

Paula Siebra
Cristalino Segredo
02/06 - 05/08 2023

Mendes Wood DM is proud to present *Cristalino Segredo*, a solo exhibition by Brazilian artist Paula Siebra in the gallery's Brussels space. This is the first opportunity for European audiences to experience the artist's work following her residency and exhibition in Bruges, Belgium, in 2021.

Taking over the entirety of the gallery space with more than 20 paintings, this exhibition presents the most complete overview of Siebra's work to date, bringing together three years of artistic research on a vast canon of subject matter – landscapes, portraits and still life. Moreover, the artist will present large scale paintings for the first time, to hang alongside the signature smaller scale, intimate works that she is best known for.

Saturated in the balmy light and atmosphere of Siebra's hometown of Fortaleza, in Brazil's northeastern state of Ceará, her paintings are at simultaneously intensely geo-specific, steeped in the culture, life and color of that part of the world, and mysteriously atemporal, somehow magically suspended from any notion of time and place.

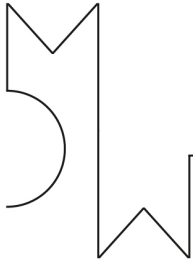
This bewitching effect is achieved by what the artist defines as "the poetics of composition". Mundane, everyday scenes – rooted in Northeastern Brazilian culture and light – are imbued with a metaphysical quality that finds resonance in the work of the Italian 20th-century painter Giorgio Morandi, whom Siebra greatly admires. Table arrangements, interiors, portraits and the simple architectures of local buildings seem embalmed by a magical stillness which, coupled with meticulously built compositions and perspectives, and slightly muted but nonetheless vibrant color palettes, contain a sense of magic that is hard to define but magnetic to look at. Symbolism is only suggested, never forced, but ever-present.

This complex exercise makes it possible for viewers who are not familiar with the artist's hometown to still find points of entry and interest in a subject matter that is entirely not their own. "The whole point of painting is to cause empathy," Siebra says, "you can see a whole world in a painting."

The exhibition will also include a 20-minute documentary made by the artist on the region's famous artisan tradition of "silicogravura", the art of using different types of colored sand, meticulously layered into glass bottles, to create complex compositions. Not only does this reflect Siebra's interest in the traditional craft of her region, but it also informs and inspires much of the color palettes that she uses to compose her mysterious tropical landscapes.

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Paula Siebra is a Brazilian painter born in Fortaleza, Ceará, in 1998. The artist focuses on images related to everyday life and scenes of intimacy using Brazilian northeastern culture as her starting point. Her paintings emerge from the exploration of established themes such as portraits, landscapes, and still lifes. These motifs, throughout her research, acquire a peculiar aspect: a certain simplification in the contours, added to a reduction in the contrast between chromatic tones, polarizing reality, and reverie – as if the artist were daydreaming about ordinary life.

In addition to following a straightforward continuum from tradition, her paintings relate to an inherent visualness of her native land of Ceará and the Brazilian Northeast as a whole. She is particularly close to folk art since her interests encompass the synthetic form of clay objects, laces, and other textile works such as crochet and embroidery, as well as the geometric and colorful architectural features of traditional houses. Surrounding villages, household objects, and anonymous faces are elements of the landscape in which the artist is immersed, appearing as if clothed by a light mist that covers everything - alternately concealing or revealing them.

Paula Siebra (b. 1998, Fortaleza, Brazil) lives and works in Fortaleza.

Her recent solo exhibitions include *Cristalino Segredo*, Mendes Wood DM Brussels, Belgium (2023); *Noites de cetim*, Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brazil (2022); *Lembrança de algum lugar*, Sobrado Dr. José Lourenço, Fortaleza, Brazil (2022); *O Soar das Horas*, Nieuwe Gentweg 21, Bruges, Belgium (2023) and *Arrebol*, Mendes Wood DM New York, USA (2021). Additionally her work has been including in group exhibitions such as *74º Salão de Abril*, Centro Cultural Casa do Barão de Camocim, Fortaleza, Brazil (2023); *Arte Laguna Prize Exhibition*, Arsenale di Venezia, Italy (2023); *Close*, Grimm Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2023); *A Gauzy Flame*, Herald St, London, United Kingdom (2023); *Pequenas pinturas II*, auroras, São Paulo, Brazil (2022); *My reflection of you*, The Perimeter, London, United Kingdom (2022); *Corpo Ancestral – 21ª UNIFOR Plástica*, Universidade de Fortaleza, Fortaleza, Brazil (2022); *Male Nudes: a salon from 1800 to 2021*, Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brazil (2022).

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