

nara roesler

**sérgio sister and
karin lambrecht:
color clímax**

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sérgio sister and karin lambrecht: color clímax

Throughout the history of art, whenever the effects and affects of painting are discussed, color has proven to be the most elusive and persistent of themes. Within the rhetorical model established since the Renaissance — following Horace's famous suggestion *ut pictura poesis*: as is poetry, so is painting — which has shaped the understanding of art within a humanist framework ever since, color would become the ultimate resource of pictorial eloquence: the equivalent, in painting, of the sudden breaking of the voice within discourse.

Voice, as a climactic event, as the apex of discursive emergence, would thus serve as the model for color in painting. According to this static illusion of the humanists, lines and forms within a composition would be equivalent to ideas and to the arrangement of words in sentences. But only color would take on the destiny of painting as incarnation—embodying its figures, giving them life, body, and believable presence. A specific distinction of the modern West, color as mimetic climax — the climactic power of color in painting, unprecedented in other cultures and eras—made possible the prized objective of stirring emotion, that is, of moving viewers emotionally and into emotions.

For centuries, color was the key to this effect of passionate affect in painting.

Yet within that same rhetorical model, culminated by the pictorial epiphany of color, lay a contradiction: lines and forms are, like ideas, controllable, predictable, rational; but color—colors, in their inexhaustible refraction—are instead like voices: ephemeral, elusive, unstable, mutating, mercurial, pathos-laden. The epiphany of color thus carried a major risk for the clarity of painting: that instead of giving birth and life to the work, it might produce a holocaust of meaning—a perceptual and saturating climax—thereby installing the sheer sensual primacy of painting.

Around 1600, as Robert Klein has argued, when the scientific method became valid in itself, when the content of discourse lost its primacy to the sheer need for expression, and when *maniera* became an autonomous value above the very idea of art, classical humanism began its slow decline, opening thresholds

toward an aesthetics of the passions that would become fundamental in modernity, and which Klein saw prefigured—albeit hermetically — in Giordano Bruno's marvelous *Treatise on Bonds*.

This is the story of the power of color as climax — for there is, upon reflection, no climax of line, unless it be its disappearance, as in the famous anecdote of Apelles' line: an infra-thin, imperceptible line. The climactic power of color allows painting to emancipate itself from all discursive control, to slip from its rhetorical straitjacket, and reveal itself as pure luminous and opaque affect of colors.

This climactic field of color finds in Sergio Sister and Karin Lambrecht two extraordinary performers, at the culmination of that centuries-long history of painting as chromatic *oikonomía*, as the privileged home of color.

Through their works—after a century of the autonomous exercise of color, emancipated from ideological restriction—it is the variety, mutation, and multiplication of climactic color surfaces that link both artists, just as much as they distinguish each from the other through complementary—if opposing—dialectical polarities. They constitute the metaphor of a hylomorphic idea of painting, in which Sister would embody the materiality of surface and Lambrecht its breath; where Sister would display the planar solidity of color in painting, the life of its resistant body, while Lambrecht would embody the atmospheric, sedimented concentration of color as a place of breaths, condensation, *pneuma*.

Sergio Sister is one of the foremost abstract painters in the Americas. His work represents one of the most interesting chapters in the long history of the monochrome in painting. In fact, in the opening page of the oldest book on painting in the West, Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, the term *monochromaton* appears—true arché of painting—which would have preceded all forms of polychromy: painting in singular colors, Pliny calls it (*singulis coloribus*). Two millennia later, that *monochromaton* became an aesthetic category of modernity, and like everything related to the modern, it was also potentially political. Notably in Russia, revolutionary artists, thinkers of a collective

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Left: Sérgio Sister, *Metallic blue and green*, 2023 [detail]
Right: Karin Lambrecht, *Untitled*, 2007 [detail]

destiny for humanity, reinvented the monochrome. Sergio Sister belongs to that history. Since he ceased to be a painter of political figuration, after the trauma of prison and torture, Sister has dedicated himself to developing the most extensive repertoire of monochromatic painting at the end of the twentieth century in Brazil. I like to think that this survival of the modern monochrome—begun around 1989 in his brushes—coincided with the rediscovery of a political space of democratic freedom in his country after the fall of the dictatorship in 1984.

But Sister's painting is not only—or simply—monochromatic. He constructs material bodies of paint whose surfaces, however modest in scale or heterocline in object-assemblage, are characterized by the planar presence of color intensities whose density and subtlety are always revealed interstitially—at the critical limits of the plane: articulating gaps, margins, and thicknesses—as coordinates of climactic amplitude. His works are thus radiant fields whose monochromatic quality aspires to no illusion of purity; on the contrary: they invite us to see the material complexity, the mutating body of their multichromatic values glowing beneath the solid monochromatic opacity. To this ambiguity—to this pulsation of color—Sister often adds the articulating element of a bond between bodies: at once a signature that allows him to assemble his polyptychs and a powerful trace of his belonging to the most advanced tradition of Brazilian modernity. Indeed, these articulations—*ligações*—that connect the planes in Sister's works coincide, nearly without exception, with what Lygia Clark called “organic lines,” that is, non-lines, incised intervals that in Sister articulate the planar plurality of his works. Thus, since the late twentieth century, Sergio Sister has embodied the most systematic development of the few strictly Brazilian formal categories of modernity: giving new life, within the monochrome, from its literal superficial truth, from its condition as a surface modulated by organic lines, to an incessant and enduring color climax.

Younger than Sergio Sister and coming from a land of migrants in southern Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul, Karin Lambrecht has persisted—with inspired intellectual

and aesthetic courage since the 1980s—in the unfinished adventure of the spiritual in art. If in Sister we find Clark's interstices—full voids—as material bonds, in Lambrecht's work the mnemonic trace of another great influence takes form: Mira Schendel, perhaps the most intensely spiritual among modern Brazilian artists, and like Lambrecht herself, bearer of the wandering and multiplying potency of Europe in America. I do not know whether this revealing and spectral presence of Schendel in Lambrecht's work—which I perceive as an absolutely fitting background music to the inner metabolism of her works—is voluntary or, like the survival of the organic line in Sister, an unintentional emergence that lends bodily complexity to her pictorial poetics.

What is certain is that in Lambrecht there exists an emotionally charged, agonistic quality of painting: her canvases are like lungs rescued in *extremis* by the breath of color, works that are characterized by their immediate climactic density. But amid these ethereal surfaces, which seem to find anew—each time—a climax of life on the edge of exhaustion, the “stigmata” also appear: soiled painting, as Walter Benjamin said of painting as stain—where emergence imposes itself above inscription—like birthmarks, like the marked doors of the Israelites during the tenth plague, like the signs of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. The “stigmata” that happily mark Lambrecht's works are often erased writings, tempestuous stitches, embroidered crosses, knots tied like scars onto the surface of the supports. All this converges in Lambrecht to explore, with absolute daring, the living epidermis of painting as tear and radiance at once. Thus, the “spiritual” quality of Lambrecht's work does not imply a resistance to the body. On the contrary, her work is a constant revelation of the incarnative dimension of color. It is, rather, an adventure, an errancy determining in painting always the imminence of radiance as climax and as ciphered coordinate, hermetic territory, palimpsest, a field for a beauty that seeks to face its own ruin and its traces.

This spiritual intensity—utterly original in Lambrecht—also carries another important mnemonic trace: the lasting memory of her formative years

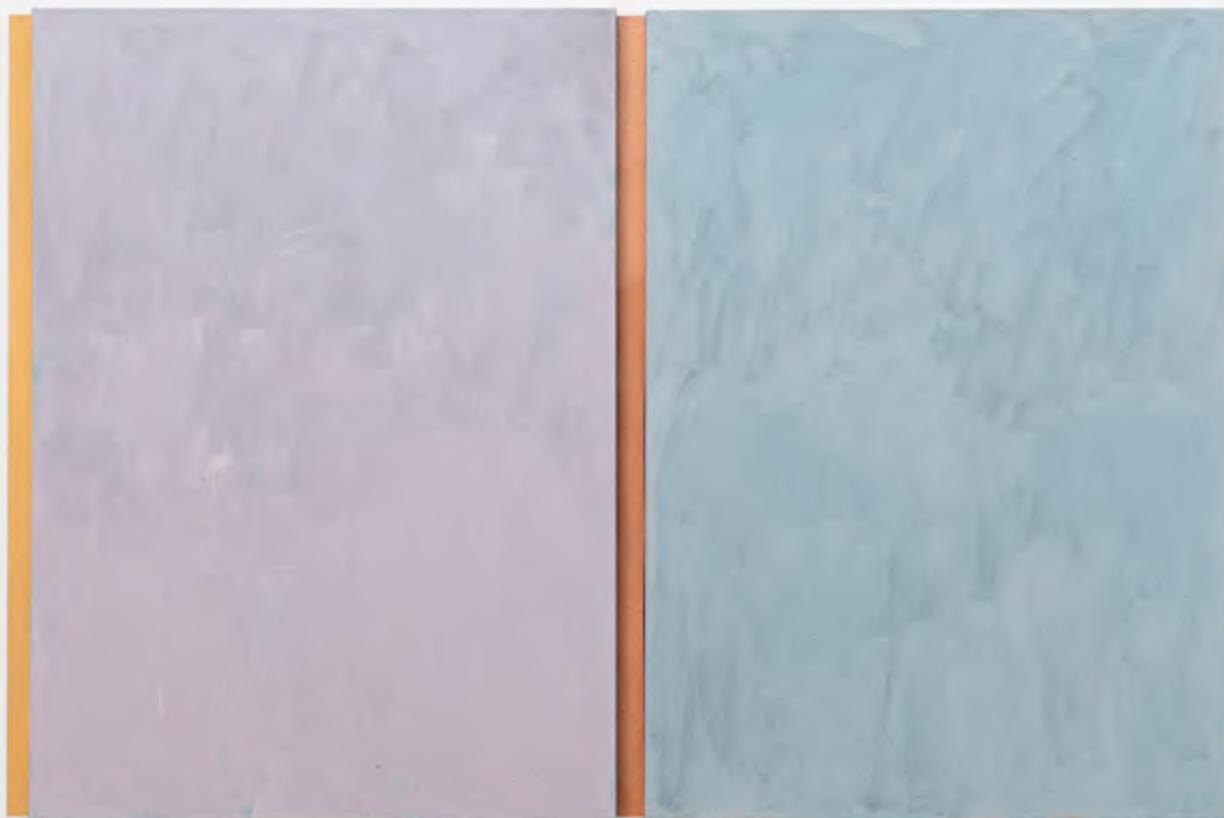
under the direct influence of Joseph Beuys. This is no small matter: just as some Spanish Renaissance painters trained in the Florentine workshops of Michelangelo and Leonardo; just as Emilio Pettoruti and Xul Solar encountered first-hand early Futurists and Expressionists; just as Lygia Clark trained under Fernand Léger or Argentine masters learned directly at Bauhaus or Ulm; just as Antonio Dias shared the foundational adventure of Arte Povera in Italy—Karin Lambrecht is, as far as I know, the only Brazilian artist whose initial training occurred under the direct influence of the celebrated German master.

But it is well known that great artists are far more than their origins, and often infinitely more than their masters. If others appear or survive in them, it is because others are always what constitute us, and because, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty affirmed, in matters of expression “no one commands and no one obeys. What we wish to say does not lie before us like a pure signification. It is nothing other than the excess of what we have lived over what has already been said.”

Sergio Sister and Karin Lambrecht are linked and distinguished in the experience of color becoming body in their works: solid and clear-cut climactic monochromatic coordinates in Sister; expansive and dense atmospheric climax color in Lambrecht. More recently, both also converge in their continued engagement with paper—the subtlest, most infinite resource of the visual arts—which can serve as a larval site, a crucible of nascent forms, a fusional realm of cardinal points: East (Sister) and West (Lambrecht) meeting in the unique resonance of forms that multiply and reconfigure themselves to encounter, in that provisional substitute for the universal, the evidence of an epiphanic aesthetic certainty: the mercurial or stable, forceful or expansive, embracing affects and effects of the inexhaustible amplitude of color.

—Luis Pérez Oramas

Sérgio Sister
Metallic blue and green, 2023
oil paint on canvas
145 x 220,5 x 4,5 cm
57.1 x 86.8 x 1.8 in

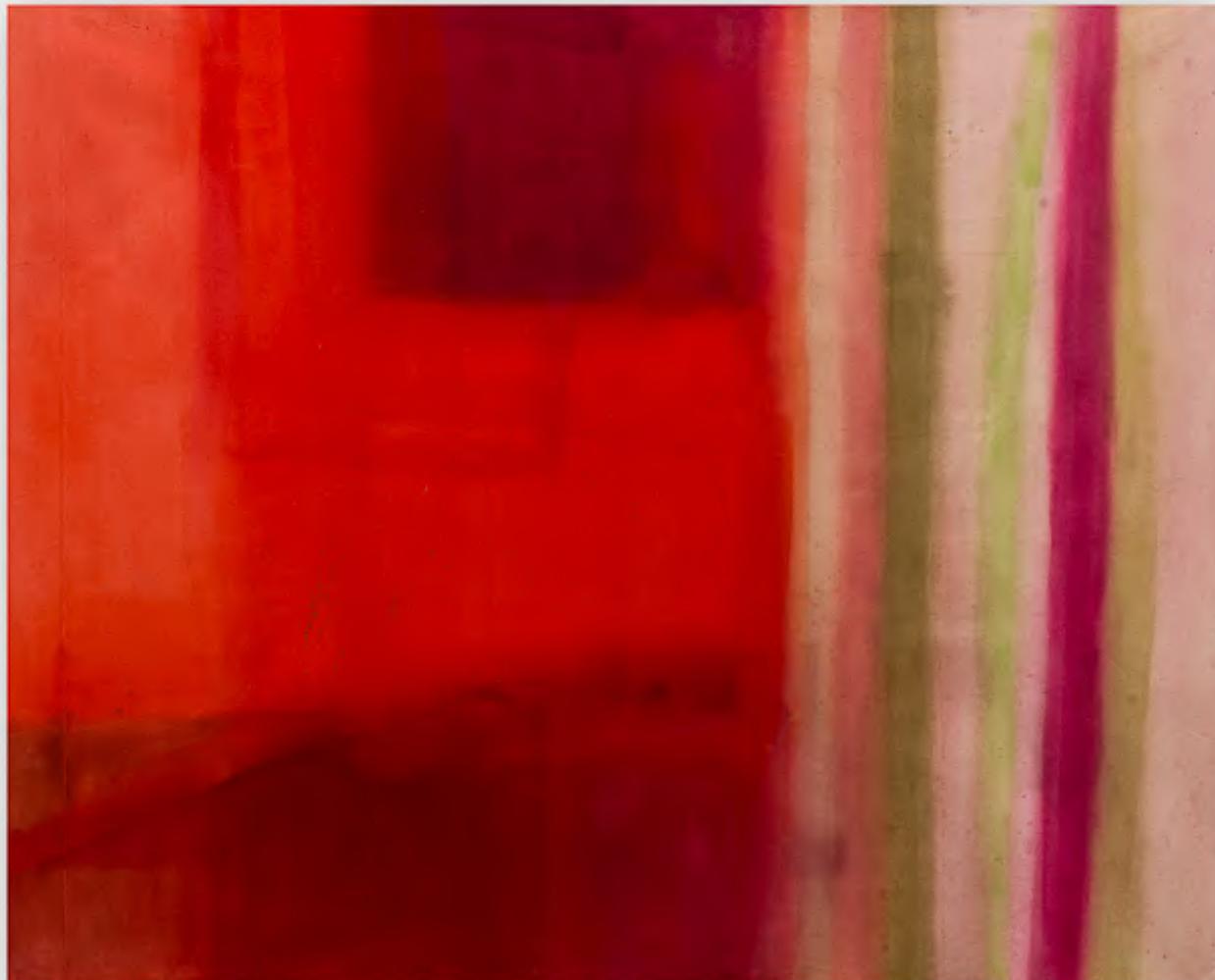


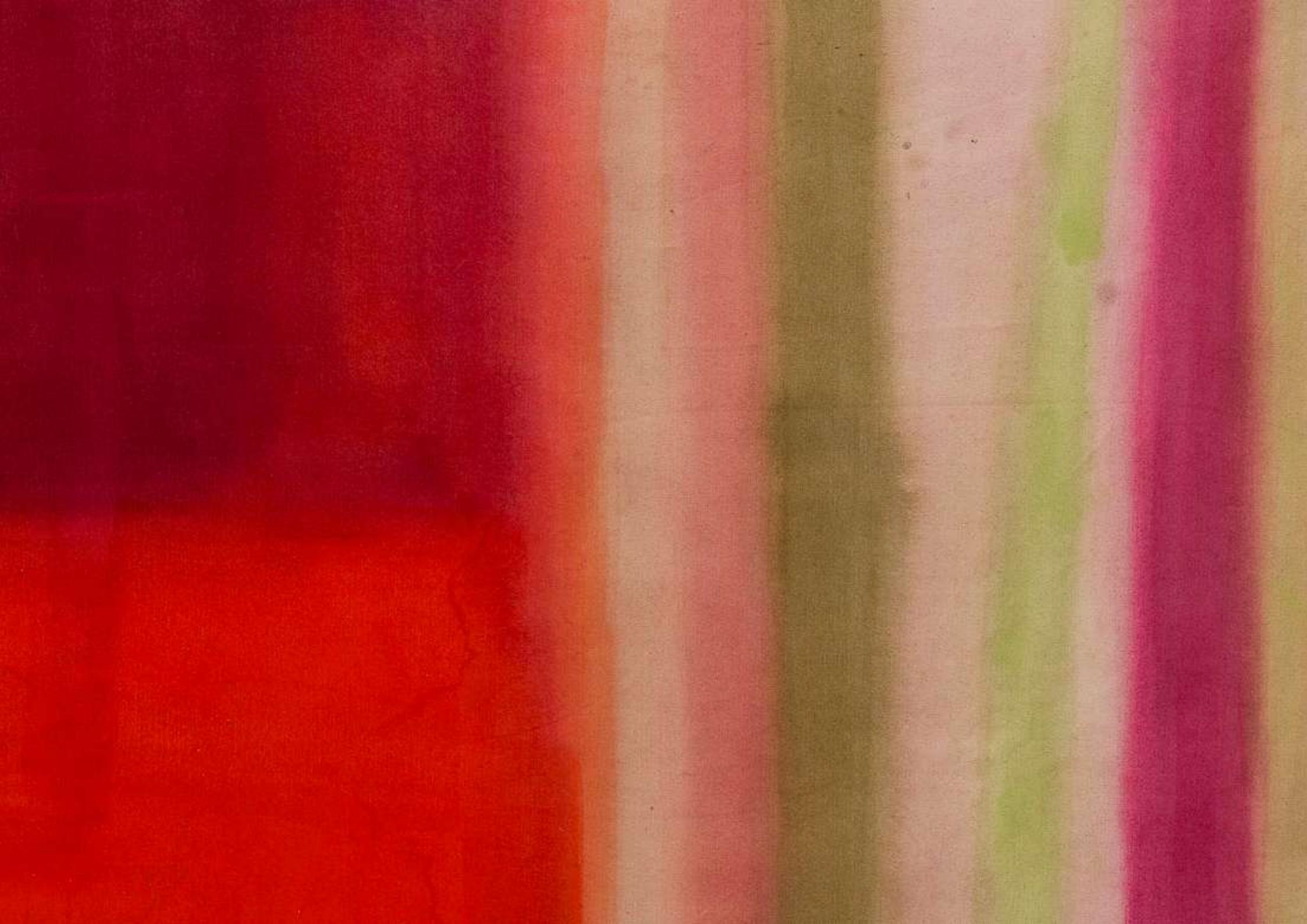


Sérgio Sister
Untitled, 2007
oil paint on canvas
180 x 15 x 4,5 cm
70.9 x 5.9 x 1.8 in



Karin Lambrecht
Butterfly, 2025
pigments in acrylic
resin on canvas
172 x 213,5 x 3,5 cm
67.7 x 84.1 x 1.4 in





Sérgio Sister

*Red and yellow earth with
orange and green connections*, 2022

oil paint on canvas

140 x 223 x 4 cm

55.1 x 87.8 x 1.6 in





Karin Lambrecht
Yes, 2017

acrylic emulsion pigments, charcoal,
soft pastel, and copper on canvas
192,5 x 361,5 x 4 cm
75,8 x 142,3 x 1,6 in



31m



QH

Karin Lambrecht

Untitled, 2023

gold leaf, acrylic resin, graphite,
and soft pastel on paper

120 x 155 cm

47.2 x 61 in



Karin Lambrecht
Butterfly, 2025
watercolor on paper
37 x 26 cm
14.6 x 10.2 in



Karin Lambrecht

Butterfly



Karin Lambrecht
Untitled, 2025
watercolor on paper
37,5 x 26 cm
14.8 x 10.2 in

Karin Lambrecht

Sérgio Sister
Oily area, 2025
oil paint on kozo
paper on filter paper
200 x 100 cm
78.7 x 39.4 in





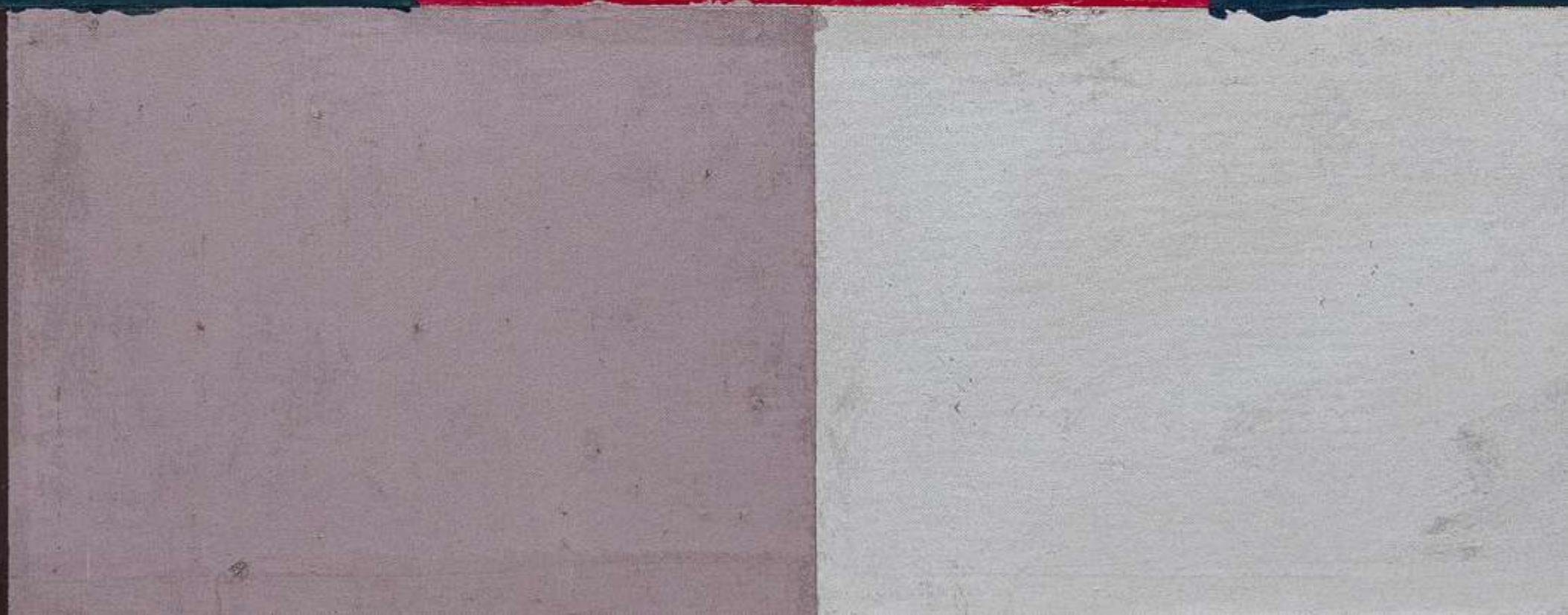
Sérgio Sister
Untitled, 2024
oil paint on kozo paper
54 x 80 cm
21.3 x 31.5 in



Ente 1024

Sérgio Sister
Untitled, 2012
oil paint on canvas
120 x 229,5 x 4,5 cm
47.2 x 90.4 x 1.8 in





Sérgio Sister

Slats - set 3, 2019

oil paint, vinyl paint, canvas,
aluminum and wood

1 piece of 48,3 x 5,7 x 2,2 cm | 1 piece 79,7 x 8,1 x 2 cm
1 piece of 19 x 2,2 x 0,9 in | 1 piece of 31,4 x 3,2 x 0,8 in





Sérgio Sister
Extra edition, 2022
oil paint on kozo paper
199 x 100 cm
78.3 x 39.4 in





Karin Lambrecht
Untitled, 2007

pigments in acrylic emulsion,
fabric and copper on canvas
298 x 238 x 12,5 cm
117.3 x 93.7 x 4.9 in





Sérgio Sister
Untitled, 2010
oil paint on canvas
120,3 x 230,1 x 5,1 cm
47,4 x 90,6 x 2 in

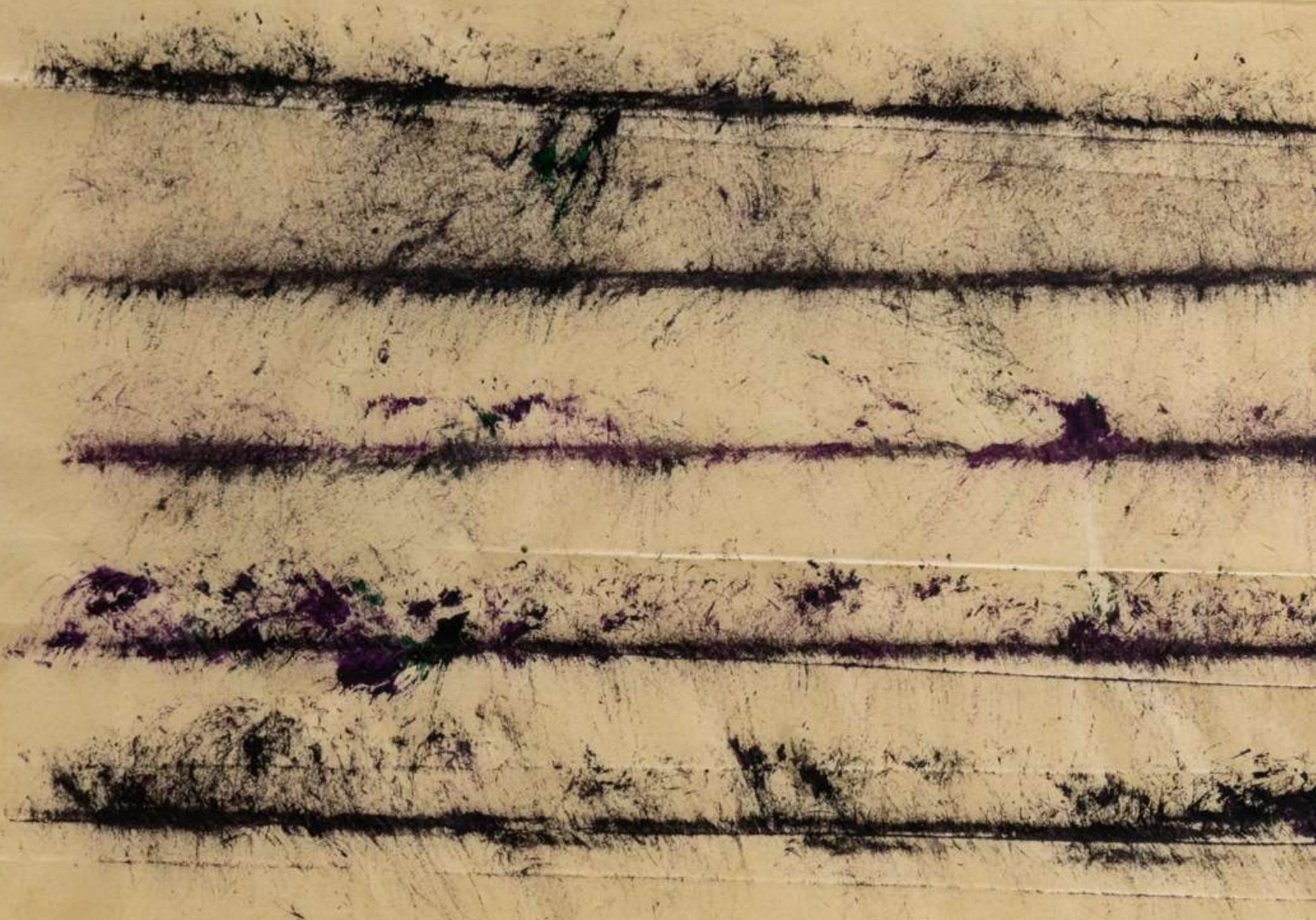


Sérgio Sister
Untitled, 1995
oil paint on canvas
120 x 140 x 3 cm
47.2 x 55.1 x 1.2 in

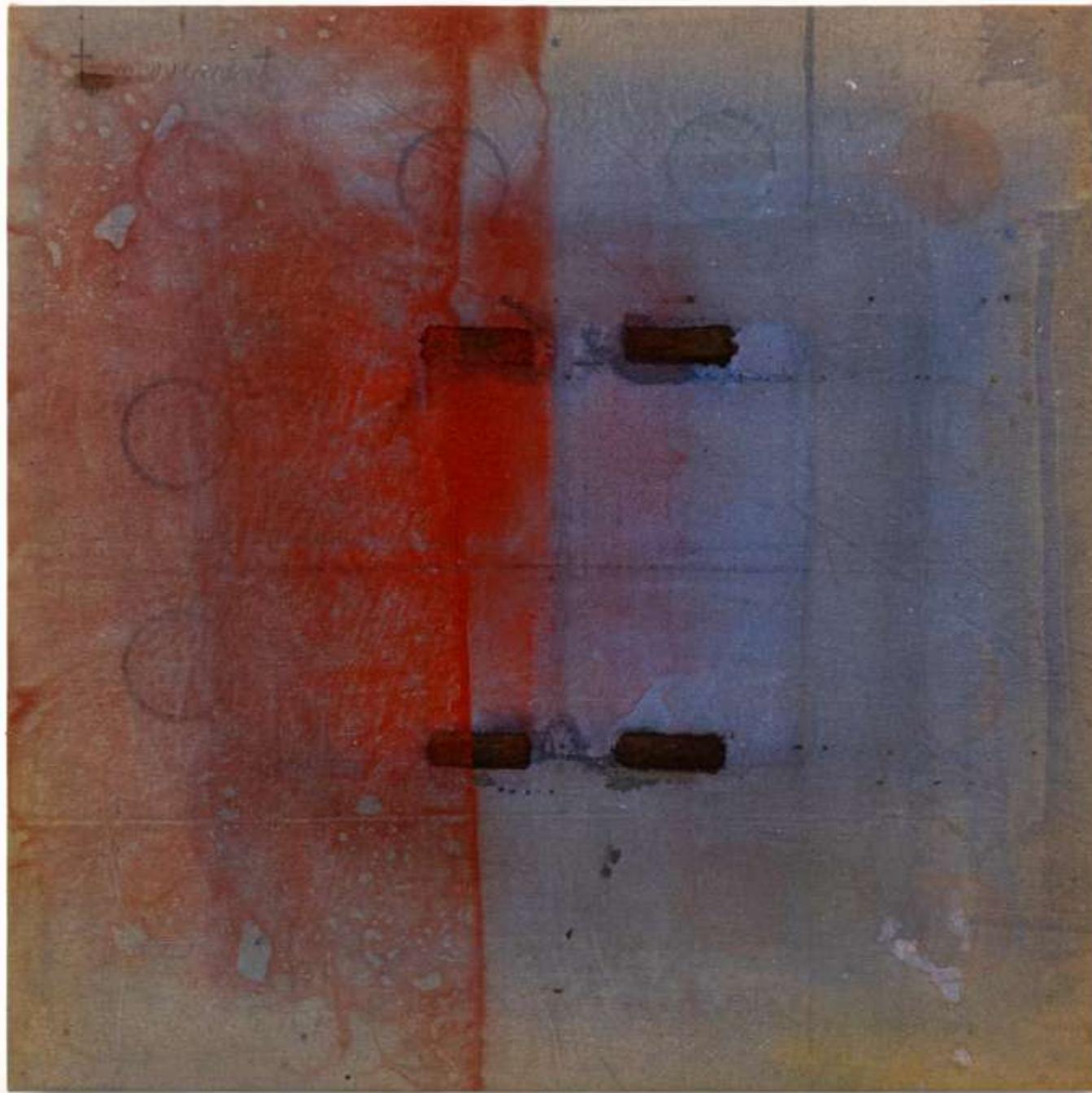


Sérgio Sister
Untitled, 1989
oil paint on paper kozo
40 x 45 cm
15.7 x 17.7 in





Karin Lambrecht
Untitled, 1993
pigments in acrylic
medium on canvas
84 x 85 x 3 cm
33.1 x 33.5 x 1.2 in





Karin Lambrecht
Erde Mit Schlüssel, 1993
pigment, soil
and charcoal on canvas
59 x 68 cm
23.2 x 26.8 in





Sérgio Sister
*Violet and aluminum
over red*, 2015
oil paint on canvas
38,1 x 45,7 x 6,4 cm
15 x 18 x 2,5 in





Sérgio Sister

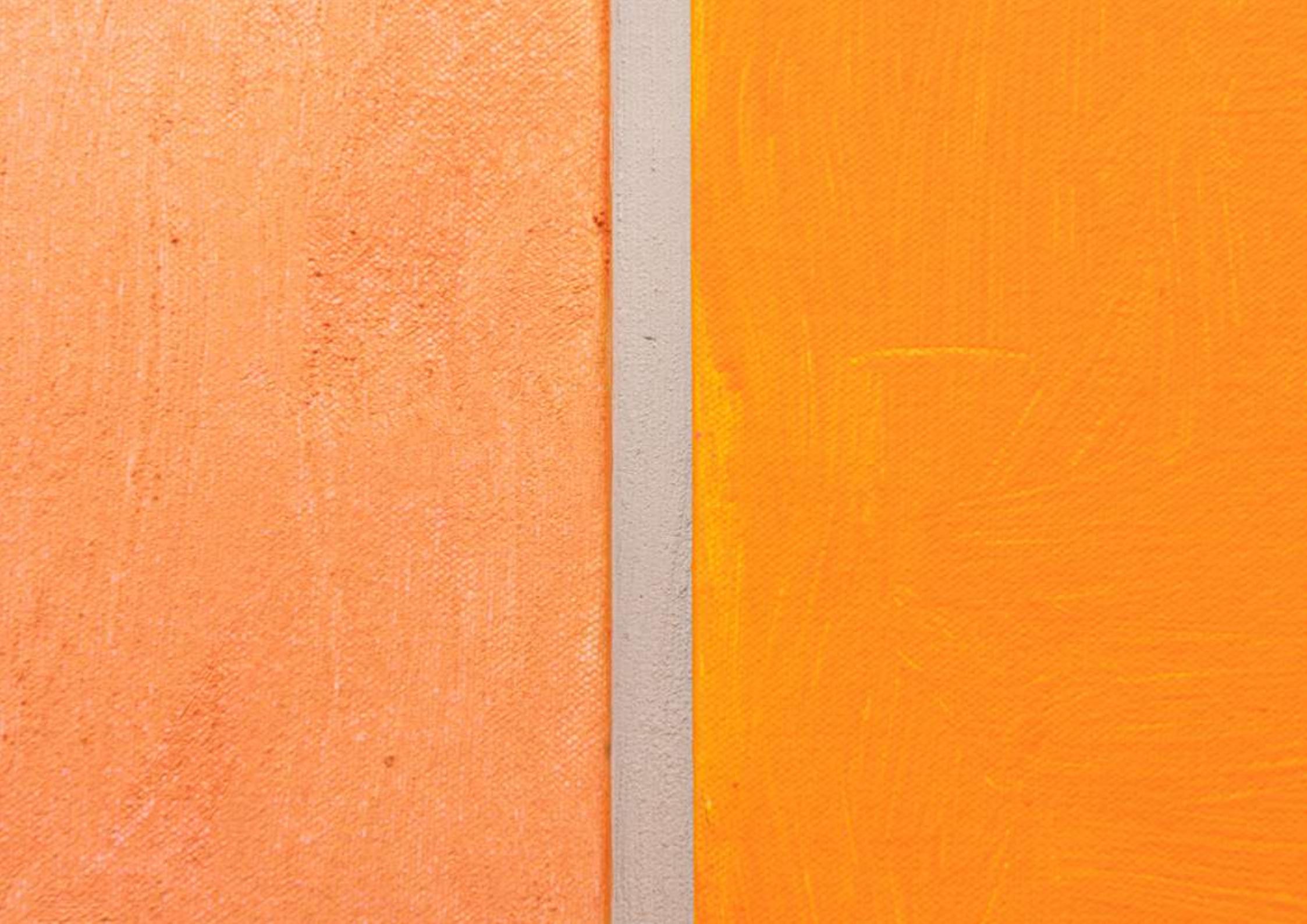
Painting with a white join, 2019

oil paint on canvas and aluminum

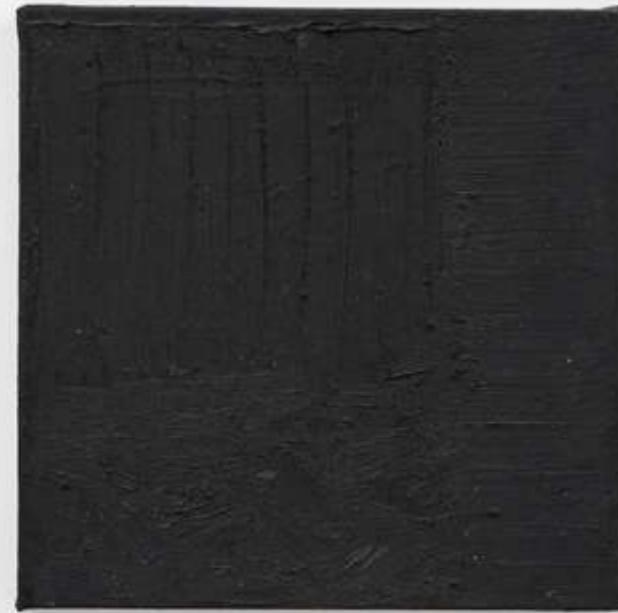
30,5 x 41,5 x 2,5 cm

12 x 16.3 x 1 in





Sérgio Sister
33 x 33, 1990
oil paint on canvas
68,5 x 33 x 2 cm
27 x 13 x 0.8 in



Sérgio Sister
Quarantine 7, 2020
oil paint on wood
37 x 25 x 7 cm
14.6 x 9.8 x 2.8 in





sérgio sister

b. 1948, São Paulo, Brazil, where he lives and works

Sérgio Sister started painting in the late 1960's, at the same time when he was working as a journalist and became engaged with political action. In 1970, Sister was arrested for his militancy. While detained for 19 months at the Tiradentes Prison, in São Paulo, Sister attended painting workshops held at the institution. As a part of Geração 80, Sister revisits an ancient theme in painting: the interplay between surface and three-dimensionality, in an attempt to liberate painting in space. What marked his production at that time was the superimposition of autonomous chromatic layers coexisting harmoniously side by side.

Today, his work combines painting and sculpture. He uses supports derived from found structures and from systems designed to serve our everyday needs, as we can see in the *Ripas* series, produced since the late 1990s (strips), and in *Caixas* series, produced since 2009, whose names are appropriate of the manufactured products from which they derive. These are sculptural paintings made from found wooden beams that resemble crates, porticos, or window frames. Sister paints the beams different colors and assembles them into configurations that allow various depths, shadows, and experiences of color to emerge.

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selected solo exhibitions

- *Pintura entre frestas e cavidades*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2023)
- *Pintura e vínculo*, Nara Roesler, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2021)
- *Then and Now*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2019)
- *Sérgio Sister: o sorriso da cor e outros engenhos*, Instituto Ling, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2019)
- *Sérgio Sister*, Kupfer Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2017)
- *Sergio Sister: Malen Mit Raum, Schatten und Luft*, Galerie Lange + Pult, Zurich, Switzerland (2016)
- *Expanded Fields*, Nymphé Projekte, Berlin, Germany (2016)
- *Ordem Desunida*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2015)

selected group exhibitions

- *Co/respondences: Brazil and abroad*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2023)
- *Entre tanto*, Casa de Cultura do Parque, São Paulo, Brazil (2020)
- *A linha como direção*, Pina Estação, São Paulo, Brazil (2019)
- *The Pencil is a Key: Art by Incarcerated Artists*, Drawing Center, New York, USA (2019)
- *Géométries Américaines*, du Mexique à la Terre de Feu, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France (2018)
- *AI-5 50 anos – Ainda não terminou de acabar*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake (ITO), São Paulo, Brazil (2018)
- *MAC USP no século XXI – A era dos artistas*, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP), São Paulo, Brazil
- *25th São Paulo Biennial*, Brazil (2002)

selected collections

- François Pinault Collection, Venice, Italy
- Fundación/Colección Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico
- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

karin lambrecht

b. 1957, Porto Alegre, Brazil
lives and works in Broadstairs, UK

Karin Lambrecht's production in painting, drawing, printmaking, and installation demonstrates a preoccupation with the relationship between art and life, in a far-reaching approach: natural life, cultural life and life as an individual. According to scholar Miguel Chaia, Lambrecht's technical and intellectual processes intertwine and are kept evident in the work as a means of creating a 'visuality that is spread through the surface and directed towards exteriority.' Her work is thus, an action that merges body and thought, life and the finite.

Early on in her career, Lambrecht began to question the idea of a canvas and how to paint it—she subsequently decided to eliminate the chassis, sow up the fabric, and use charred patches. As part of the so-called 'Geração 80', Karin Lambrecht also engaged with gestural abstraction, working within the expanded field of painting and sculpture, and establishing a dialogue with Arte Povera and Joseph Beuys, drawing from their formal concern for the relationship between both politics and materiality. From the 1990s onwards, the artist began to include organic materials in her paintings, such as charcoal, rainwater, earth and animal blood, which also determined a chromatic lexicon. In addition to these organic materials, her work frequently features crosses, references to the body, encouraging a sense of affinity, or rapport, between the viewer and the work.

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selected solo exhibitions

- *Seasons of the Soul*, Rothko Museum, Daugavpils, Latvia (2024)
- *Seasons of the Soul*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2022)
- *Karin Lambrecht – Entre nós uma passagem*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake (ITO), São Paulo, Brazil (2018)
- *Karin Lambrecht – Assim assim*, Oi Futuro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2017)
- *Nem eu, nem tu: Nós*, Espaço Cultural Santander, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2017)

selected group exhibitions

- *Fullgás: Artes Visuais e anos 1980 no Brasil*, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil (2024)
- *Acervo em transformação: Doações recentes*, Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- *Alegria: A natureza-morta nas coleções MAM Rio*, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2019)
- *O espírito de cada época*, Instituto Figueiredo Ferraz (IFF), Ribeirão Preto, Brazil (2015)
- 25th São Paulo Biennial, Brazil (2002)
- *Violência e Paixão*, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro; Santander Cultural, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2002)
- 4th La Habana Biennial, Cuba (1992)
- 19th São Paulo Biennial, Brazil (1987)

selected collections

- Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, New York, USA
- Ludwig Forum fur Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany
- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
- Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), São Paulo, Brazil

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