

Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel

Galpão

Rua James Holland 71 | 01138-000 São Paulo Brasil

T +55 11 3392 3942 | www.fdag.com.br

Antonio's re/de/composition

by Thiago de Paula Souza

The image of an empty lot in Salvador's Cabula neighborhood is a recurrent memory from Antonio Tarsis' childhood. During the day, the space was used as a football field by local children and youths. Around it grew a thicket that once night fell seemed to be on fire, seen from afar and lit by the flickering lights of the neighboring houses. Antonio says that in the darkness a new landscape emerged before him, different from the daytime view – beams of light reflected on the plants appeared to set the vegetation ablaze. It was as if nightfall had transformed each part of the thicket into a territory awaiting discovery. Memories like this echo through various aspects of the artist's practice and are as crucial to his visual repertoire as the everyday materials he employs. Tarsis has a habit of storing packaging, whether fruit boxes or matches, and adds new pieces to his collection when passing through markets and fairs in London, where he lives, or Salvador, where he was born.

In *recipe for disaster*, the artist's first solo exhibition in São Paulo, he presents works made over the last months, in his Barra Funda studio. These pieces convey the main aspect of his production: testing new possibilities for the use and circulation of the objects he collects, suggesting placements outside of their usual contexts.

Leaf III (2023) materializes the memory of the vacant lot. As if his workshop were a laboratory, Tarsis carefully selects the cut-outs to be extracted from the boxes. On paper, he combines fruit box packaging, creating a series of hybrid species – prints from different parts of the world are combined and form new fruits, derived from these combinations. After meticulously filling out the whole surface, he positions a sheet of white tissue paper over the collage and traces all the cut-outs. This sheet functions as a stencil guiding cuts on the black paper laid over the collage. New layers are added over this composition, camouflaging the initial aspect of the figures themselves.

If in *Leaf III* memories of a burning landscape were only evoked, fire becomes a constitutive element of *Leaf, coal and seeds III* (2023). While the wooden boxes that compose the collage begin to fade from exposure to sunlight, Antonio begins to prepare the burnt matchsticks that will later be placed inside the box drawers. He glues them together, and after they're firmly stuck, cuts them in half. The number of matchsticks then doubles, and the burnt halves are finally inserted into each drawer. In *Where the end begins* (2023), pieces of coal substitute matches, broken down into sizes that fit into the boxes.

The difference in technique notwithstanding, drawings in the exhibition figure as intersections between the different materials Tarsis employs. The artist draws on cardboard paper, also used industrially for the production of matchboxes. In order to make this thick material more malleable and adherent, Antonio bathes the sheets in water for about 24 hours, making them easier to trace over. The first intervention is then done in gunpowder, which once burnt leaves residue on the surface. After this, he uses a welding pen that punctures the sheets and reveals the colors of the fruit boxes glued behind. Finally, his process involves the reorganization of elements, derivation and association of ideas, apart from the development of a unique language with dimensional as much as affective layers.