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## ***Romper o Dia, Crack of Dawn***

By Pedro Köberle

Each of Tatiana Chalhoub's compositions begins with a collection of fragments harvested and rearranged in a collage-like procedure. Shards of ceramics or swaths of canvas and acetate are processed in compositions where color is strictly bound with the support's material constitution. Varnish, enamel, oil and acrylic paint each lend their own specific qualities to her work's surfaces and reliefs. A vibrating, insistent chromatism is compounded with an impression of spontaneity, as if the pieces or shades of paint were assembled by the latent forces that attract them, like magnets, to compose a piece. This might be attributed to how the artist welcomes the unpredictable, since the chain of operations that leads to a given work, from fire to the oven's heat, permits plenty of moments where unpredictability intervenes. Not all accidents, however, are fruits of chance, and Chalhoub also produces deformations as if she "kept unfinished" the material elements she deals with.

*Romper o dia, crack of dawn*, this show's title, alludes to the presence of fracture as a technique, but also shelters other meanings, as we shall see. Apart from the recurrence of cracks and fissures on each surface, the liquified consistency of the enameled paintings is owed to the many layers of pigment that activate color, illuminating the surface from behind. Organic contours are fused, partially layered and entangled like solutions of different densities in a heterogeneous medium – which is why these forms do not appear *on* or *on top of* one another but mixed together in the same layer. This fluidity, however, does not disguise the mineral nature of these works. One example is the exhibition's titular piece, in which diaphanous sediments of pigment in whitened blues compose horizontal filaments of cloud that settle into a partially dissolved landscape. Within this vaporous space, Chalhoub fills in cracks in the ceramic with cadmium yellow, as if the body of the work were expanding outward, and its cracking volume held light.

Among her amorphous masses and irregular contours, Chalhoub also distributes recognizable figures. All of these works present, if not images or direct representations of the physical world's forms, at least the sensible qualities that evoke natural environments and outdoor spaces. In this sense, each piece has its own microclimate, an atmosphere that we feel unfurl along with optical experience; a range of tactical apprehensions or haptic sensations weave a perceptive web throughout the room. This ambiance is also connected to the metaphor embedded in the exhibition's title, since the hot, cold, tepid or boreal tones in each work, together with their sometimes sedimentary, sometimes aquatic finishes, translate the ambiguous climate – between day and night – of the first inklings of dawn.

The show spreads out in at least three "families" of works: the bouquets, small-scale groupings of a variety of painted ceramic shards; the panels, made up of refractory plates that function as canvasses, and finally the collage paintings, where materials as diverse as vinyl cutouts, pieces of acetate, paper and canvas patches find their place.

Moving on to the bouquets, the name of which comes as much from the fact that these shards are gathered in little populations as from the quite literal floral figures that crop up here and there. These smaller works are, under close inspection, *anthologies* – etymologically, the word derives from the composition of *anthos* (a flower) and *logia*

(collect, harvest). The important thing is to consider the kinship that emerges between the flower and the fragment. In some pieces, these fragments release figurative sparks: a landscape or a mountain are born. All this from clay, which we pull from the earth: matter that allows for modeling. This does not mean suffering arbitrary displacements, but rather ordering plasticity through forces that stabilize deformation. Like these works, landscapes are fragments wrenched free from a larger continuum. From what whole are these shards a part?

With these relationships in mind, we move on to the panels, made on sets of refractory plates. Here, too, the mineral element makes up a background over which images unfold, sometimes completely abstract, sometimes figurative, but always concrete. The rose is one of these images, particularly visible in *Rosa Vermelha* (2024). Here, cracked plates of red ceramic form the rose's fleshy volume, and others, in grayish green, form its leaves. The rose itself used to be a single red mass, and only later were its pedals provided by breaking, in another example of the accidental's constructive vocation.

In *Precipitation* (2024) lies a different approximation to surrounding space, where the foggy masses, the clouds in lilac and light blue seem to float languidly above a green hill and under a taciturn sky. Among the different fields of color is a textural variation that sometimes verges on wet velvet, as in the midnight blue in the lower portion, or seems like the warp and weft of canvas, as in the olive green parts from the middle portion upward. The vertical positioning of the work unmakes the panoramic illusionism common in landscape painting, calling attention to the puddles of pigment on the surface, dissolving and reassembling the clarity of a natural prospect. Among the clouds the artist places angular lines, graphic charges in the celestial terrain, sunrays breaking through overcast skies. In these last two works is a dilation of the gaze, attesting to Chalhoub's capacity for moving between scales, from indoor environments to wide open spaces.

Finally, the collage-painting *Figura Escura* (2024) condenses the different offshoots of Chalhoub's pictorial vocabulary in a composition where serrated cutouts and their oblong counterparts elbow for room in irregular space. The silhouettes that appear in other pieces in the show are transferred from one state to another until they arrive at their position in this one, constructed through patient accretion. This might be among the more raw works in the group, in that the dislocated superposition of fractured planes produces a simultaneity that fuses and confuses its constitutive elements. If we call the yellow, shining acetate circle the sun, the scene glows under temporary recognition, but refuses to settle into landscape. This flash of familiarity across the mind is common in the exhibition. In Tatiana Chalhoub's combinatorial processes, partial images, textures and materials, the senses are sharpened, always with new ones lurking about.