



A COR DIVAGANTE MAI-BRITT WOLTHERS

CURADORIA | CURATED BY
LIGIA CANONGIA

ABERTURA | OPENING
19.07 19H

VISITAÇÃO | VISITS
19.07 — 26.08

RUA DONA MARIANA 137 CASA 2
BOTAFOGO - RIO DE JANEIRO
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G A L E R I A

A COR DIVAGANTE
MAI-BRITT WOLTERS

CURADORIA
LIGIA CANONGIA

19 JUL — 26 AGO 2023

We are pleased to present **MAI-BRITT WOLTERS'** first solo exhibition at **Portas Vilaseca**, running from **July 19th to August 26th, 2023**.

"A COR DIVAGANTE" [The Wandering Colour] is curated by **Ligia Canongia** and brings together around 25 paintings - most of them new works - which will take up the three floors of the gallery building in Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro.

Born in Denmark and living in São Paulo since the late 1980s, Wolthers brings in her painting the modern legacy of pure forms, as seen in Arp, Miró and Matisse, in addition to returning to the simple and affectionate chromaticism of Guignard and Volpi. From this tradition, the artist enunciates forms that move fluidly between abstraction and representation. Her creations focus on a visual balance and are rather suggestive than figurative, mixing imagination and reality, experience and rationality.

COVER

MAI-BRITT WOLTERS

Untitled, 2023

Acrylic and graphite on paper

150 x 152 cm | 59 x 59.8 in

The artist rarely uses the color that comes directly from the tubes of paint, preferring, instead, to mix and experiment with them in the exercise of her own making, as if each fragment of the surface demanded its own color, with unique value and absolute autonomy. The fragmentary vision and the formal imprecision that spread in the space of the painting are operations originating from the chromatic effect of each fragment, they are constructions, so to speak, exclusive to color.

Despite emerging as an artist in the mid-1980s, a period defined by "the return to painting", Wolthers did not share the voluminous models of the so-called trans-avant-garde, preferring, instead, to maintain a delicate palette, faithful to the subtlety of her strokes and the power that she envisioned in the playful aspect with which her fragments "play" in the space.

"A COR DIVAGANTE" [The Wandering Colour] is open to the public from Tuesdays to Fridays, (11:00 am - 7:00 pm); and on Saturdays (11 am - 5 pm). Free admission. Portas Vilaseca is located at Rua Dona Mariana, 137, house 2 - Botafogo - Rio de Janeiro, RJ. Come along and visit us!



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A COR DIVAGANTE
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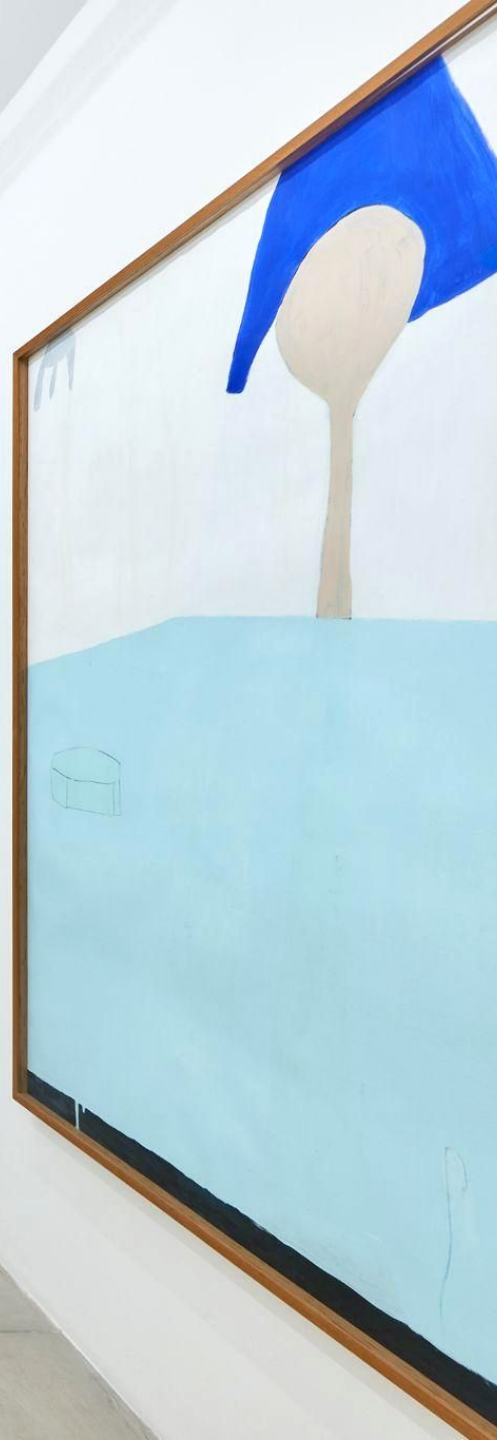




Untitled, 2015

Acrylic and pastel chalk on paper

120 x 150 cm | 47.2 x 59 in







Untitled, 2018

Acrylic on paper

100 x 152 cm | 39.37 x 59.84 in



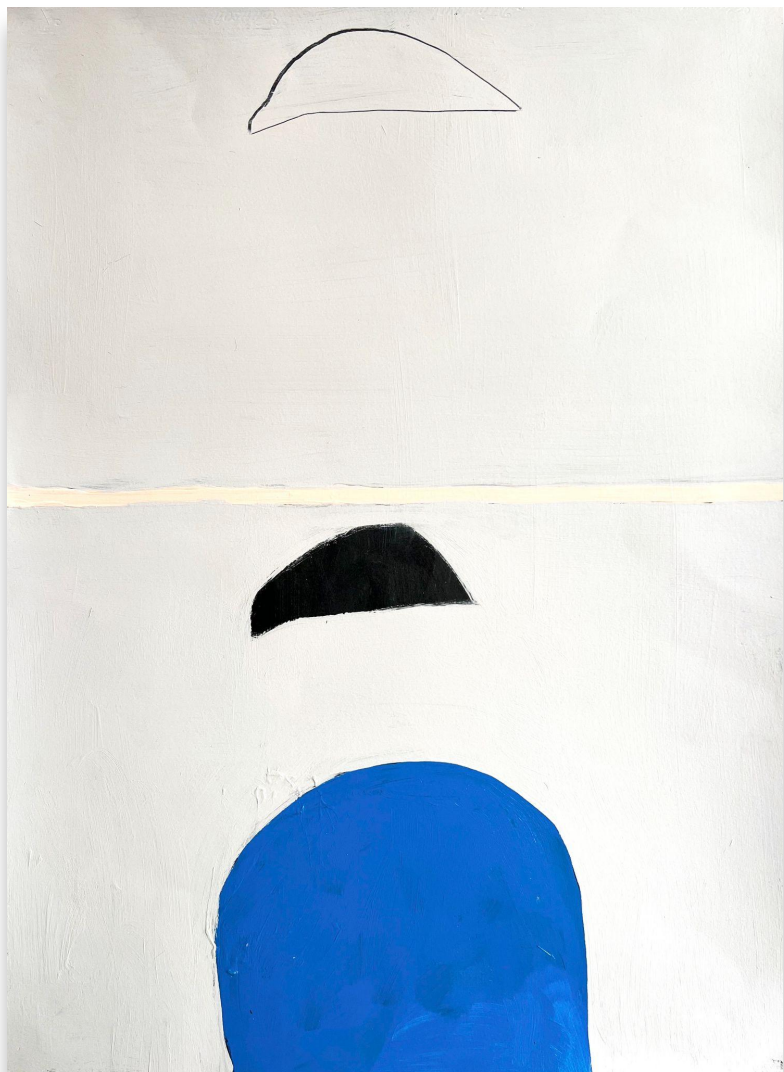




Untitled, 2020

Acrylic and graphite on paper

180 x 152 cm | 70.8 x 59.8 in



Untitled, 2023

Acrylic on paper

75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in









Untitled, 2021

Acrylic, pastel chalk and graphite on paper

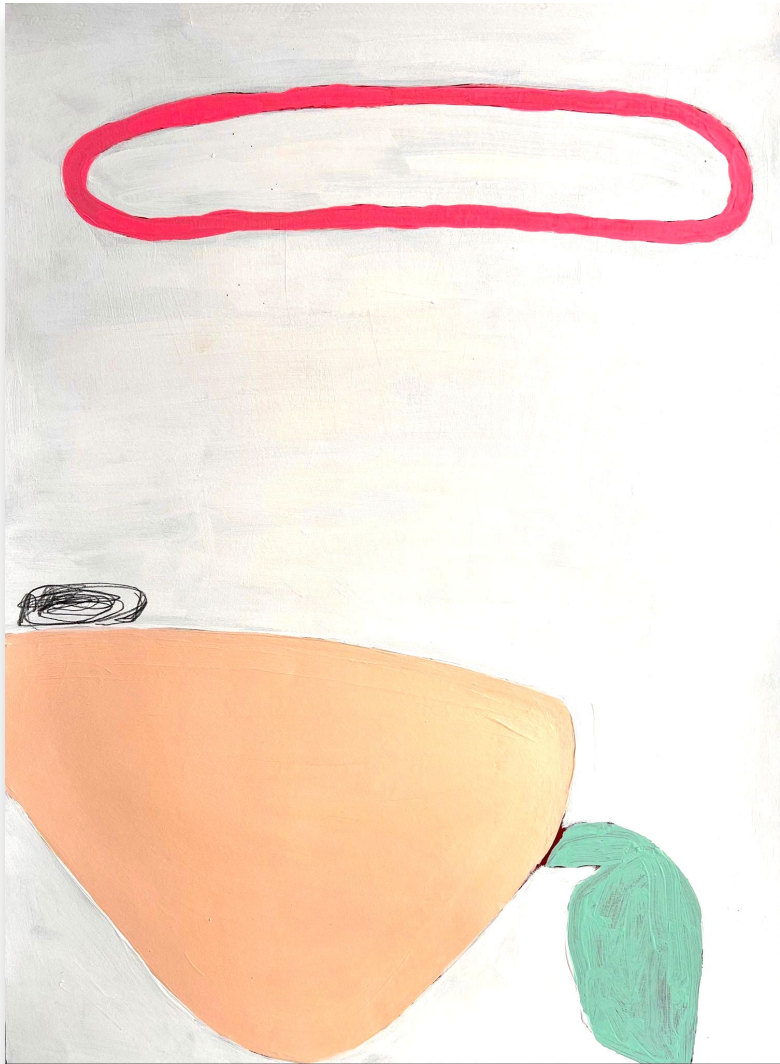
180 x 152 cm | 70.86 x 59.84 in





Untitled, 2023
Acrylic on paper
150 x 152 cm | 59 x 59.8 in

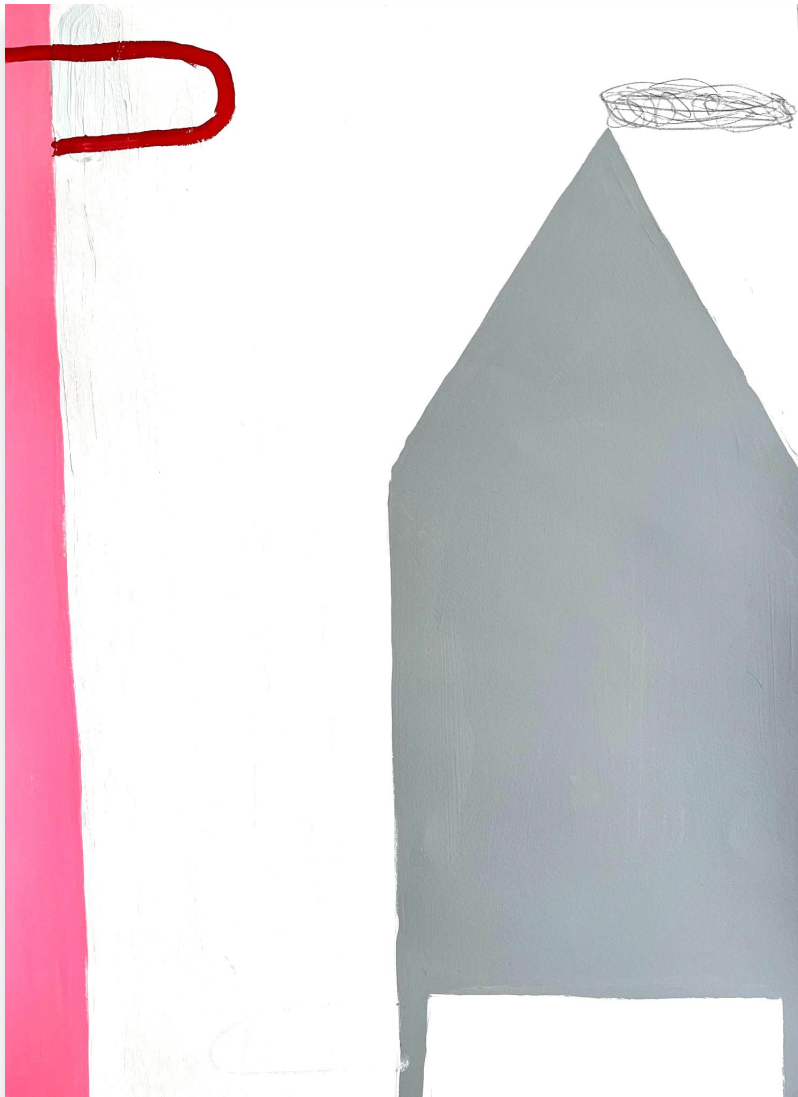




Untitled, 2023
Acrylic on paper
75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in







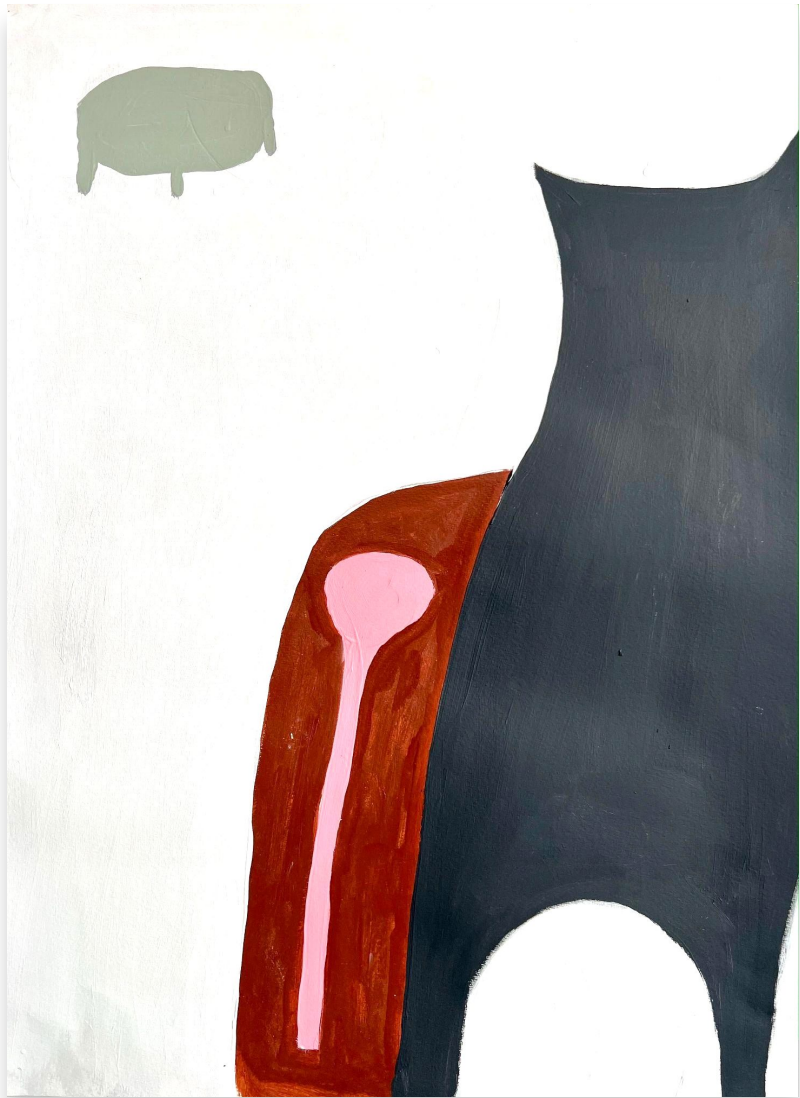
Untitled, 2023
Acrylic on paper
75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in



Untitled, 2023

Acrylic on paper

75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in



Untitled, 2023

Acrylic on paper

75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in



Untitled, 2023

Acrylic on paper

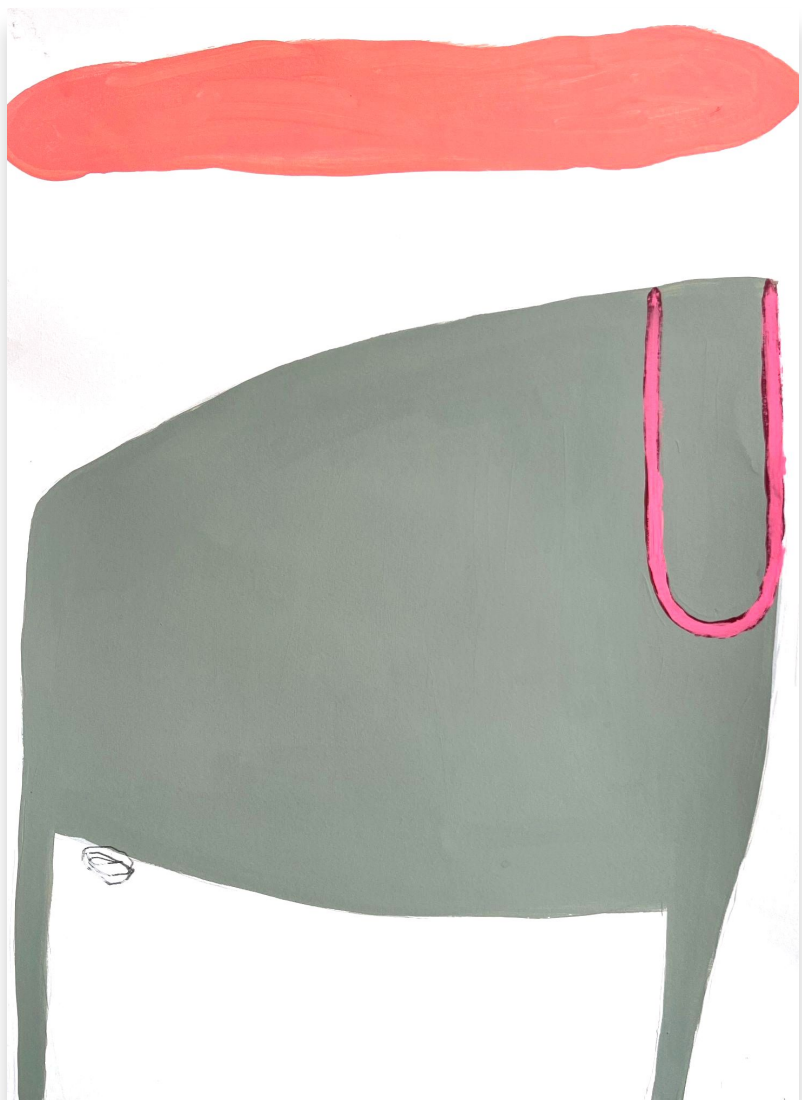
75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in



Untitled, 2023

Acrylic on paper

75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in



Untitled, 2022
Acrylic on paper
75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in





Untitled, 2018

Acrylic and graphite on canvas
190 x 160 cm | 74.8 x 62.99 in



Untitled, 2023
Acrylic on paper
75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in



Untitled, 2023

Acrylic on paper

75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.6 in





Untitled, 2022

Acrylic on paper

65 x 51 cm | 25.5 x 20 in











Untitled, 2023

Acrylic on canvas and dripped paint

40 x 30 cm | 15.74 x 11.81 in







Untitled, 2018

Acrylic, pastel chalk and graphite on canvas

162 x 146 cm | 63.7 x 57.4 in



Untitled, 2018

Acrylic and pastel chalk on canvas

162 x 142 cm | 63.7 x 55.9 in







Untitled, 2020

Acrylic on canvas

170 x 200 cm | 66.92 x 78.74 in





Untitled, 2023

Acrylic and pastel chalk on canvas

128 x 184 cm | 50.3 x 72.4 in





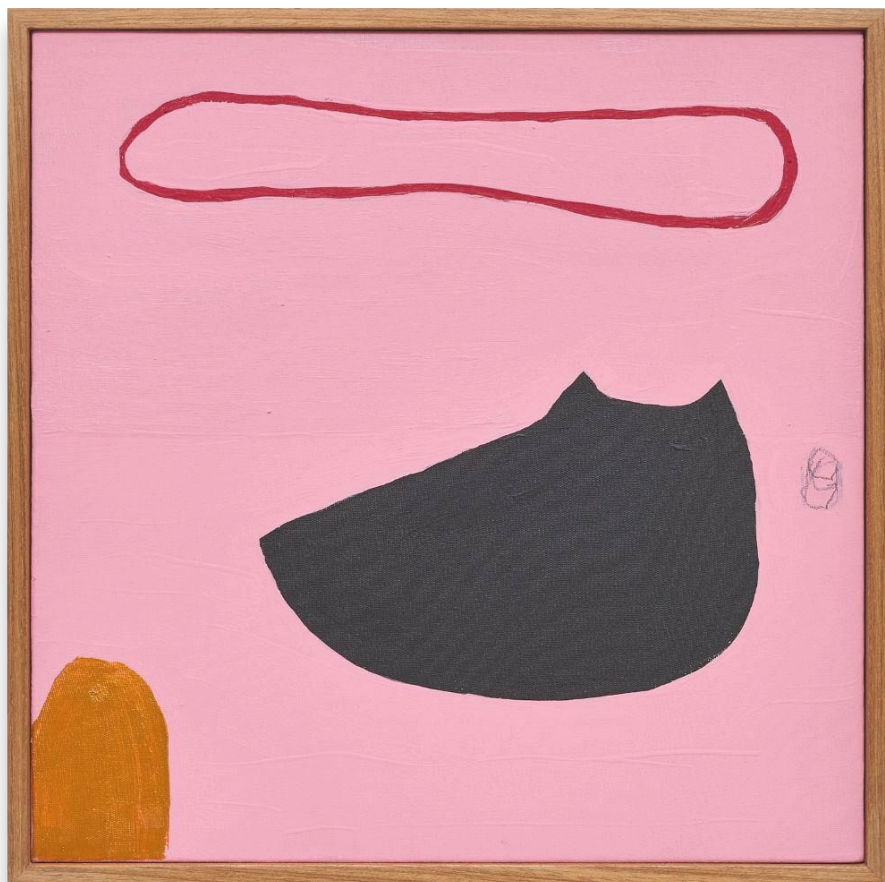


Untitled, 2023

Acrylic and oil stick on canvas

155 x 195 cm | 61 x 76.7 in





Untitled, 2023
Acrylic on canvas
40 x 40 cm | 15.7 x 15.7 in

Mai-Britt Wolthers: Colors That Shelter the World¹

Ligia Canongia

In their rush to establish parameters for classifying movements in art history, modernist and dogmatic readings posed a false question: the opposition between abstract and figurative art. Like all opposition-based reasoning, entrenched in static and definitive identities, this dichotomy gave rise to a raft of formalizations situated at the edges of these two opposite extremes, on the border between them, or touching on both terms simultaneously.

In Brazil, the 1950s saw the emergence of a strong trend of constructive art, reflecting a powerful modern thrust and decisively evincing the influence of international geometric abstraction. In that same period, the appropriation of abstract art was a true gateway through which Brazil entered modernity, establishing geometry as a model. But the impending collapse of this hegemonic movement became apparent toward the end of that decade, when it was argued that constructivism was unviable in the hybrid and multiform Brazilian reality, and that a more elastic and polyvalent approach was needed.

The work by Mai-Britt Wolthers is in tune with this sort of emancipation and resumes a historical lineage less committed to rigid, binary disciplinary fields, with the positivist order, or with rationalism. It thus dialogues with artists from the modern tradition such as Arp, Miró and Matisse, who instated an extremely personal visuality that was in a certain sense *gauche* in relation to the dominant standards of the European vanguards. Wolthers' dialogue with those modern artists is clearly reflected in her painting, in the forms that waver fluidly between abstraction and representation, defying explicit identities, and operating more through suggestion than through figurative definition.

This genealogy, however, does not account for the questions that drive the artist's painting, nor does it explain the way she reprocesses history in order to transform it into an original creation. She does not seem, for example, to operate with the same colorist exuberance and *joie de vivre* as Matisse, with his excessive light coupled with chromatic vibration. Nor does it seem that she strictly adheres to the winding, sensuous curves of Arp, where straight lines are nowhere to be found.

¹ Based on the artist's own words, published in the catalog for the exhibition "*Incertezas amanhecem*" [Uncertainties Awake], Galeria Eduardo Fernandes, São Paulo, 2018.

Her relationship with them, therefore, involves affinities as well as divergences, and is always sparing and selective, thus ensuring the originality and singularity of her oeuvre. Her painting displays an ever-shifting formal structure, an erratic field where figures arise on their own and spread freely on the canvas, without previous meaning or narration. At times, a determined figure emerges that bears affinity with reality, only to soon evanesce into another one, or simply vanish. The aim is not, therefore, to represent the world's objectivity, but rather to generate a parallel reality, whose existence lies in the artist's imagination and only comes to light on the painting's surface. The hints at known objects, the simple splotches, or the figures "cut out" from everyday life – that is, all the various sorts of imprecisions and figurative alternation that takes place on Mai-Britt Wolthers' canvases – are pure creations of the pictorial act. And nothing but the relationship between the colors determines the environmental and spiritual atmosphere of her painting.

Danish by birth, the artist arrived in Brazil in 1986 and began her artistic activity with nonsystematic studies in a few specialized schools in the city of Santos, finally discovering her own artistic language in a practically self-taught way. Signs of European modernity, however, had already been an active part of her work since the outset, especially due to her contact with the Nordic art group CoBrA and with its founder, Asger Jorn, as well as with other artists from Copenhagen.

Spontaneous boldness, free-form scrawlings, childish and primitive imagery, the unfettered exploration of the unconscious – features of the CoBrA movement that bore a kinship with the surrealist aesthetics – also certainly influenced the formation of Mai-Britt Wolthers' painting. Nevertheless, just as her affinities with Arp or Matisse were diluted in light of the originality of her own questions, here also the artist stands apart from Jorn's expressive brushwork and striking palette, just as she is distant from the thick textures and exciting, emotional colors of the European group, whereby the tragic interwar (1918–1939) outlook was replaced by the existentialist and melancholic perspective of the postwar contemporary individual.



Color plays a complex role in Mai-Britt Wolthers' work: far from being a decorative element, it is even further from being merely the volitional expression of an individual or the political emblem of a group. Rather, in her work, color is certainly a structuring element, as it has always been in the historic edifice of painting, laying the foundation for the world of forms. It is used as a constitutive reference to the fluid physical media of the artist's painting, lending concrete reality to the form's meandering existence, despite its being imprecise and spatially adrift.

Mai-Britt Wolthers' relationship with color is apparent in one of the paintings the spectator sees in the exhibition setting. In that canvas, the "dripping" culminates in a veritable spilling of paint outside the frame, as though that pink area of the canvas had assumed a physical body and had overflowed beyond the borders of the surface. More than making a statement through the mere action of color, here the color becomes an active space that proposes sensations. For various reasons, the artist rarely uses colors straight out of the paint tubes, preferring instead to mix them, experimenting with them in the exercise of the artwork's making, as though each fragment of the surface were beckoning for its own color, with a singular and completely autonomous value. The fragmentary vision and formal imprecision that are scattered throughout the space of the painting serve as operations that provide the chromatic effect of each fragment – they are actually constructions that arise exclusively from the color.

That the artist was in Brazil in the 1980s – during the so-called return to painting in the worldwide art scene – could suggest her adhesion to a trend widely shared in that generation of artists, who sought to return to the temporality of the artisanal media as a reaction against the previous technological and conceptual experiments. After all, that was a burning question among the young artists of that time, who were witnessing the dead-end street and lost horizon of the antiart movements. At that time, the return to painting, which would later become become nomadic and histrionic, also challenged the legitimacy of modern rationalism and its permanence in the contemporary world, a question that the international art world was both recovering and repudiating. Mai-Britt Wolthers might very well have shared these concerns of an ethical order with other artists of her generation, but it seems that her involvement with the so-called transvanguard and with the postmodern neovanguard artists never went beyond this.

The formal scope of her art had already been established since her initial experiments with watercolor, and she could never have identified with the baroque, symbolist or mannerist representations of the 1980s, without shaking the very “ground” on which her work was built. The exacerbated chromatic expressiveness and the grandiloquence of figuration, which lay at the base of that new worldwide painting, had very little or no effect on Wolthers’ formal arrangements, which seemed to be more informed by the simple and watery color of Volpi, for example, than the abrasive colors of the “materic” Casa 7 artists, her contemporaries in São Paulo.

Mai-Britt Wolthers therefore remained faithful to the subtlety of her lines, to the power that shone through the delicateness of her colors, and to the whimsical way that her cutouts and fragments “frolicked” in space, preserving her language from contingent and opportunistic invasions.

A foreigner in “terra brasilis,” and perhaps everywhere, Mai-Britt Wolthers’ painting is a standalone territory of invention, that finds its rare counterparts in modernity, but which independently deviates from the roster of languages rehabilitated by the postmodernists. Her spatial conception marked by fragmentary and sudden happenings, her low-density brushstrokes and restrained movements, in conjunction with her flat and uniform surfaces share no connection with the turbulent gesturality of the 1980s, with its abundant material presence and the narrative raptures of its figuration. The artist overlays silence on top of noise; in place of churning, explosive scenes, she substitutes intimate and delicate ones that allude to an unknown existential reality; to landscapes and explicit interior scenes, she lends the suggestion of unexpected shapes and colors that are sufficient in their incompleteness. In Mai-Britt Wolthers, in her very particular fantastic world, the real does not fit within the models of representation, a single color can “shelter the world” and “the uncertainties awake (always) more beautiful.”²

² Based on the artist’s own words, published in the catalog for the exhibition “*Incertezas amanhecem*” [Uncertainties Awake] Galeria Eduardo Fernandes, São Paulo, 2018.

MAI-BRITT WOLTERS

Gilleleje, Denmark, 1962

Lives and works in Santos, SP, Brazil

Wolthers works with painting, sculpture, engraving and video. In her research and practice, she explores the relationship between color and form, creating a movement between abstraction and representation. Her creations focus on visual balance and are rather suggestive than figurative, mixing imagination and reality, experience and rationality.

The artist has exhibited in several spaces in Brazil, and also in Switzerland, Portugal, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

Among the solo exhibitions that she has participated in recent years, we highlight: "Hileia", Centro Cultural dos Correios – Rio de Janeiro (2010); and "Equations", CCSP – Centro Cultural São Paulo – São Paulo (2014).

Collective exhibitions include: X Bienal Nacional de Santos, SP (2006); XI Recôncavo Biennial, Bahia (2011); "I'm Rosa", Lamb-arts, London, UK (2016); in addition to participation in the Charlottenborg Spring-exhibition 2017 and Kunstnernes Efterårsudstilling 2021, both in Copenhagen, Denmark.

RECENT SOLO SHOWS

- 2022 - *Brooklyn Compositions*. New Sphere, New York, USA;
- 2022 - *Fragmentos do Real*. Galeria Eduardo Fernandes, São Paulo, SP, Brazil;
- 2019 - *Confluências em Verde*. Galeria Matias Brotas, Vitória, ES, Brazil;
- 2019 - *Incertezas amanhecem*. Galeria Eduardo Fernandes, São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

RECENT GROUP SHOWS

- 2021 - *Portos*. Sesc - Santos, SP, Brazil;
- 2021 - *Kunstnernes Efterårsudstilling*. Den Frie, Copenhagen, Denmark;
- 2019 - *Compositions*. Galerie Espace-L, Geneve, Switzerland;
- 2019 - *Imprecisão Azul*. Brisa Galeria, Lisbon, Portugal;
- 2017 - *Bleu, blue, azul*. Galerie Espace-L, Geneve, Switzerland;
- 2017 - *Charlottenborg Spring-exhibition*, Charlottenborg Kunsthall, Copenhagen, Denmark;
- 2016 - *I'm Rosa*. LAMB-arts, London, UK.

COLLECTIONS

- Gribskov City Hall, Denmark;
- Centro Cultural dos Correios, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil;
- Senac - São Paulo, SP, Brazil;
- MAC - Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Mato Grosso do Sul, MS, Brasil;
- Figueiredo Ferraz Institute, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil;
- CCSP - Centro Cultural São Paulo, SP, Brazil;
- MAR – Museu de Arte do Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil.

LIGIA CANONGIA is an art critic and independent curator, living and working in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Graduated in Literature and post-graduated in History of Art and Architecture from PUC-RJ, she is the author and/or organizer of several books, among them: “Eduardo Sued” (Cosac Naify); “The legacy of the 60s and 70s” (Zahar); “Artur Barrio” (Modo/Petrobras); “Generation 80: Clashes of a generation” (Francisco Alves/Barléu) and “Angelo Venosa” (CosacNaify).

She has been working as a curator since the 1980s, in Brazil and abroad. She also led an art column on the newspaper “O Globo” and worked as an advisor to the National Art Foundation (Funarte), as well as a member of the curatorial team at MAM - Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro.

In recent years, she has curated retrospective exhibitions of the following artists: Waltercio Caldas (CCBB - RJ and Brasília; Raymundo Colares (Centro Cultural Light - RJ); Jac Leirner (CCBB - RJ and Brasília) and Angelo Venosa (MAM- RJ, Palácio das Artes - MG and Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo). She has also curated large-scale shows, including Miguel Rio Branco (MAM-RJ), Mario Cravo Neto (CCBB-RJ), José Damasceno (Espace Topographie de l'Art, Paris, Casa França - Brasil and Santander Cultural) and Marcos Chaves (MAR – RJ).

She was the curator of the first large-scale exhibition dedicated to the relationship between Art and Photography in Brazil (CCBB – RJ), which included the publication of a book on the subject.

From 2009 to 2010, she was the lead curator of Casa de Cultura Laura Alvim, at the invitation of the Secretary of Culture of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

She was also the curator - in partnership with the Swiss-Brazilian historian Adon Peres - of the international exhibitions “Nan Goldin” (MAM-RJ), “Meias-verdades” (Oi Futuro – RJ) and “Imaterialidade” (Sesc – SP).

Between 2006 and 2007, she lived in Paris after being awarded the Icatu Art Prize, dedicated to professionals in the field of culture.

In 2020, she was nominated for the Mário de Andrade Prize, awarded by the Brazilian Association of Art Critics, for her career as a whole.



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A COR DIVAGANTE

[THE WANDERING COLOUR]

MAI-BRITT WOLTERS

19.07 - 26.08.2023

Curated by Ligia Canongia

Exhibition Setting Los Montadores

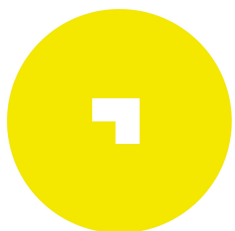
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