

Small Variations

Lucas Arruda's painting draws to itself the qualities and possibilities of the best painting: the long attention, the demanding and sensitive production, the ability to make the relationship between "what" and "how" flow harmoniously. He does this in an equally powerful manner, because, while it alludes to painting's past, to its grandeur (lost?), his painting also accompanies us in the present. Wouldn't we be there, in the enjoyment of his work, separated from the tension of the present? I think it would be the opposite: by turning on this visionary light, he also makes us feel and see the obscurity and dissension of our times.

This paradoxical light would form, for me, the center of his poetic core, since there are not exactly grand variations of motifs and themes in Lucas's painting. The great event is always silent and would respond to the creation of infinite atmospheric and luminous states. It seems to me that what Lucas proposes would be to build and sustain a difficult light, beautiful and veiled at the same time, in a constant exchange between making it visible and making it disappear. This helps us understand that the things that suddenly present themselves are of little interest to him; rather he is focused on echoing the mystery that has always involved his skies, seas, and forests.

I also think that he could not dissociate this epiphanic sense of light from the experience of a local Brazilian light. I refer to both the artist's knowledge of our physical light as well as the elaboration of the same light in his pictorial practice. In several paintings by some of our best painters, the peculiarity of an atypical light is also present. Almost the reverse of a postcard, the ambiguous light also hazes what should be a model of a tropical country: this would also be the place where excessive light haunts.

I know that Lucas admires and has a productive relationship with Iberê Camargo's paintings, for example. As an artist, Iberê achieves the accomplishment of being Brazilian and universal at the same time. In his latest works, he portrays creatures that allude to the inhabiting of a place without time or space. It always seemed to me that they would be both creatures of painting and Brazilian characters. By placing themselves nowhere, at a point outside of history, they turn the question of this place indispensable. So, it would not be an exaggeration to admit that they would also be responding to a sense of a rarefied country that is difficult to see.

Leaving aside the figures, Lucas Arruda's tonal and transitory landscapes would also be symbolic of a relationship with the country. I think that his paintings of forests form the part where these questions gain greater evidence.

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In front of them, we are always placed on a threshold, on the threshold of a kind of nonevent, even because we will never be able to enter them. The painter, most of the time, gives them a timeless sense, as a desire to protect them from their destiny. In doing so, he resets the inescapable question of why he wants to save them. In their immobility, these forests also seem to say that they are equally fragile. All this, for me, configures an omen: the aura of metaphysics that surrounds them would not free them of physical forces—those that could destroy them, for example.

Paulo Pasta, September 2021