

ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

TERRENCE MALICK
ART IN THE CAUCASUS
LUIGI GHIRRI



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LISBON

Jorge Queiroz

FUNDAÇÃO CARMONA E COSTA

While many artists like to claim that the process is the most important part of their work, this assertion all too often becomes an excuse to disregard its visual quality. For Jorge Queiroz, however, process is the key to the visual power of his work. His drawings appear as collections of marks and traces, mixed with fragments of figuration. The results are richly layered, rewarding sustained examination by the viewer. The exhibition “*Debaixo das pedras da calçada, a praia!*” (Under the Cobblestones, the Beach!) presented twenty-six works (two of which are series of six pieces each) made between 2008 and 2012, showing the artist as an original, intuitive, and sometimes darkly romantic draftsman who moves between drawing, gouache painting, photography, and printmaking. The show beautifully succeeded in summarizing Queiroz’s development up through his recent move into oil painting on canvas—the start of a new chapter. The first work in the exhibition hints at the importance of looking: A large gouache-and-pencil work on paper, *Untitled*, 2011, shows a wide-open eye on a red-brownish background. Given that there is no face or other context, it is hard to know what emotion the eye might express, but it is clearly gazing intensely at something—an appropriate prelude to the works that follow.

There are three types of representational ingredients that can be distinguished in Queiroz’s often complex pictorial space: architectural fragments, landscape-like motifs, and human figures. They all exist as

allusions, not as well-defined depictions, and likewise there is no clear genre or subject. The works are intriguing for the way in which these different realms are intertwined. In one, for instance, the heads of three human figures appear as constructive parts of some kind of building: A landscape appears as a state of mind. Queiroz organizes pictorial space by using compositional devices almost like windows, frames that create spaces within the space of his pieces. They resemble text balloons in comics, but are filled with images rather than words. It’s a way to create a local perspective and logic within the larger pictorial context. The ambiguous spatial constellations, including the figures, appear as layers of consciousness, a view into a mind at work. In Queiroz’s approach, drawing is a line of thought that can be followed, appealing to a chain of associations in the mind of the observer—a Proustian universe.

As satisfying as the results of these associations are, Queiroz doesn’t come across as an artist who aims to please his audience. Rather, he seems faithful to his process. In aesthetic terms, this commitment results in a wide spectrum of work: from scratchy, loose, obsessive, and destructive drawings to beautiful, calm, and fluid ones. This variety is perfectly captured in the six sheets of “*Untitled*,” 2009, which combine drawing with printing and share a clear formal motif: two red rectangles. But in result and atmosphere, they are six worlds apart—ranging from bright and open to dark and cramped. Queiroz’s varied treatment of this simple composition shows that he’s not a formalist, but an artist who bends form to the needs of an inner content.

—Jurriaan Benschop



Jorge Queiroz,
Untitled, 2010,
watercolor, engraving,
pencil, and oil pastel
on paper, 29 x 21 ¼”.