

Katie van Scherpenberg | Feliciano Centurión

The Armory Show

Focus Section

Booth F2

9 - 11 September 2022



Katie van Scherpenberg

Born in São Paulo to European parents in 1940, van Scherpenberg's formative years were then spent between Brazil and Europe. In 1968 she took the radical decision to move to the Amazon and settle on the remote Island of Santana. Here, in the delta of the world's largest river, she spent most of the next 17 years.

The lack of professional art materials in the Amazon forced van Scherpenberg to experiment with the formal and material aspect of her painting. Using mineral pigments from the Brazilian soil and Amazonian water, her paintings became connected symbolically and physically with the land. Experiencing another shortage of materials in the 1990s, van Scherpenberg began one of her most significant series in which she used pieces from her own trousseau as canvasses. Soon, other women started to offer her pieces of their own linen, so she amassed a considerable number of bedsheets and pillowcases to work with. What started from economic need soon acquired a subversive meaning, as the delicately embroidered collection of linen symbolising the domestic role assigned to women in patriarchal society was transformed into a work tool. These fabrics were treated pragmatically as the support used by an artist fully devoted to a rigorous pursuit of painting.





Katie van Scherpenberg, *Portal*, 1999, Bronze and copper oxidation, embroidered bed sheets on canvas, 2 modules, 109.5 x 192 cms, 43 1/8 x 75 5/8 in

Portal, 1999

Provenance

Artist's studio; Rio de Janeiro

Exhibitions

Katie van Scherpenberg: Overlooking the Amazon, Cecilia Brunson Projects, London (1 October–30 November 2021)

Description

The conjunction of materials in this work draws attention to the dichotomies of public and private, interior and exterior and masculine and feminine. For *Portal* van Scherpenberg used copper and bronze oxides as pigmentation, a choice intended to produce unexpected visual effects on the surface of this large-scale diptych. As Kiki Mazzucchelli writes, “The bright greenish copper stains on the top end of each canvas drip down over the bronze-coloured background, creating organic lines that vertically cross the painting”. This natural process of metallic corrosion that stains the material sits at odds with the quaint, domestic embroidery along the top of the sheets. The unrecognised domestic labour carried out by women in patriarchal society becomes highlighted in the copper oxide pigment that recalls notions of industrial work.

Portal also places itself in dialogue with van Scherpenberg's interventions on the landscape, or ‘landscape paintings’, such as *Jardim Vermelho*, 1984 and *Furo*, 2004. In these works, the artist focuses on applying pigment directly onto the ground in her physical surroundings; subsequently, time and the natural elements begin to change the work or make it gradually disappear. This is not dissimilar to the way in which ‘Portal’ is subjected to the effects of time and the air around it. With this connection to the artist's performance work (or interventions), we are reminded that van Scherpenberg's painting practice is inseparable from time and the natural world.





Katie van Scherpenberg, *Babado [Frill]*, 2006, Embroidered bed sheets and pigment on marine plywood, 43 x 62 cms, 16 7/8 x 24 3/8 in

Babado [Frill], 2006

Provenance

Artist's studio; Rio de Janeiro

Description

This work is an example of van Scherpenberg's series, *Mamãe Prometo ser Feliz [Mummy, I Promise to be Happy]*, in which she used bed linens as the support for her paintings. The series was initially triggered by a severe financial crisis in Brazil in the 1990s when van Scherpenberg found herself without access to proper art materials. She began to use pieces from her own trousseau as canvasses but soon other women started to offer her pieces of their own linen and she amassed a considerable amount of bedsheets and pillow cases to work with. What started from economic need soon acquired a subversive meaning, as the delicately embroidered collection of linen symbolising the domestic role assigned to women in patriarchal society is transformed into the support for the artist's work.







Katie van Scherpenberg, *Untitled*, 2002, Mixed media on canvas, 52 x 72 cms, 20 1/2 x 28 3/8 in

Untitled, 2002

Provenance

Artist's studio; Rio de Janeiro

Description

Part of van Scherpenberg's *Feuerbach and I* series, this work dialogues with a specific landscape painting by Anselm Feuerbach (1829-1880) which accompanied her to the Amazon. It was a painting which had moved with her family from country to country during her childhood. This Romantic German painting prompted van Scherpenberg's contemplation of disintegration and death as the ultimate means through which communion with nature takes place. The painting evokes both the artist's memory of the Amazon and Feuerbach's work, but in its materials and process it finds a new sympathy with the land. Van Scherpenberg uses detergents such as salt and vinegar applied to fine plates of aluminium or copper to produce pigments like Verdigris through chemical reactions and the paintings are created through a process of flux, subject to a natural means of transformation that is not subject to human control, challenging the Eurocentric tradition of painting in which the earth is representationally conquered. As Art historian Paulo Herkenhoff suggests, van Scherpenberg's use of local Brazilian pigments alters the European vocabulary of painting and illustrates the necessarily temporal nature of art.



KATIE VAN SCHERPENBERG 2002



Katie van Scherpenberg
Untitled, 1986

Gesso, tempera and wax
on marine plywood
50 x 50 cms
19 3/4 x 19 3/4 in

Untitled, 1986

Provenance

Artist's studio; Rio de Janeiro

Exhibitions

Katie van Scherpenberg: Overlooking the Amazon, Cecilia Brunson Projects, London (1 October–30 November 2021)

Description

While living on the remote Island of Santana in the Amazon Delta, van Scherpenberg did not have access to traditional painting supplies. This forced her to experiment with different natural pigments and a wide variety of materials that often incorporated found objects. Exploring the dynamics of the relationship between support and material, she prepared mixtures made with gesso, tempera, sawdust, wax, and other materials onto plywood boards, adding pigments onto the surface to create abstract works in which form and materiality are highlighted. Speaking about this period, van Scherpenberg stated that these works gave rise to 'the idea of a succession of forms leading to the unknown, the fundamental, the sacred thing, and finally painting as a road to knowledge.' This work also alludes to the artist's 'interventions' on sand, such as *Traços (Traces)* (1991) where she created a trail of marks in iron oxide onto white sand in Piauí, Brazil. Similar markings are found in a grid formation across the organic and textural surface of this work.



Katie van Scherpenberg

Born in 1940 in São Paulo, Brazil

Lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Selected Solo Exhibitions:

- 2022 *Yakecan*, Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
 Spotlight, Frieze Masters, London
- 2021 *Overlooking the Amazon*, Cecilia Brunson Projects, London
- 2019 *Olamapá*, Centro Cultural Oi Futuro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 2014 *Pororoca, Amazônia no Mar*, Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 2006 *Sin título*, Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas, USA
- 2000 *Feuerbach e eu na Paisagem*, Museum of Contemporary Art of Niterói, Niterói, Brazil

Selected Group Exhibitions:

- 2018 *Feito poeira ao vento* - Coleção MAR, Museo de Arte de Río, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 2016 *Ephemera, diálogos e entre-vistas*, MAC Niterói (Niterói Contemporary Art Museum), Brazil
- 2009 *Bienal do Fim do Mundo*, Ushuaia, Patagonia, Argentina
- 2006 *New, Now, Next*, Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas, US
- 2003 *Arte em Diálogo*, MAM RJ (Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 1989 XX Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil
- 1981 XVI Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil

Selected Collections

Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas, US

Collection Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, New York, US

Gilberto Chateaubriand collection, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The Museum of Contemporary Art of Brasília, Brazil

The Museum of Contemporary Art, University of São Paulo, Brazil

Niterói Contemporary Art Museum, Brazil

The Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

University of Essex Collection of Latin American Art (ESCALA), Essex, UK



Feliciano Centurión

Feliciano Centurión is a Paraguayan artist who died in 1996 at the age of 34, one of the countless victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic that decimated a generation. He was born in San Ignacio in the south of Paraguay and was raised by his mother and grandmother in an ultra-conservative and catholic society. In 1980 Centurión moved to Buenos Aires where he felt liberated not only by the new artistic spirit as Argentina emerged from a brutal dictatorship but also by the ability to be open in his sexuality.

Centurión's affective multi-media works can be understood through the idea that the *personal is political*. The intimacy of the textile works stems both from the artist's use of quotidian objects that have close dealings with the body – blankets, clothing and handkerchiefs – and the presupposition of his own hand's dexterity in their re-inscription. Marginalised by his sexuality and an immigrant in Argentina, the activism of his work resides in its love, spirituality and humour. Depictions of flora and fauna that recall his rural hometown become metaphors for love and beauty in objects that suggest a refuge and healing from the hostilities of the world. Through the subversive disregarding of patriarchal hierarchies in his embrace of traditionally feminine visual languages and media, Centurión's work explores all aspects of existence, from love to gender, migration and death.

Vivir es Todo Sacrificio



Feliciano Centurión
Vivir es Todo Sacrificio
[To live is to sacrifice], 1996

Embroidery with inclusion on
blanket
55 x 43 cms
21 5/8 x 16 7/8 inches

Vivir es Todo Sacrificio [To live is to sacrifice], 1992

Provenance

Artist's Family Estate

Exhibitions

Feliciano Centurión: Abrigo at the Americas Society, New York (February 14–May 16, 2020)

Affective Affinities - 33rd Biennial of São Paulo, Brazil (7th September - 9th December, 2019)

Publications

Iglesias Lukin, Aimé, and Karen Marta. Eds. Feliciano Centurión: Abrigo. p. 89, illustrated. New York: Americas Society, 2020

Iglesias Lukin, Aimé, and Karen Marta. Eds. Feliciano Centurión. p. 131, illustrated. New York: Americas Society, 2020

Pérez-Barreiro, Gabriel, and Fabiana Werneck, eds., 33rd Bienal de São Paulo: Affective Affinities: Livro Registro, 165, illustrated. São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2018.

Description

'Vivir es Todo Sacrificio' demonstrates Centurión's appropriation of materials traditionally associated with the feminine and domestic to create new meanings. The work is minimal in its execution with the artist's embroidered words being the only addition to the fabric. But the junction of the textile, with its symbolic power, and the embroidered aphorism - catholic in its undertones - creates a work laden with experience, power and beauty. Whilst the work's titular aphorism is a demonstration of the calm acceptance with which Centurión approached his mortality, the domestic context of the material suggests a desire for warmth, protection and for suffering to be soothed.





Feliciano Centurión
Gansos [Geese], 1991

Acrylic on blanket
52 x 61 cms
20 1/2 x 24 1/8 in

Gansos [Geese], 1986

Provenance

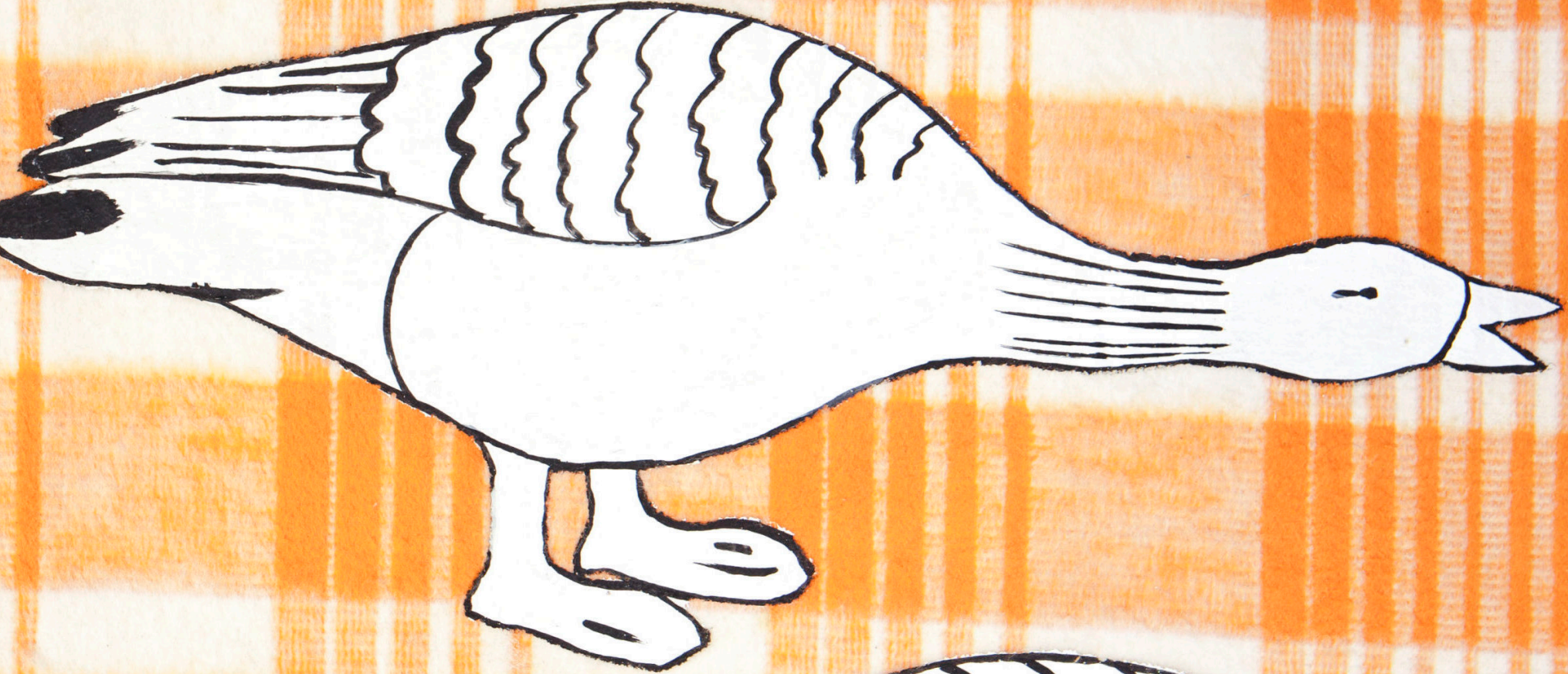
Artist's Family Estate

Exhibitions

Affective Affinities, 33rd Biennial of São Paulo, Brazil (7 September–9 December 2018)

Description

The geese painted onto a section of second-hand, chequered blanket - a material repeatedly used by Centurión - recall encyclopaedic images of animals and the artist's early childhood in rural Paraguay. Having moved to Buenos Aires, Centurión found comfort in these nostalgic reminders of the flora and fauna of his home country. The recurrence of animal and plant imagery in the artist's work can be attributed to his connection to the Guaraní concept of *Teko Porã* - a spiritual notion, or mantra, that translates to 'good living'. It encourages balance, respect and harmony in all interactions with human, animal, and plant life. Centurión was proud of his Guaraní heritage, and he spoke the language. The region of his birth, Misiones, take its name from the missions established by colonising Jesuits from 1609 onwards. Unlike other colonising forces on the continent, the Jesuits aimed to preserve the indigenous culture and language; partly as a result of this, Guaraní is one of the few officially recognised indigenous languages in Latin America; it is spoken by 90% of the population.





Feliciano Centurión
Untitled, 1990s

Acrylic paint on paper plate
27 cm diameter
10 5/8 in
[Framed 52.5 x 52.5 x 3.8 cm]
[20 5/8 x 20 5/8 in]

Untitled, 1990s

Provenance

Artist's Family Estate

Exhibitions

Feliciano Centurión: I am Awake: 1992 - 1996 at Cecilia Brunson Projects, London (19 September - 13 December 2019)

Description

This series features various animals painted onto paper plates in a style which is characteristic of the way Centurión poeticised the quotidian. He combines the imagery of children's books with the ready-made in a reflection of his enthusiasm for the aesthetics of mass consumption that swept through the Latin American middle classes in the 1960s. In 1989, Centurión found himself at the heart of a community of artists working in the orbit of the Rojas Gallery at the Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas, part of the University of Buenos Aires. These artists shared a desire to incorporate a new kind of materiality in their work - using unconventional, cheap, colourful materials. This was motivated by a desire to create art that was 'light', to distance themselves from the heavy - politically charged - conceptualism of the 1970s. Some of these works show animals and plants native to the subtropical, Paraguayan jungle where the artist spent his childhood; others allude more to fantasy, and carefully blend nostalgia, memory, and imagination. Centurión's choices of colour, pattern and material imbue his work with a light, youthful, almost childlike, sense of joy.





Feliciano Centurión
Untitled, 1990s

Acrylic paint on paper plate
27 cm diameter
10 5/8 in
[Framed 52.5 x 52.5 x 3.8 cm]
[20 5/8 x 20 5/8 in]



Feliciano Centurión

Born in San Ignacio de las Misiones, Paraguay, in 1962

Lived and worked in Bueno Aires, Argentina since 1980

Died Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1996

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 *Feliciano Centurión: Everyday Beauty*, Galeria Millan, São Paulo
2020 *Feliciano Centurión: Abrigo*, Americas Society, New York
2019 *Feliciano Centurión: I am Awake*, Cecilia Brunson Projects, London
2018 *Solo presentation*, 33rd Bienal de São Paulo: Affective Affinities. São Paulo

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2022 *Theme: AIDS (1993)*, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo
2021 *Bodies of Water: The 13th Shanghai Biennale*, Shanghai, China
2011 *Recovering Beauty. The 1990s in Buenos Aires*, Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas
2007 *Arte contemporáneo*. MALBA—Fundación Costantini, Malba, Buenos Aires, Argentina
1994 The 5th Havana Biennial, Cuba

Selected Collections

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin
Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA)
Museo Castagnino + Macro, Rosario, Argentina

Subject to availability.

Taxes Where Applicable.

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