

Marina Saleme

Apartamento s

February 11 – April 10 2021
Sala 02

Press Release

Marina Saleme

Apartamento s

solo show
February 11 – April 03, 2021

In this installation made up of 1,000 works including drawings, paintings and collages on paper, 100% cotton paper, canvas, rice paper, Marina Saleme presents a philosophy of waiting, getting away and being alone

This is the seventh solo exhibition by Marina Saleme at Galeria Luisa Strina. Known for her large-scale paintings with complex designs, the artist chose, in this exhibition, to create an installation with small format works that together make up a monumental and fragmented painting, showing the same female figure sitting in the same position, always at wait, you don't know what. Apartamento s series (2019-2021) dialogues with the Garotas (As descabeladas) series, from 2013, which were also presented in a solo exhibition at the gallery, assembling large groups of small works, setting up a narrative. The same is true with Apartment s.

Tadeu Chiarelli, art historian and curator, who signs the exhibition's critical essay, says that what the artist experienced, during the production of the series "was a game: she repeated the drawing over and over again, always keeping an eye on the original – "when sometimes, I think the pencil knows where to go, I take a photo with my cellphone and invert it, and start it over, paying attention to each line" - continuously producing some sort of action on it: changing the background with colors or gestures, reshaping in extreme the lines that surrounded the image, erasing the figure's face, covering it with a violent action of the graphite so far as to almost maim the media in an effort to bring the image back, in a following drawing, revealing the image through other ways of representing it, in an apparently infinite coming and going."

Please find Tadeu Chiarelli's full text below.

MARINA SALEME and the woman placing her hands on her shoulders, low head, her legs and feet tensed.

What drives someone to repeat over and over the same action for so long is the question that I place myself when observing Marina Saleme's installation *Apartamento s* that is being presented now: the artist literally remakes a thousand times the same figure over and over and in each repetition the represented image that results is unique, although it is always the same.

[*a woman placing her hands on her shoulders, low head, her legs and feet tensed/ a woman, her legs and feet tensed placing her hands on her shoulders/ shoulders, her her legs in a tensed woman head low, hands on]*]

Marina tells me that some time ago (about two years), when leafing through a magazine, she suddenly came across a photo depicting a woman "bent over herself". She carried on apparently untouched by the image, but at some point, she realized that it was imperative to return to the image and rescue it. Then, she returned to that page and removed the "leaning over herself" woman's image from the context of the magazine.

[*a woman with tense legs and feet, head lowered, hands on shoulders / a woman with hands on shoulders, head lowered, legs and feet tense / a woman with head lowered legs and feet tense, hands on shoulders]*]

Marina is not sure what made her unconsciously feel about that woman's photo. If at first the image did not seem to attract her attention, the strange need to return to it minutes later, the realization that something potent was contained there, something which, in some way, the artist identified herself with (for the better or worse), touched Marina deeply. In fact, that was the beginning of everything.

[*a woman with her legs lowered, her hands on her legs shoulders head tense the the / shoulders, with the the tense feet with her hands a leg down, with a woman on her heads the / a woman with her feet and legs tense her hands a head down, legs]*]

Having the photograph in front of her, the artist began the second stage of her process, now copying the figure onto different medias and using various techniques (always linked to drawing and painting), reshaping their forms, the lines that limit them, changing their surroundings, etc. In all these procedures there was the need to destroy the image as an allegory of loneliness (or pain, guilt, detachment or despair), to reduce it to its graphic/plastic materiality, removing it from both its simple symbolic dimension as well as from the excessive flat homogeneity of the photo.

[*a woman with tense legs and feet, head down, hands on shoulders / a woman, head down, legs and feet tense, hands on shoulders / a woman with hands on shoulders, head lowered, legs and feet tense]*]

During the entire the series production time, what Marina experienced was a game: she repeated the drawing over and over again, always keeping an eye on the original – "when sometimes, I think the pencil knows where to go, I take a photo with my cellphone and invert it, and start it over, paying attention to each line" - continuously producing some sort of action on it: changing the background with colors or gestures, reshaping in extreme the lines that surrounded the image,

erasing the figure's face, covering it with a violent action of the graphite so far as to almost maim the media in an effort to bring the image back, in a following drawing, revealing the image through other ways of representing it, in an apparently infinite coming and going.

[*a woman with her legs down, her feet tense, her head on her shoulders, her hands / a woman with her head tense, her hands down, her legs and her feet on her shoulders / a woman with her hands on her shoulders, her legs and feet tense, head down*]

The effort involved in this an operation was intended to make the image disappear and, immediately, to work on to bring out the object of her interest: the “over herself” woman’s figure. Kill her to then revive her. The pleasure of destroying, the pleasure of making it be born and destroying again, and making it be born again.

[*a woman lowered, hands on shoulders, with one foot the tense the on with head with legs / with the tense woman on the shoulders, hands with legs with one head foot lowered, a / a with lowered, head one shoulders, hands with the tense ones with feet legs woman*]

Suddenly and mysteriously the game is over. The tension is resolved and as this step is finished, Marina’s only concern is to hang each of the drawings onto the wall in the shape of an orthogonal grid, which is defined by the area occupied by each one of the pictures that she has created. Is the artist responding thus to the need to deny “chaos” from the drawings she produced? Does the grid work as a “structural” contradiction to organize (as a sort of a critic comment) the expressive obsession of the game stated in each one of those drawings made by Marina?

[*a woman with her legs lowered, the feet tense, her head on her shoulders, and her hands / a woman with her hands on her shoulders, her legs and her feet tense, her head down / a woman with her head tense, her hands down, legs and feet on shoulders*]

In reference to modern painting, the representational field structure formed from the intersection of vertical and horizontal lines was used by many artists strategically to guarantee the two-dimensionality of the media and, in many cases (but not all), to inject a certain “classic” dignity to the production. Some works by Hannah Höch; or *Dois nus* (Two Nudes, 1930), by Lasar Segall (among other works by the artist), and almost all Andy Warhol’s productions and Agnes Martin’s are good examples to be remembered here.

[*a woman with her legs on her shoulders, and her feet tense, her head in her hands lowered / a woman with her head tense, her hands lowered, her legs and feet on her shoulders / a woman with her hands on her shoulders, her legs and feet lowered, the head tense*]

Therefore, in installations such as *Apartamento s*, Marina uses two “contradictory” strategies: on the one hand, the nearly inexhaustible need to remake the completed image, reorganizing its components using gestures that frequently reach a destructive frenzy; then, the organization of the results of those struggles from transformation into a fixed orthogonal grid, not onto the metaphorical reality of the canvas, but to that “true one”: the hard and raw reality of the wall.

[*a woman with shoulders, the head the hands foot on with legs tense lowered, / the one with hands tense on feet the head legs woman the shoulders, with with lowered, / the tense shoulders, head legs hands foot with with a lowered, with the woman*]

In the introductory paragraphs of a text that I once wrote about the photographer/sculptor Marcelo Zocchio's production, I noticed that, especially from the mid-1950's to the 1970's, it was possible to sense, among Brazilian and international artists, two attitudes towards the anteriority of ready-made images in our routines. There were those who accepted their usage often without any critical positioning, and others who sought to resist the governance of those images coming from the media, based on pure and simple denial or, on the other hand, by remaking them in handmade mode. (In the text, I recalled the productions by Geraldo de Barros and Alex Flemming as examples of that attitude. Today, to this list I would add, among others Regina Silveira, Iran do Espírito Santo and Leda Catunda. Marina should also be added to this team[1]).

[a woman with her legs lowered, her feet tense, and her head on her shoulders, the hands / a woman with her head lowered, her hands tense, her legs and feet on her shoulders / a woman with her hands on her shoulders, her legs and feet tense, head lowered]

From early stages in her career, Marina has guided her production by questioning those ready-made images. However, initially she did not remake images taken from the mass media, preferring to investigate the images we all have in our minds when referring to "portrait", for example. Her concern was pushing the boundaries of the notion of *schemata*, which prevails in Western painting, specifically in the genre "landscape", based on the emphasis on horizontality, dividing the canvas between "earth and" air ".[2]

[a woman with her on hands legs and shoulders, tense foot lowered, head the the with/ lowered, the legs foot with head tense with hands the on woman one shoulder, one/ with one woman on with the shoulders, foot legs lowered, with tense the heads hands]

This scheme for landscape representation – visible, both in the tradition of painting and in its heir, photography -, have at first interested Marina. It seems that she has always intended to unmask the symbolic effects of those images, those schemes, to reveal the reality of art as an action on the real and not merely projections of metaphorical images. Let's see:

[a woman with the legs lowered, the feet tense the head on shoulders, and the hands/one woman with the head tense, the hands lowered, the legs and the feet on shoulders/one woman with the hands on shoulders, the legs and the feet tense, the head lowered]

In order to create space for her painting, among those interested in the material aspect of painting in São Paulo (some coming from the old Casa 7, some not) and their apparent antipodes (Leda Catunda, Caetano de Almeida, but especially Monica Nador), Marina invested initially in the discussion of the tradition of landscape painting schemes by rising with a certain "exaggeration", the horizon line of her image "compositions". In this line of thinking, she built an "expressive" simulacrum on the plastic field, replicating either stormy or dripping skies, or falsely serene ones; below the horizon line, however, the artist did not simulate anything, just made visible the modernist grid, placed, sometimes obediently to the orthogonality, or sliding it diagonally, destabilizing any ceremonial sense.

[one woman legs and with the feet tense, the head lowered, the hands on shoulders/one woman with the head tense, the hands on shoulders, the legs and the feet lowered/one woman with the hands on shoulders, the legs and the feet tense, the head lowered]

All those paintings produced at the end of last century and the beginning of this one – the "drops",

“rains” period etc. – kept the landscape painting scheme but made fun of it, as they made the orthogonal grid explicit. However, in several of those works, Marina managed to feed this fire where she wanted to burn the idea of painting as representation: firstly, because she normally used the grid structure, but diagonally; second, because of the sumptuousness of the colors she was using – a sensuality increased by the artist from then on. (*Celeste*. 2001, in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, is an excellent example from that phase).

[*one woman the head lowered, with the feet tense, the hands on shoulders, with a legs/one woman with the hands on shoulders, with the head tense, the hands, the legs lowered/the head lowered, the legs and the feet tense, the hands on shoulders, one leg woman*]

And such sensuality would be even more emphasized when Marina, from her own volition, begins to use metallic tones, while, ironically, she transforms the modernist grid into “gradis” with an oriental flavor: a painting filled with irony on a conceptual background, one of the most exciting productions carried out in São Paulo in the first years of this century.

[*one woman the head tense, lowered with feet the hands with the head on shoulders/ one hands with the woman on shoulders, the head with/ the head the legs, and the lowered, feet on shoulders, the hands tense, one leg woman*]

In those canvases, Matisse’s ideas were addressed, even though his presence was not obvious. The French artist, who knew how to update Orientalism, leading him to a declared sensuality (without, however, objectifying the figure of the woman), just at the beginning of the 21st century had his work repurposed by an artist who bestowed upon that sensual undertone a subtle women’s diction.

[*one woman the head with the feet lowered, tense on shoulders the legs with the hands/ the hands on shoulders with the head one woman lowered, the legs and the feet the/ the legs lowered, the head and the feet tense the hands on shoulders, a woman leg*]

But, as seen before, such paintings, sometimes very sumptuous, do not form the exclusive territory where Marina articulates her poetics. *Apartamento s* is the proof. The artist also explores other fields in where to debate with her work, issues as a territory to fight against the anteriority and supremacy of *schemata* and/or *readymade* images, in opposition to what the artist’s gestures remake.

[*one woman with legs lowered, the head with the hands on shoulders, with the foot/the head lowered, the feet and the legs tense, the hands on women, one shoulders one/ one woman with the hands on shoulders the hands with head tense, the legs lowered*]

If the organization of a sensual and ironic universe set the motto of Marina’s “main” production, so, there is this other type of work that – perhaps less “recognized” in her trajectory – brings alternative ways for her to face the problems of representation or the art constituted in the limit between the representation of the world and its presentation as a new data granted to the real. I am making a reference to some series produced by the artist, predecessors to *Apartamento s*[3].

[*one woman shoulders, with the tense the with feet hands legs the head on with lowered,/ hands shoulders, one woman the with lowered, head legs with on the feet tense with/ a woman, the head lowered, the legs and the feet tense, with the hands on shoulders*]

There are many of those series in which Marina destroyed/reconstructed specific images from a myriad of origins – works of art photographic reproductions, published photos in the daily press or not, her own image reflected in a mirror etc. As seen, the artist always reaches for the core of the graphic/plastic reality of an image, leaving for later – when she places the various modules of the series on the wall, grouping them into a great one – the recovery of its symbolic potency, the source image no longer there, but from all those figures that emerged and re-emerged from the actions that Marina executes throughout the process.

[one woman with legs foot with the head with lowered, hands on shoulders, tense/ one woman hands shoulders, on with lowered, tense the legs with head with the foot/ with woman lowered, legs foot head the on one the hands shoulders, with tense with]

I ask Marina if in those series that preceded *Apartamento s*, she also used photographs found in magazines or newspapers. She replies negatively, or better, not exclusively. As mentioned before, the source images that she uses to organize her work with come from several origins, without any kind of hierarchy, by the way.

[a woman legs shoulders, the tense hands foot with head lowered, the with on with the/ with head on the lowered, woman hands foot on shoulders, legs the one tense with one/ with one the with legs the shoulders tense the lowered, foot head on hands woman with]

To illustrate this, I will restrict myself here to *Garotas (As Descabeladas) – Girls (The Disheveled)*, an installation produced between 2010 and 2012 that today belongs to the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo – who knows, one of the most interesting pieces of work to enter that collection in the last decade.

[a woman with hands on shoulders, a head down, her legs and feet tense / tense the woman and the feet with her hands and feet legs her head lowered, / the woman with her foot legs with one with head lowered, the shoulders tense hands in with a]

The artist tells me that, for *As Descabeladas (The Disheveled)*, the source images would have been: “in death, *Lamentação (Lament)*, by Giotto; in passion, a photo of Tony Ramos and Gloria Pires taken from a newspaper; in the fall, I used the dead figure of *Lament*, but vertically; in loss [the same image of *Lament*] lying on the floor, wrapped in “blankets”, on islands. But only on the first day... Then, everything unfolded in my head”

[a woman with on shoulders the one hands the head lowered, tense legs feet the the/ one woman tense feet and with the feet and the hands lowered, head one the/the woman with the hands with on shoulders the head lowered, tense feet legs the the]

Although the core of the series is *Lamentação (Lament)* by Giotto, this work, as the photo of the actors, was only a detonating fuse for the same playful process (and symbolic – but only at the end of the whole process). She was not particularly interest in Christ, except for his humanity. Marina declares:

[with with on and the one legs woman shoulders lowered, hands head tense feet the the/ withwith woman on shoulders one the hands the head tense legs feet lowered, the the/ head shoulders lowered, legs hands tense feet the woman with on with the with and the]

“Jesus’ life was not this work’s driving force – which has no Christian “religious” attribute – except for the dramas of humanity – and then yes, Jesus or any man or woman losing a child, or abandoned or in love, or lost... Anyway, disheveled”.

[*a woman with on hands and the shoulders the lowered, head the the tense feet legs/ one woman with on shoulders and the head hands tense lowered, legs feet are the the/ with the legs the the shoulders, tense one on with hands lowered with head woman feet*]

The artist was touched by the members’ visible suffering in the scene conceived by Giotto, not exactly because of Christ’s suffering, (or not only that), but because the figures’ suffering represented here. Passion of Christ, but also carnal passion, and fall and death, all four issues that the artist will explore in a series of hundreds of small paintings that make up a large installation. In some of these little paintings, Marina reinforces the values raised by the Italian artist, in others, she almost destroys them, to free the vibration of the tense and revealing gestures, in the golden, in the silver and in the blue ones.

[*a woman shoulder, with the fe[et the with tense head legs the feet on with lowered,/ hands woman one shoulders, the with lowered, legs heads with on the feet tense with/ one lowered, the head woman the legs and the feet tense, with the hands on shoulders]*]

Destroy to (re)build; go to the bottom of the well to emerge from there with new potency of meanings – this seems to be the objective of the various operations carried out by the artist in those series/installations which, it seems, constitute the lunar segment of Marina’s work, in strong contrast – but complementary to – the solar dimension of her so sensual paintings.

[*a woman with her lowered, leg, the feet tense, on shoulders the head and hands the / one with a woman the tense head the legs lowered, the feet on shoulders and the/ one woman leg tense the feet the head lowered,*]

I could not finish this text without mentioning the pandemic period we are living in, a period in which Marina was most dedicated to the series *Apartamento s*. Although the series started before the pandemic, there is no doubt that its meaning takes on even more intense drama connotations, if we link the figure made and remade hundreds and times to the situation in which we live in. However, it would be important for us not to forget one fact: as a work of art, *Apartamento s*, while imposing itself as a record of its juncture, of the spirit of its time, it is also the transcendence of itself and of its historical circumstance.

[*a woman with the hands on shoulders, the head lowered, the legs and the feet tense/ one woman with the legs and the feet tense, the head lowered, the hands on shoulders/with shoulders, the the legs on one tense woman head with lowered, hands with*]

[1] – “Marcelo Zocchio e and repulsion at to the volatile dimension of the image.” In CHIARELLI, Tadeu (cur.). Marcelo Zocchio and the materialized image. São Paulo: Pinacoteca de São Paulo, 2016, p. 35 et seq.

[2] – To better understand the notion of schemata, read: GOMBRICH, E.H. Art and illusion. A study of the psychology of pictorial representation. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1986. For instance, it is interesting to notice the fact that, shortly before that, also in São Paulo, the artist Leda Catunda developed a series of works that were equally elaborated from the notion of schemata

(*Landscape with side, Aquarium and Round aquarium* – all three from 1984 – are some examples, among others). This does not mean that there is a direct link from Catunda to Saleme. This consideration only points to a conceptual direction present in painting being produced in São Paulo in the last decades of the last century – as Sergio Romagnolo had so long ago realized.

[3] – In addition to this series of paintings already commented on, Marina Saleme develops other pieces of work that eventually come together. I refer to her productions as a photographer, as a drawing maker, as an installations producer and as an artist who creates interventions in public spaces. For the restrictions of this text, I will now only linger on the series of “compulsive drawings” of the artist and its subsequent installation in space.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Marina Saleme (São Paulo, 1958) completed her degree in Fine Arts at the Armando Alvares Penteado Foundation in 1982. In her early years she worked mainly with tonal stains, without reference to the human figure, which imply shapes composed of straight lines. However, as the artist states: “My works are never totally abstract.”

From the mid-1990s onwards, her production began to gain allusions to figures such as people, rain, flowers, clouds, often indicated in the titles themselves.

In the following decade her lines become wind and curve, drawing arabesques that every so often are partially covered by other images, and at times are evidenced in the most superficial layer.

Solo and group exhibitions: Instituto Figueiredo Ferraz, Ribeirão Preto (2019); Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro (2017); Museu de Arte Contemporânea de São Paulo (2008); Paço das Artes, São Paulo (2003); Centro Universitário Maria Antônia, São Paulo (2001); Centre D'Art Contemporain De Baie-Saint-Paul, Canadá (2004); Palácio das Artes, Belo Horizonte (1996); Embaixada do Brasil na França, Paris (1989); among others.

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