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JULIÃO SARMENTO EXPLORES AN IMAGINARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEGAS AND DUCHAMP



Portrait of Julião Sarmento by Paulo Pires.

Julião Sarmento's new exhibition "Terra Incognita" is inspired by an imagined relationship between Edgar Degas and Marcel Duchamp. Using 3D printers, Sarmento has modernized Degas' Little Dancer in a life-sized sculpture of the lithe adolescent. Another sculpture, Parce que Rose, is informed by Duchamp's iconic piece Why Not Sneeze, Rose Selavy? We talked with Sarmento about his exhibition at Sean Kelly Gallery.

WHITEWALL: Given the distance between the style and time period of Degas and Duchamp, how did you envision these two interacting?

JULIÃO SARMENTO: The "terra incognita" is not just about the fictional relationship between the two artists, but between specific works, as well: Degas' Little Dancer, Duchamp's Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?, and Duchamp's Large Glass. As far as how the two artists might interact, I leave that for the viewer to decide.

WW: The exhibition will also include geometrical paintings. How do these relate?

JS: There isn't a direct, one-to-one relationship. However, the shapes in the paintings are a reference to fractal geometry. Fractal geometry is about creating things, building things. To create a sculpture, you

have to build it up, to create a painting, you have to build it up. To create a relationship, you have to build it up.

WW: You say you consider yourself a "builder of enigmas" and that you don't like to analyze your own work. If you could mark some themes that pervade your work, what would they be?

JS: I'm always interested in what I don't know. I'm interested in asking questions. For me, my work is not about making statements, it's about questioning things.

WW: Parts of female forms in your paintings and drawings are often erased, creating a mysterious effect. Can you elaborate on this process?

JS: When I make a painting, I like the history of the painting to be evident. There should be traces of the process of making that work that the viewer can see. I could erase all evidence of the previous lines, but I want the process by which the image is created to be evident.

WW: You also used 3D printing to manipulate images from Degas. How do you see the juxtaposition between digital and hand-crafted works?

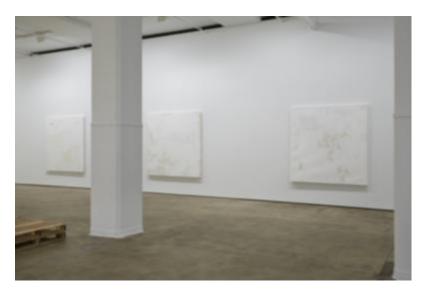
JS: I don't see an important juxtaposition regarding digital versus hand-craft processes – these are merely tools. They're different tools that I can employ to create something. It's just a matter of picking the right tool for the task.

WW: You also have two solo exhibitions in European museums. Can you tell me about these?

JS: The exhibition in Nice will be a mini retrospective of sorts. The exhibition in Torino will be about a relationship between my work, the work of Sol LeWitt, and the work of Giorgio Morandi.

"Terra Incognita" will be on view at Sean Kely Gallery through May 3.









Images: JULIÃO SARMENTO, Installation view of "Terra Incognita" at Sean Kelly, New York, March 28 - May 3, 2014, Photography by Jason Wyche, © Julião Sarmento, Courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York