

A GENTIL CARIOCA

Ricardo Basbaum, Carlos Contente, Laura Lima, Maria Nepomuceno,
and Thiago Rocha Pitta

March 24 - April 27, 2011
Gallery 1

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery presents a group exhibition organized by the Rio de Janeiro-based gallery A GENTIL CARIOCA, featuring five artists from this gallery's program.

A GENTIL CARIOCA is a gallery situated in the Central Historic district of Rio de Janeiro dedicated to promoting local artists. Founded by artists Laura Lima, Márcio Botner and Ernesto Neto, A GENTIL CARIOCA captures and diffuses the diversity of contemporary art in Brazil. Believing that every work of art is a cultural object with the potential power to disperse culture and education, the gallery is a place where the context of art and politics is considered, remade, documented, and transformed. A GENTIL CARIOCA advocates the potential for art to act as a voice for different artists and ideas, and as such the gallery's programming seeks to stimulate and nourish a network of local Brazilian collectors and arts patrons.

The presentation at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery includes works on canvas and paper by Carlos Contente, (b. 1977) whose work is focused on the repetition of his simplified self-portrait. For several years, the artist's stylized figure has appeared infinitely multiplied in pictures and graffiti. Recently, Contente has further developed his work in complex, ecstatic, surprising, and sometimes disturbing compositions, in which he compliments his figure with a "family" and narratives. In a new series entitled Wild Naif, the artist explores the pleasures of the powerful colors found in his tropical environment. Contente's fertile imagination takes form through "naif" or childish drawings, free intuitive forms, and illustrations inspired by comic book and Pop culture - all culminating in a deep reflection on the artist's self image.

Maria Nepomuceno (b. 1976) presents a large-scale sculptural work fashioned from brightly colored rope, straw and beads that rise and sprawl across the floor, and group together as characters in a new and imaginary world. While it is possible to identify the materials used, such as simple strings and everyday beads, the application in this artwork lends to an interpretation that vacillates between the micro and macrocosmic worlds. While the materials obey their own organic and organizational logic, they are woven together in a process that presents seemingly infinite possibilities for the spiraling, circling and multiplying forms and raises the viewer's desire to return to a direct and sensual relationship with nature. Inspired by ancient traditions and complex indigenous craft techniques, Maria Nepomuceno pushes the forms into a contemporary engagement with space and structure, form and concept. Anthropomorphized yet alien, the unique and amorphous shapes are, as described by Holland Cotter in the NY Times, "at once charming and mysterious, relaxed and vivacious, like the never-entirely-gentle Rio environment that produced them."

A video and photographic series by Thiago Rocha Pitta documents honey making its way down and over rocks, as if the syrupy liquid were passing through different geological eras on their way to their final destination - the ocean. Superimposing honey on the rocks, Pitta proposes a poetic reflection of time. Trained as a painter, Pitta explores how surfaces and landscapes accept and record changes made over time by the artist's application of dyes, liquids, and/or colored pigments. Born in Tiradentes, Brazil in 1980 and living and working in São Paulo, Thiado Rocha Pitta was invited in 2010 by ARCOmadrid to participate in the Solo Projects section with his video Danae nos jardins de Górgona.

Laura Lima's performance installation, entitled Naked Magician, 2010, features a magician with short sleeves at work. A metaphor for the artist in the studio, the magician works alone, organizes his/her effects, makes notes, and creates strange and sometimes "bad" sculptures. The shortened jacket arms indicate that there are "no tricks up his sleeves" as the audience is given access to the magician's routine and secrets. Born in 1971, Lima's work is primarily concerned with the human body - often as part of a larger whole, whether connecting to or contradicting other objects. In many works, the body performs metaphors of social relationships between the individual and the collective body, and articulates connections and obstacles between bodies and objects. As described by the artist, "I am more interested in the intricate social relationships, the exchange of behaviors that in time serve to alter our perception of the quotidian, the every day."

Finally, Ricardo Basbaum's vinyl installation comprises a diagram of words and lines that form a drawing of sorts (or visual poem) which meditates on the dynamic flow between words and images. In his work entitled diagram (refrain series), the artist (b. 1961 in São Paulo) takes the diagram as a connective tool, negotiating issues that can range from a personal relationship ("me/you") to the architectural space. Mounted on a large light-green wall, this diagram deals with statements that function as refrains to be repeated, reproduced, and multiplied both orally and discursively, as in a pop song and music.