

Medium
Date
Artist
Web address

Web
April 2nd, 2021
Sophia Loeb
<https://www.wherestheframe.com/post/in-conversation-with-sophia-loeb>

Publication

Where's the frame

IN CONVERSATION WITH: SOPHIA LOEB

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Sophia's works are provocative yet mesmerizing. Infused with a lot of nature and flowers references, it all comes naturally to the Brazilian native. She does not want to capture nature as is, she wants to translate her feelings and emotions when she is one with nature. The composition of her work carries a circular motion that mimics the rhythmic fluidity of life cycles and her colour palette embraces the exoticism. In this conversation between where's the frame? and Sophia, we discuss many things: her residency experience at the SVA New York, moving back home to Brazil during COVID, and her strong connection to the ocean.

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You grew up in Sao Paulo, Brazil then moved to the UK to study in Camberwell, Goldsmiths and the RCA – how did these life experiences affect you? Do you consider yourself as a third culture kid?

I moved to the UK when I was 18 years old, it was always my dream to study abroad. However, I did not know how hard it could be to leave your home country, friends and family at such a young age. The first 6 months were very hard for me, I had to adapt to a new culture and climate, which is very different from Brazil. My mental health was very unstable in my first semester, but as the months went by, I felt stronger and more confident. I think what saved me from my struggles was art, I would work really hard on my own practice and every weekend I would try to go to as many shows that I possibly could. I remember thinking to myself that I was there for a reason and so I had to make the most of it, I focused a lot on my inner evolvement and on the development of my work.

Every time I returned to Brazil during the holidays, I would get this strange feeling of alienation, I would feel different from the people I knew, I would sometimes get the feeling that I was a stranger to my own self. It was hard to accept that I changed and that things in Brazil remained exactly the same. I began to realise how the timing of things was different in both countries. However, as time went by, I began to understand these differences and accept them, I learnt how to embrace them and be grateful for them. I accepted the new version of myself and the speed of my personal evolution. This experience has made me realise the importance of transformation and change so that one can be more aligned with their truest self. The experience of leaving your comfort zone always brings benefits to you in the long term, I would consider myself a third culture kid because of my locomotion of places, however I get very attached to these places and so I have a strong need to return to them, I would say that now a days I am more attached to places than I am to people.

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Can you describe your studio to us? Do you have any weird figurines? Or a lot of plants? How did your studio practice change during lockdown?

When I was living in London before the pandemic, my studio was at Goldsmiths university. Students were allocated in small constructed rooms with approximately 3 students per room, each student gained approximately two and a half meters of wall space. I was very lucky that in my last year at Goldsmiths I had a whole room just for myself because one of the students was in a leave of absence and the other student would never come into the studio and so I took over the entire place. It was very helpful because I began to up the scale of my work, and I managed to work with other media and leave the work into the studio space. In my last semester in Goldsmiths I was working in a big installation for my degree show. Unfortunately, I had to leave everything behind due to the Covid-19 crisis. I was very upset because I did not get my degree show as planned and I could not access my current work in the studio. Sadly, I had to leave London unexpectedly and return to Brazil. The pandemic has been very transformational and important for humanity, it is Earth's time to heal and we must respect that. During the lockdown in Brazil I would work constantly everyday in my room. However, the smell of oils and turps was too strong and so I would sleep in my brothers' room with him. After a while I had too much work in my room and so I installed myself downstairs in my families dining room, the smell began to bother everyone so when the lockdown became more flexible my parents told me I should get a studio and so they helped me move my things to a studio here in Brazil. It is the first time I have my own actual space; this has been an amazing opportunity for me because since I am currently on my MA at the Royal College of Arts it is essential to have a space to work in. My practice evolved a lot during lockdown because of the amount of work I produced and continue to produce. I have been exploring new ways of working and new media, this has broadened my creative mind and opened space for new possibilities in my practice. I think the lockdown has allowed me to connect deeper with myself and so produce works which are more connected to my inner needs.

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Untitled (Oil on canvas, 40.5 x 30.4 cm, 2021)

Was there a pivotal moment when you decided to pursue a career in art?

I always knew that I would be an artist from a very young age, I was always very creative in my activities. When I was 15, I decided I would pursue a career as an artist and so I began to work on a portfolio so I could apply for art schools abroad.

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Can you describe your work in less than 15 words?

My practice embraces the ephemerality of nature and the connection of all living species on earth.

Your continuous brush strokes mimic flower petals, how does nature play a role in your works?

What I love the responses to my work, viewers are often very creative. My body of work can be thought provocative, it allows and encourages a multiplicity of interpretations. I think that the ephemerality of nature, the organic and biomorphic forms in nature speaks to our soul, it speaks to our physical body, it teaches us so many things. It teaches us how to be patient, accepting and beautiful in our own unique way. Nature teaches purity and the prevalence of truth. We are made from Earth's clay; the strength and power of nature is buried underneath our skin. The more I look into nature and stay close to nature, the more I feel alive, present, creative and aligned with my inner needs. I would say that my work not only mimics flower petals, but it mimics all-natural forms. Nature is my biggest source of inspiration, both consciously and unconsciously. When I am working, I do not seek to make a direct representation of nature, rather I prefer to transform my feelings and emotions of being in contact with nature into some form of physicality so that viewers feel a sense of familiarity and connection to nature and realises the oneness of all things. Everything is connected and co-exists in a repetitive cycle of constant impact. The compositions in my work carry a circular motion which mimics the rhythmic fluidity of life cycles.

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Gaia (Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm, 2020)

Can you tell us more about your time in New York for the SVA residency in 2019?

My residency at the SVA was absolutely amazing. It was a very enriching and engaging experience which helped tremendously in the development of my practice. Just by being in New York close to all the galleries and museums, was a huge opportunity for researching into first-hand material. The opportunities we had to talk to incoming artists every day at the SVA, was mind-blowing for the development of my work. My practice had never evolved so quickly in such a short period of time. I stayed for one month at the SVA and I managed to produce 15 works. I would arrive at the studios extremely early and work the whole day until 6pm. On weekends I would go see as many shows as I possibly could. I think that the key for the development of my studio practice was my

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willingness to leave my comfort zone and experiment as much as I could. I would listen profoundly to all of the mentors I had at the program, I pushed myself like I had never done before and took as many risks as I could. I was not afraid to fail, I was not concerned with succeeding either, I just wanted to produce and produce and produce, I wanted to push boundaries and break from my conventional way of working. I was going through a period of constant destruction and construction; I was transforming myself into a new artist more aligned with my inner needs. At the end I was so proud of what I had accomplished, of how I had evolved as an artist and as a person. My practice is more aligned with my being, we both carry a mutual exchange of responsibilities, that being the growth and healing of each other. Even though we are two separate entities, we are bound as one. In the absence of each other we disappear into oblivion. For the sake of our lives, we must nurture and learn from each other so that the eternal doing can be made.



Selva do Una (Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm, 2020)

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What do you miss about Brazil whenever you're in London?

It's funny because every time I come back to Brazil, I miss London tremendously and crave to go back, and the same happens when I'm in London, after a few months I crave to return to Brazil. It is as if the separation from both places helps me value them more. I think that space is something very important because we can see things more clearly. This has made me into a more grateful person for sure. There are a lot of things I miss about Brazil when I am in London; actually, it is a very long list hahaha. I would say the sunny weather, the tropical vegetation, the food, people's warmth, and especially the ocean. I feel a very strong connection to the ocean. Being away from the ocean is really hard for me, I feel that it is the strongest entity on earth, it is one of the elements which has the biggest power of healing, it is so dense and powerful, it is so full of history and wisdom.

What takes you to cloud 9?

I love activities that help me connect profoundly to my inner being. I would say that what takes me to cloud 9, is when I get very deep into my art practice and time flies, it looks as if I transcended into an alternative creative dimension where there is no sense of time and space. This also happens to me when I am surfing or swimming long distances in the ocean. I think that reaching this meditative state where there is no interference with the mind is so powerful and transformational.

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Carnivaorta (Ceramics, 48 x 46 x 20 cm, 2020)

If the current pandemic is a song, what song do you think it will be?

I have been listening to a lot of songs that talk about the passage of Time and I have been currently writing a portfolio of texts for the RCA that talks about my experiences with the passage of time. Sometimes what we predict in our mental sphere is not aligned with the happenings of the universe, we must respect its timings to perform its will. If we don't, we create terrible anxiety within ourselves, we must surrender to the process, we must observe nature and learn from its wisdom.

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The song I would relate to my personal experience in the current pandemic is *Tempo só* by *Gilberto Gil*. The lyrics and the rhythm of this song is so beautiful and empowering. It talks about the importance of time, how time is responsible for determining the outcomes and consequences in our lives, it teaches patients and the importance of love.

“Somente o Tempo, o tempo só

Time alone, oh! Time will tell...”



The dragon's den (Oil on canvas, 40.5 x 30.4 cm, 2021)

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What are you currently working on? Any projects we should know of and that you can reveal?

I think that this pandemic has caused another very big shift in my practice and I began to experiment more and more with different methods of working and different media. I have been doing a lot of drawing and watercolour paintings and recently have increased the scale of my paintings. I have been working more frequently with ceramics and other crafts like macrame and sewing. I am creating different structures with the sewing machine that look very exciting. I really like the idea of mixing different media because each material carries their own language, they impact viewers in diverse ways. These alternative experimentations are very enriching for my creative process, it opens new pathways for my creative mind to wonder and imagine future projects. I have many new ideas for future installations that I hope to create when the lockdown is over.