

Almeida & Dale Art Gallery opens exhibition by Hélio Melo on March 23

Between paintings and drawings, the artist's work denounces while at the same time proposing alliances and manages to portar the forest in its completeness, from destruction to beauty

"The life trajectory and themes of his production make Hélio Melo, in addition to being the main artist of Acre and the Amazon region, a unique artist in the Brazilian panorama of the 20th century", says curator Jacopo Crivelli Visconti in an excerpt from the wall text that will be in the individual exhibition that bears his name and will open on March 23 at Almeida & Dale Art Gallery.

The characteristics that differentiate him from other artists range from his work not being autobiographical, even with a precision to bring his own experiences; the work that transcends the explicit denouncement and creates images and allegories to synthesize the violent social and landscape transformation; denunciation and defense are intrinsic in his apparently unpretentious drawings and paintings; and a form of expression that "manages to be a portrait of violence, beauty, destruction and the sublime immensity of the forest, of its silent, profound, irreplaceable existence", says Jacopo.

Born and raised in a rubber plantation, Hélio Melo (1926-2001) was a rubber tapper, boatman, barber, watchman, writer, poet, musician and artist. From the late 1970s onwards, after moving to Rio Branco (capital of Acre, a state in the Amazon region) and starting to paint the forest from memory, he participated in the first exhibitions in the region, drawing the attention of important artists and critics, such as Sergio Camargo and Frederico Morais, who became great admirers of his work.

"In the vast majority of his works, the scene is structured in a very conventional way, with a foreground close to the ground, formed by low plants or tall grass, vertical elements (basically trees) that close the scene on both sides and, in the space delimited by these axes, the characters. It is a theatrical or cinematographic construction of space that suggests, therefore, a staging and a mise en scène, not a flat, direct and naive reproduction of reality", says Jacopo.

The exhibition brings the forest portrayed by Melo and remains current even after a little over 20 years of his death, ancestral, mythical and fabulous. "An organism that feeds and is fed, that somatizes violence and destruction, that cries along with the animals, that gets emotional, suffers and, in its own way, speaks (...) Directly or indirectly, several drawings and paintings by Melo suggest that it is from the forest that things are organized and structured, and make explicit the equivalence between the characters that appear on the scene", writes Jacopo for the book that is being prepared about the artist.

For a few years now, Hélio Melo's work has been placed in dialogue with that of other artists. Also, in her contribution to the book, Lisette Lagnado analyzes the reasons for including Melo at the 27th Bienal de São Paulo, which she curated in 2006, and subtly points to the need to trace other genealogies and identify other kinships, in contemporary art, for his work and poetics. Lagnado highlights, for example, affinities with the work of Hélio Oiticica, whose intimacy with the marginalized fringes of Brazilian society fully justifies the approach with the empathetic representation of the tragedy of the rubber cycles made by Melo.

Hélio Melo

Curated: Jacopo Crivelli Visconti

Opening for guests:

March 23rd

Visitation: from 03.24 to 05.20

Monday to Friday, from 10am to 6pm. Saturday, from 11am to 4pm

Book launch: April, 15th

Almeida & Dale Art Gallery

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About Almeida & Dale Art Gallery

Founded in 1998, Almeida & Dale Art Gallery has become, in more than two decades of existence, one of the most relevant in Brazil, inserting the work and legacy of Brazilian artists in important national and international collections, collections and archives. Among them: Willys de Castro, Di Cavalcanti, Flávio de Carvalho, Mestre Didi, Alberto da Veiga Guignard, Alfredo Volpi, Jandira Waters and Roberto Burle Marx. In recent years, with Antônio Almeida and Carlos Dale as directors, the gallery's program has revisited the work of several exponents of our art, promoting retrospective exhibitions, prepared by guest curators and produced with museum rigor. Publications widely recognized for their novelty and notoriety of academic essays and rescue of historical texts accompany the exhibitions. Recently, Almeida & Dale held individual exhibitions of fundamental artists in the historical and critical panorama of Brazilian art, such as Agnaldo Manuel dos Santos, Miriam Inez da Silva, Luiz Sacilotto and Sidney Amaral, relying on loans from collectors and institutions, and stimulating interest critics in Brazil and abroad. Along with the constant promotion of exhibitions and publications, Almeida & Dale supports projects for the preservation of works by Brazilian artists. An example of this is the representation of the estate of Luiz Sacilotto, an outstanding artist of the Brazilian concrete art movement

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