

For the fourteenth 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 Sofia Arez.

Sofia Arez

Each mushroom is what it is - its own centre.

- John Cage

Sofia Arez brings the enigmatic kingdom of fungi to life in the twenty-one paintings presented in Symbiosis, as part of Abreu Advogados' programme of exhibitions dedicated to nature, in partnership with Carpe Diem Arte e Pesquisa.

The delicate watercolour recordings of the species found by the artist are akin to scientific illustration, attracting our gaze and interest in the diversity of shapes, colours and textures discovered, as well as contributing to a greater understanding of this little-known universe, in a continuous work of cataloguing their respective habitats - where they grow, whether you find them on leaves, in the ground, on rocks or under trees. From the silence of walks to the observation of the landscape and nature, she draws our attention to how such experiences - and these fantastic beings - affect us. "In the contemplation of the smallest and most insignificant things, from which we can find a fascination with form."

Some seem to come from another planet, or out of our own minds, from the effects we get when we close our eyes. Kaleidoscopic images expand into mandala-like shapes, magic circles and fairy rings, fascinating the observers. The mandala symbolises unity, while the ornaments and organic designs produce meditative images and consequent effects of a sensory experience. Also acting as a philosophy, the artist assimilates pause and mindfulness into her artistic practice after learning about mycology.

Sofia Arez's work is close to the illustrations of English botanical artist Margaret Mee (1909-1988) in the lightness of its many layers and striking details, in the frequent walks through the forests - where Sofia goes in search of mushrooms - and in the way both artists' work contributing therefore to the development of research into the uncertain and threatened future of our planet, integrating respect and understanding of the great power of those that heal, feed or sometimes possess a deadly poison.

Almost always camouflaged and hidden, in Symbiosis mushrooms, lichens and mycelium take centre stage. Some resemble instruments, trumpets or cells. Between their different traits and properties, they end up gaining a story, a narrative, they seem to be waiting for someone to unravel their personality. There is a complex and intelligent network going on beneath our feet, this is the landscape that Sofia Arez investigates and presents to us. From a contemplative place, felt in the subtlety of the drawing itself, in the introspective and sensitive making of the watercolour, the perceptions and ways of understanding nature branch out, revealing this larger community of which we are part, together with the micro-organisms that sustain and carry life.

Ana Grebler