

**For the nineteenth edition of the ongoing exhibition dedicated to nature, Abreu Advogados, in partnership with Carpe Diem Arte e Pesquisa, presents a series of works by the artist Luís Silveirinha.**

The images with which we are invited to interact in this exhibition by Luís Silveirinha evoke the plant kingdom through a surrealist approach, in the sense of the imagination's complete freedom and the impulse to engage with the depicted object. And although this object corresponds to a Platonic idea – that of the plant, the branch, the flower – its materialisation in these gouaches is so free and unrestrained that it goes so far as to question the Idea of the plant itself. If our gaze seeks, as ever, to make sense of what we see, here is the flower disc, here a cactus, there a succulent, a carnivorous plant, a seaweed; yet one soon realises that we are not looking at a herbarium – for this is, by its very nature, static and inert – but at something that celebrates life and movement, and which produces not the recognition typical of a herbarium, but a sense of utter strangeness in the face of the object, where any resemblance to reality is purely coincidental.

Many contemporary artists have turned their gaze to flowers and plants: Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) transformed the mundane flower into a monumental object of drapery and colour; David Hockney (1937–2026) found in nature the possibility of an attentive, contemplative gaze and the experience of light; for him, no two trees are alike, just as no two people are the same. Vegetation does not follow the laws of perspective, because it is complex; it grows in all directions and thus defies the representation of space, relying on light rather than distance to convey a sense of depth. In Lucien Freud (1922–2011) we find pure biology, life and decay, in the coexistence of lush and withered leaves; in Lourdes Castro (1939–2022), the phantasmal projection of the flower; and in the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–1989), the sensuality inherent in an object that is also nothing more than a reproductive organ, a gynoeceum or androeceum shamelessly exposed to our gaze.

LS's painting engages with all these dimensions and yet we draw from it something utterly unique: a sense of proliferation and germination, as well as an almost monstrous sense of estrangement, clearly removed from the eternalisation of nature, where the object becomes a phenomenon. His 'plants' expand and extend beyond the boundaries of the paper on which the drawing is rendered, as if we were observing merely a fragment of the cosmic cellular reproduction within these frames – a quality particularly evident in the 'Deus' series. All the drawings extend into an off-screen space that inevitably evokes a subtle unease within us, to which the distortion of perspective, for example in 'Eden', also contributes. In the 'Continuous Nature' series, the blossoming unfolds freely, almost in the surrealist manner of the 'strange corpse', just as in the rambling that springs from the stone, the paper, the fossil that has decided to blossom. In the unrestrained fertility of these series, water plays a predominant role; working with gouache on paper is a water-bearing experience in the interplay between transparency and density, in which the artist both leads and is led, in a mutual openness without which the creative act cannot take place. In the space of business and urgency that is a shared office, the contemplation of these drawings is more of an exhortation than an invitation.

**Maria Joana de Melo**