

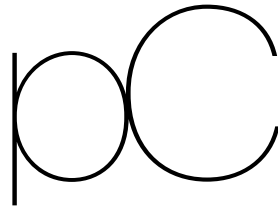
PRESS RELEASE

Julião Sarmiento | *Arena*
Pilar Corrias Savile Row
28 October – 3 December 2021



Pilar Corrias is pleased to present an exhibition of never before seen paintings by Portuguese artist Julião Sarmiento (1948-2021), titled *Arena*. The iconography and titles of each of the works, the last he made before his death in May 2021, are loosely based on drawings by Francisco Goya, seen by Sarmiento at the Museo del Prado in 2019.

Abstracted from their original context and reimagined on a grand scale, the figures in Sarmiento's paintings offer visions of human life by turns haunting, comic and triumphant, while also disrupting a number of key art historical notions, namely, those of authorship, hermeneutics and the gaze.



The title of the series, *Arena*, has a double meaning, referring both to the arena as a public place of battle, as in a bullfight, but also to the Spanish for sand, from which the English word is derived. As Sarmiento himself stated: "When I look at Goya's drawings, I find that, even in the interiors, the floor is always sandy, and one gets a sense of the extreme, overpowering heat of the Spanish peninsula, so this aspect of the arena is always there."

The title may thus be interpreted in manifold ways: as an allusion to the internal struggle of the artist's creative process, to the tension between Sarmiento's paintings and the works by Goya upon which they draw, and to the relationship between artwork and viewer in the public gallery space.

Born in 1948 in Lisbon, Julião Sarmiento lived and worked in Estoril, Portugal until his death in May 2021 and was widely considered one of Portugal's best known contemporary artists. He worked across different mediums (painting, collage, drawing, sculpture, performance, and film) to deploy a concise vocabulary of images, drawing upon themes of memory, sexuality, transgression, morality and duality. Sarmiento studied Painting and Architecture at Escola Superior de Belas Artes in Lisbon where he received his MA in 1974. The richness and complexity of Sarmiento's work lies in its system of free-floating signifiers which migrate between works and across the boundaries of medium. He was the first artist to represent Portugal at the Venice Biennale, in 1997, a significant turning point for the country's cultural presence on the international stage. Hans Ulrich Obrist said of the artist: "Sarmiento changed Portugal... very few artists transform an entire country." Sarmiento went on to appear in the 1982 and 1987 editions of the Documenta quinquennial in Kassel, Germany and also had work included in the Venice Biennale in both 1980 and 2001, as well as the São Paulo Biennale in 2002.

Selected solo exhibitions include: *The Real Thing / La Chose, Même*, Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, Paris (2016), *Doppelgänger*, Laboratório Curadoria #2, Colégio das Artes da Universidade de Coimbra (2015), *Guest or Host?*, CAAM Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (2015), Julião Sarmiento, MAMAC Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice (2014); *Lo Sguardo Selettivo*, GAM Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Torino (2014); *Guest or Host?*, Fundación Luis Seoane, A Coruña (2014); *MACE Museu de Arte Contemporânea*, Elvas (2013); *75 photographs, 35 women, 42 years*, Pilar Corrias, London (2013); *MACG, Museo de Arte Carrilo Gil*, Mexico (2013); *White Nights, A Retrospective*, Museu Serralves, Porto (2012); *CAC Contemporary Arts Center*, Cincinnati (2012); *Julião Sarmiento 2000-2011*, *Es Baluard: Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma* (2011).

For all PRESS enquiries, please contact Rees & Co:
Madeline Adeane | madeline@reesandco.com | +44 (0)7989 985 850

Pilar Corrias
54 Eastcastle Street
London W1W 8EF

t +44 [0]20.7343.700

Pilar Corrias
2 Savile Row
London W1S 3PA

www pilarcorrias.com
e info@pilarcorrias.com