, 2021, Oil and spray paint on paper, 42,5 x 30 cm
5. *Untitled*, 2021, Oil and spray paint on paper, 42 x 29,5 cm
6. *Demora*, 2022, Mural Painting
7. *Cento e tal anos*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 158 x 173 cm
8. *Estrelinhas II*, 2021, Oil and spray paint on paper, 42 x 31 cm
9. *Tule*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 35 x 25 cm

## GALLERY 2



10. *Frozen*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm
11. *Untitled*, 2019-2021, Oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm
12. *Cracked paintings*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm
13. *Régua de Musaranhos*, 2022, Mural Painting
14. *A promessa do tempo*, 2021, Oil, wax, wick and fire on canvas, Variable dimensions