

(DIS)FAMILIARITY – A SINGULAR CASE

To set up a group exhibition is always to analyse relationships of concept, form, colour, material, philosophies, life cycles, etc. However, in this case there is another less common factor in play, a family link. Three generations of artists belonging to the same family on a straight line, father/grandfather, daughter/mother and grandson/son. Most people do not become artists for one reason or another, it is not a common endeavour to aspire to (even though it has had a surge in popularity of recent), the ones who do, their offspring rarely carry on the same occupation much less so the third generation. Therefore it is truly a singular case in this respect. This allows one to approach this exhibition in a different way, to see these relationships in a familial context; how does this familiarity play in the usual interrelations of the different approaches to art? How much cross influence there is or there is not?

This exhibition has clearly been an opportunity to self-identify, to diagnose influences and explore them. There are visibly some common trends that run along the three generations: the use of and interest in literary references is prevalent; a focus on the contrasting of colour and its interactions; the artist as an individual maker without affiliation in an interested exchange with Art's currents.

António Areal's (AAreal) oeuvre has been finalized for some time now, Sofia Areal (SAreal) and Martim Brion's (Brion) is still developing, therefore, there is a clear cross pollination in the last two cases and a one directional influence from AAreal. One can clearly see AAreal's influence on the next two generations. On SAreal's work there was a well-defined interest on the French based artists AAreal liked so much, mainly the surrealists at the beginning of her career. Then as AAreal evolved to join the international Avant-garde of the pop and conceptual arts, in his own caustic way, SAreal only retained of these the directness of the approach towards the work and the strong contrasting colours. Brion on the other hand eschews the early phases of AAreal but the forms and colour contrasts used by AAreal have been a strong influence on his work, not so consciously but more as a constant presence at home which imparted visually and verbally through other's mentioning of AAreal and his work.

SAreal and Brion are a harder case, as it is still evolving. Cross-influences are clearly observable. In a more formal sense, the use of colour is much valued in both works; defining shapes, one (SAreal) with vibrant personal gestures the other (Brion) with a more distant focus but with the handmade process still present. Brion's burgeoning literary focus has been honed at first by SAreal's influence, only later would AAreal start to take part. In SAs work, one can observe in some recent series a geometrical influence a presence, which was not there before, one would suggest this is a visible sign of Brion's presence.

One can continue to mention differences and similarities in form, colour, references, influences, concepts, nonetheless it is better, in this case, to let the works speak by and amid themselves. Arranged in dialogues of one to one or in more complex arrangements, the interest of this exhibition is clearly to explore this (dis)familiarity.

One spoke mostly of similarities and common influences not differences. This is because these are too many to list them all; the most important one comes albeit from a similarity already mentioned. The strong focus on honing an individual character as an artist, leads to a different approach from all three to the way they conceive, create and relate to their work. Differences created out of familiarity.

Martim Brion

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