

All mystery falls short

This essay was all but done as the Artemis II mission astronauts spent about seven hours observing the lunar surface, revealing a Moon no one had ever seen before. As the spacecraft flew over the dark side of the Moon, radio signals vanished, and the astronauts' communications with Earth were cut off for roughly 40 minutes. One of the most remarkable images was of the "Earthset" — just as the Sun does each day, now we were the ones disappearing behind the horizon.

As I watched the footage and listened to the audio, I could not help but remember my visits to Tatiana Chalhou's studio and the works in *Noite Quente*. I particularly recalled my first visit, when she told me about an issue that had been driving her practice lately: what must an urban forest be like when we are asleep, one in a city such as Rio de Janeiro? One which we don't see when all the lights are off? Somehow, this life that takes place even when we don't see it was right there, on that face of the Moon, which had been concealed up to now. Nothing has changed, but everything is different.

There's something fable-like in *Noite Quente*. By that I do not mean that Chalhou's works are fables, but that they tap into that way of operating in the world. Her ceramics, bronzes, and paintings introduce us to gardens, forests, seas, and lakes inhabited by cocoons, insects, birds, and nests. Mystery and wonder inform all these images, imbued in each silhouette. They are in the full and the empty parts, and in the spaces between them. In this group of works is an exploration of the way in which minimal forms can contain entire world systems. Her interest in basic structures and processes does not seek simplification, but condensation: the smallest gesture can activate a chain of transformations, mutations, metamorphoses.

At the beginning, there is always drawing. Once upon a time, many times, a line, many lines, that lived on the paper. Some moved on to canvases. These ceased to have a relationship with the hand to take on a different body, the length of the entire arm. In the process of painting, they reaffirmed their presence by taking on a personality, or became recollections of other possible stories. Other lines left the paper to exist in ceramics, bronze reliefs, or collages. They become embodied in other materials, in articulated shapes. They appear as organic lines, existing in these moments of encounter.

In her practice, Tatiana Chalhou combines painting, ceramics, bronze, and collage into a single operating system. More than separate disciplines, these media are distinct states of one expanded pictorial language. Painting is the structural axis, but it is constantly traversed by procedures of fragmentation, montage, and material reincarnation. Elements that emerge as residues, as cutouts, or as isolated bits return in different works, displaced in scale and support. They are living matter, producing a logic of internal circulation among the different works. Here, painting, ceramics, bronze, and collage do not constitute standalone, closed-off disciplines, but as different moments of matter.

This matter is a kind of mystery that the artist insists on keeping around. Tatiana is pleased when she is surprised by a piece, when it startles her, or when she feels she has learned something new from it. She is interested in the "wrong that turns out right," in process as the key to making art. Maybe it is the alchemy that stems from ceramics, the heat when the kiln is closed and

reopened only days later. Each piece experiences repeated firing cycles, making time a concrete variable in the work: waiting, resistance, error, and reconfiguration are mechanisms for the continual transformation of forms. And what happens there, far from the eyes and on its own time, impregnates everything around it, so that painting seems like kneading clay.

These works also emphasize the importance of movement. They each carry within them a different exercise in stepping back and drawing near. This dynamic echoes within the exhibition space. *Noite Quente* is not an exhibition to be seen standing still. One must walk around these premises where perception is continually put to the test. These works exist between proximity and distance. The oscillation between micro and macro is not merely formal, but structural: the work depends on the movement of the body in space to complete itself. The experience is neither frontal nor continuous, but fragmented, as if the image were built by repeatedly coming up close and then moving away from it. We realize what we see are chimeras that constantly remind us that a step is all it takes, and we are no longer in the same place.

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