

For the seventeenth edition of the ongoing exhibition programme dedicated to Nature, Abreu Advogados, in partnership with Carpe Diem Arte e Pesquisa, presents a series of works by the artist José de Almeida Pereira.

José de Almeida Pereira

All art establishes a relationship with reality. In this relationship, the interpretation and representation of space and time are of particular interest, thus dimension and movement are the main points of interest. Permanent change becomes an absolute rule for understanding reality. For a physicist, the idea of a present moment is illusory; there is no such thing as now. If two people sneeze 'simultaneously' on Earth and Mars, the one on Mars will sneeze only 15 minutes later. Thus, the present moment is like the end of a rainbow. Even though we think that what is right in front of us is here and now, and not light years away, the truth is that the image of that thing in front of us still takes a few nanoseconds to reach our eyes.

To look at José de Almeida Pereira's painting is to realise this impossibility of the now. The idea of a now that is impossible to capture, the now that photography captures, in its most direct and immediate relationship with reality, is spectral, as much as cinema, that realm of shadows, according to Gorky. It is precisely this spectrality that pervades José de Almeida Pereira's oil paintings. His characters, his dog and the landscape dance between a moment ago and a moment from now, in a spectral zone made up of superimpositions that blur the boundaries of the object, announcing the fleetingness or fragility of the human gaze, forced to realise that everything is a succession of nows that wander in a liminal zone between still there and already here. José de Almeida Pereira's canvases also refer to the Impressionist era, insofar as it already professed what cinema would later achieve and what photography, fully static and mortuary, was incapable of conveying: movement, transience and the relief of nature. The undefined boundaries and blurred contours of Impressionism sought to represent movement, already foreshadowing the cinema that was then taking its first steps.

On the other hand, the oil paintings shown here produce the same strangeness as a technical flaw in photography, such as when there is a ghost image, double exposure or a blurred object. The double vision (stereoscopy) and kinetics of José de Almeida Pereira's canvases question the presence of the object in time and space, which is highly dynamic in his work. The free brushstrokes, using colour that is sometimes concentrated and sometimes diffuse, give us the idea of depth of field in the landscape around the humans and the animal, who continue indifferently on their way, their activity, their movement, not looking at us, not posing, simply passing by.

Paradoxically, the painting seems to be an absolute presence, which is why it is so well preserved and conserved. Even though the stillness is false and nothing can resist transformative erosion, however slight, permanence and contemplation are things we owe to art and fiction. Thus, José Almeida Pereira's painting invites us to stop and observe a fleeting existence, in the full candour of the daily movements of a familiar dog that unfolds not only in the same painting but in several other paintings, always the same, making it both an entity and an event at the same time.

Maria Joana de Melo

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