

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Art Review Magazine
Juan Araujo
Oliver Basciano
2018

Juan Araujo's studio is located in a row of shops at the base of an eight-storey residential block. The Portuguese Roller Sports Federation is next door. Behind its metal shutters, Araujo's is an open-plan rectangular space with a large central table scattered with paints. Additionally, the room contains a sofa and a number of the artist's paintings leaning against or hung on the white walls. It is a lowkey sort of place, a far cry from the iconic architecture Araujo has been depicting in his oil works for over ten years.

The Venezuelan artist moved to Lisbon in 2015: prices in Caracas were on the rise and the process of getting artworks out of the country was proving bureaucratic and expensive. Prior to his move, Araujo's paintings explored architecture, including studies of Lina Bo Bardi's Casa de Vidro (1951) and other such fetishised modernist properties. He would not paint the houses directly though, but from photographs published in books. In much of his earlier work the artist painted the caption information, the white margin and page number. A 2014 painting, *Mondrianesque Floor*, shows an external view of João Batista Vilanova Artigas and Carlos

Juan Araujo

is a Venezuela-born, Lisbon-based artist. In 2017 his work was included in the Anozero biennial in Coimbra, and *Dimensões variáveis* at MAAAT, Lisbon. He will participate in Front International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art in 2018. He is represented by Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art, Lisbon; Galleria Continua, San Gimignano; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, and Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo.

Cascaldi's 1956 Casa Baeta in São Paulo, for example, while an interior shot, with its Mondrianesque palette, is only half in frame. The effect of depicting images of the buildings, rather than the buildings themselves, flattens the view, accentuating blocks of colour in a manner reminiscent of De Stijl.

For his most recent project, however, part of the 2017 Anozero biennial in the Portuguese

city of Coimbra, Araujo turned from architecture to the work of Portuguese photographer Jorge Molder, for an exhibition situated in the Círculo de Artes Plásticas. Molder had exhibited in the same institution in 1986. "The association of plastic arts has a long history, there are a lot of memories that exist in this space," Araujo says. "I wanted to acknowledge that and curate a show of Molder, but of course all the works would be painted by me." Molder's work, which again Araujo painted from monographs dedicated to the artist, develops and adds complexity to the appropriation the painter had played with when painting the work of iconic architects. Molder's original photographs often took the form of self-portraits and dealt with themes pertaining to symbolism, dreams and the subconscious. Araujo plays with this fact, again confusing notions of authorship in the process, as the viewer is left uncertain as to what visual effect in the oil works belongs to the imagination of Molder, and what is the result of Araujo's brushstrokes. *Oliver Basciano*



Mondrianesque Floor, 2014, oil on wood, 28 x 41 cm. © the artist.
Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

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