

A Brazilian in Paris: Bruno Dunley on His French Solo Debut and the State of Painting in Sao Paulo

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By Juliette Soulez, ARTINFO France



PARIS — One of Paris's newest project spaces is giving a young Brazilian artist his French debut: the recently opened **11bis** has chosen **Bruno Dunley** for the third show at its space in the Marais, which will also mark the Brazilian painter's first exhibition in France. Art advisor **Claudia Paetzold** first discovered Dunley at **Art Rio** when a painting of his featuring a penguin caught her eye. After Paetzold befriended Dunley and forged links with his Sao Paulo gallerist **Marilia Razuk** and her Paris-based daughter **Marcela**, she asked the young painter to create new works for an exhibition at 11bis, a project space started by **Paetzold's cpCONTEMPORARY** and Maria do Mar Guinle's See Art advisory firm, which specializes in Brazilian art. **ARTINFO France** caught up with the talented and promising artist to talk minimalism, narrative, and life as a contemporary artist in Brazil.

Tell me about your inspiration and the poetics of your paintings.

I'm a young artist; I feel like I'm still at the beginning of my career, and I don't have a clear idea of the totality of my poetics — maybe I never will. It's as if I'm walking with a candle in my hands, perceiving things gradually as they get closer, too close even. But I have to continue if I really want to see them.

What I paint are approximations, poetic figures, which speak to the uncertainty and the doubt that I think are part of my poetry. This is more overt and intense in relationship between paintings in the new body of work that I'm presenting at 11bis. I see my work as a series of questions and statements about the possibilities of

painting, what it is, and what we expect from it. I try to give in to expectations and then break them in the work. I want to take first-time viewers to the limit of existence and acceptance. I think that's what I'm trying to paint: A painting is finished when it breaks my expectations of the work.

Would you say that your works have narratives?

I like the term "fictions without words." At first you cannot discern a clear narrative or linear trajectory; the paintings seem to have the strength and fragility of something silent, speechless, or dumb. Often we recognize the figure, but there is a strangeness because we cannot reach it or identify its purpose. There is an emptiness that insists on removing these images from the world of things, but the painting remains, it persists; it is a kind of ghost trapped in the paint.

Increasingly I see the poetics come through in the relationship between several paintings or a group of works. Forced interaction between them causes the differences to fade, and the works develop a kind of continuity. Gathered in one space, the paintings show incompleteness and ambiguity; they ask questions. My attempts to frustrate any sense of consistency in imagery or style can be very pronounced; I don't want there to be a single theme or pictorial procedure repeated.

Do you consider your paintings minimalist?

I do not think my painting is minimalist, but I think it appropriates certain aspects of that vocabulary. Often, when I start to paint, I construct a monochromatic surface, a kind of color plate, almost an object. This approach to paintings as objects comes from my experience with these works, and a spatial awareness that it is not the image's perspective that guides our eyes toward a virtual interior, but the surface and its relation to the body and space. The visual clarity in some of my studies may also be related to minimalism, but I'm not thinking about it while I'm working. My concern is creating the painting and searching for the tools to carry it through.

How is it being a painter in Brazil today?

Over the last few decades Brazil has developed a strong contemporary art scene based on traditions that date back to the 1950s, and which today have gained increased visibility in other countries. As a Brazilian artist, I feel like I'm living in a privileged moment. Besides being able to draw from European and American traditions, I also have direct access to Brazilian art history, which, although relatively short, seems timeless.

In Sao Paulo, where I live, the environment is very good for painting. We still don't have enough historical distance to understand what is happening, but there are many artists working with painting here, which is a relatively recent phenomenon. It's an optimistic moment.

I think the relationships between young painters and artists who began their careers in the 1980s have also helped nurture this environment. For my part, artists like Rodrigo Andrade, Paulo Pasta, and Sergio Sister were fundamental to the development of my

work. I maintain a close relationship with these artists as well as others from my generation, like Marina Rheingantz, Rodrigo Bivar, Lucas Arruda, Ana Prata, and Mariana Serri.

Bruno Dunley's exhibition at 11bis continues through June 30.

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