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## MARIANA GOMES

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### SOLILOQUY

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OPENING 30 JAN. 10 PM

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30 JAN. - 7 MAR. 2020

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#### **On Painting. Mariana Gomes and the Space for the Sky**

And what is the meaning of happening?  
What ambush lies beyond the heather  
And behind the Standing Stones?  
Beyond the Heavyside Layer  
And behind the smiling moon?  
And what is being done to us?  
And what are we, and what are we doing?  
To each and all of these questions  
There is no conceivable answer.  
We have suffered far more than a personal loss—  
We have lost our way in the dark.

T.S. Eliot, *The Family Reunion* (1939)

Suggested by Mariana Gomes as a motto for this exhibition, this text by T.S. Eliot uses different narrative strategies – from Greek tragedy to crime fiction – to address a family drama. In this context, it is not important to focus on the specific nature of this drama, but rather to emphasize the indirect mode the writer chose to compose the drama. A strategy that privileges the absurd and improbability of the actions. This doesn't mean that Mariana Gomes is interested in exploring any kind of drama in her paintings, but that she is interested in Eliot's use of absurd, exaggerated and symbolic devices to build on a certain topic, matter or concept.

This preference for the oblique word, which is so common, translates into the way in which this artist uses each of her paintings to convoke other painters and other works, building a pictorial and plastic device that, in some way, absorbs reality.

In this case, absorbing reality does not imply a realist approach, this is, a representative or didactic approach to reality and to its facts. The images Mariana composes to say / show the world do not render it clearer or more transparent, but rather more opaque, complex and mysterious – this is, more poetic. In this sense, we can see here a defense of friction as a necessary,

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earthly and essential condition for walking:

We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground!

L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §107

Going back to the rough ground, from which Wittgenstein made a philosophical program, in the case of Mariana Gomes means to go back to the surface, to form, to the canvas and to painting, free from politics and ideas, equipped with the ambition to paint. This idea of a daily practice of painting convokes the freedom of painting everything she wants, without the need for a previous construction or decisions that precede the action. As it was defined by Gerard Richter, this is a 'daily practice of painting' that presupposes a commitment with an idea of an everyday artistic practice.

For example, the artist works simultaneously on all her paintings, always attentive to the directions and development suggested by each one of them. A conception of the work of art as a living organism in a permanent state of development and formation.

In this context, the practice of Mariana Gomes aims to test and experiment with the different figurative, temporal and spatial potentials of painting. Figurative, because she explores and tests to the limit a huge range of visual references taken from other painters and paintings, which the artist reorganizes in new compositional logics. Temporal, because each of Mariana Gomes' paintings, thanks to its intensity and complexity, creates a zone where all the times of painting flow into a single moment. Finally, each of these paintings causes a kind of expansion of the space of painting: it conquers the sky, rises above our heads, opening up and projecting us into the different regions of the sky.

Together, these three elements allow Mariana Gomes to develop a work that revisits many aspects of the history of painting – given that in this show the main reference is Tiepolo and his magnificent skies – and affirms itself as a singular work, very expressive of a painting that doesn't want to say anything except that it is a painting.

This ambition of "not wanting to say a thing" (in the artist's own words) but, rather, engaging in a daily practice of painting, leads her into experimenting several modes of being a painter. Therefore, one can find a diversity of characters and authors in her work, a variety of artistic personalities that almost suggest the poetic malaise of heteronymy.

Some works are figurative, other abstract, other are seemingly surrealist – different elements of comics juxtaposed with a more geometric, formal, and rational universe; others are playful and use language to provoke the viewer and disturb meaning; other are metaphysical and open, throwing the spectator into the unknowing space of the heavens, opening up not towards an interior space, but transforming the paintings into celestial beings. One should emphasize: they are not paintings of the sky, but paintings that long for the sky.

Regardless of the affiliation and ambition of each of the works by Mariana Gomes, we can identify a decisive and unifying element: her refusal to reify the images. The images at the origin of these very informed and cultured paintings are not the continuation of a certain iconographic and historical tradition. Her strength lies in the way she doesn't accept her images to be transformed into culture, tamed and anesthetized, representing something other than themselves.

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It is a strategy that avoids neutralizing the images, transforming them into insignia or advertisements of any ideological, discursive and aesthetic order, and attempts to make them as a place of discover, mystery and porosity. To claim the space of painting as an obscure space of discovery and mystery corresponds to assuming painting as the place of an event that is material and spiritually indomitable. This leads the artist to obscure her works, fighting any idea of transparency or literality, because she knows that, as Adorno wrote, the materialistic transparency of culture has not made it more honest, only more vulgar. (Prisms, 1967)

Going back to Eliot's initial words, each of these works is a material, pictorial and spiritual event whose structure is composed of layers, overlays and actions whose structure of meaning is porous, profound and poetic.

Nuno Crespo, January 2020

MARIANA GOMES (Faro, 1983) lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal. She has a bachelor degree in Painting by the Faculdade de Belas-Artes Lisbon University, Portugal. In 2011 she was distinguished by the Prémio Fidelidade Mundial – Jovens Pintores 2011. From her shows, we highlight the following: Canhota, curated by Bruno Marchand, Fundação Carmona e Costa, Lisboa (2019); Quote / Unquote Between Appropriation and Dialogue, curated by Ana Anacleto and Gabriela Vaz Pinheiro, Galeria Municipal do Porto, Oporto, MAAT – Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon (2017); Romanian Dances, Baginski Gallery, Lisbon (2017); Bollocks, curated by Bruno Marchand, Appleton Square, Lisbon (2016); 10º Prémio Amadeu de Souza-Cardoso, Museu Municipal Amadeu de Souza-Cardoso, Amarante (2015); Breviário, Galeria Fernando Santos, Oporto (2014); Stop Making sense!, curated by João Pinharanda, EDP Foundation, Lisbon (2013); X Tentativas, Galeria Módulo – Centro Difusor de Arte, Lisbon (2009). Gomes's work is a part of a number of private collections and of public collections such as EDP Foundation's Contemporary Art Collection, Modern Collection of the Gulbenkian Museum, Fundação Carmona e Costa e PLMJ collection.