

nara roesler

maria klabin



maria klabin

b. 1978, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where she lives and works

Maria Klabin's work engages with scenes, occurrences, and landscapes that permeate everyday life and thus, have been seen and experienced exhaustively. In dealing with omnipresent elements, Klabin extracts the cadence of their recurrence, seeking to capture the formal rhythm embedded in the repetition, or banality, of their existence. The artist's process lies in constantly producing and assembling drawings, photographs, and annotations, which she draws from her immediate entourage. The accumulation of thoughts and images entwine and come to make sense as a whole, unveiling intriguing relations that form the backbone of the artist's pictorial endeavor. In her own words, Klabin develops her work 'as if writing a story, or a diary, but a diary of things that don't really happen. It's a narrative that could only be told through painting, but that touches themes that seem closer to writers than to painters.'

Maria Klabin oscillates between extremes in terms of the scale of her works, producing both very small and monumental, large scale paintings, depending on the nature of her subject. Her small canvases often serve as support for rapid streams of thought—like writing on paper, perhaps harnessing an unconscious mind—and effectively capturing the rhythm of her surroundings, while her large pieces embody more contemplative, oneiric perceptions. Most recently, Klabin has produced a series of almost mural-sized landscape paintings that depart from fragments of autobiographical elements, distilled from what she describes as an improbable and fluid patchwork of memory, that results in non-objectifiable, enticing yet daunting compositions. Ultimately, whether engaging with intimate subject matters—as is the case in her portraiture, and small-scale works—, or with the amplex of her landscapes, the artist offers often psychologically charged formulations that waver between the foreboding and the tranquil.

cover *Tangerine # 02*, 2020 (detail)

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selected solo exhibitions

Liquid Air, Nara Roesler New York, USA (2022)

Entre Rio e Pedra, Galeria Silvia Cintra, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2017)

E o dia havia acabado, quando começou, Galeria Silvia Cintra, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2014)

selected group exhibitions

Abrasive Paradise, Kunsthal KADE, Amstervoort, The Netherlands (2022)

In Waiting: Works Produced in Isolation, Galeria Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2020)

Já estava assim quando eu cheguei, Ron Mandos, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2020)

Festival de Arte Contemporânea, SESC VideoBrasil, São Paulo, Brazil (2012/2013)

Novas Aquisições da Coleção Gilberto Chateaubriand, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2012)

Rumos 2005/06 Paradoxos Brasil, Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil (2006)

Alem da Imagem, Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2006)

selected collections

Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil

4	early works, 1997–1999
9	photography, 2001–2002
12	areias [sand], 2008–ongoing
20	for the day was over when it all began, 2014
34	between river and rock, 2017–2019
48	recent work, 2020

beginnings 1997–1999

Following early experimentations with sculpture, Maria Klabin soon began to work with painting focusing specifically on portraiture. However, the artist was quickly struck by a deep ambivalence as to what deserved to make it onto a canvas amidst the infinite myriad of available subject forms, and how one achieves relevance in the execution. With this in mind, Klabin sought to widen her horizons and experiences, leaving for New York and undertaking studies in photography. The decision to study a new medium came from the fact that photography offered an exercise in choosing, in deciding what to capture from the entirety of one's surroundings, constantly forcing Klabin into the act of extracting certain details or elements from her everyday life. In addition, according to the artist, 'Nothing is more figurative than photography, which leads to the understanding that things are always what they are, but are also an infinite number of other things as well.'



The audience, 1997
oil on canvas
70 x 60 cm | 27.5 x 23.6 in



Untitled, 1998
oil on canvas
25 x 20 cm | 9.8 x 7.8 in



Untitled, 1998
oil on wood
30 x 29 cm 11.8 x 11.4 in



Untitled, 1998
oil on wood
25 x 20 cm



Self-portrait, 1998
charcoal on paper
55 x 45 cm | 21.6 x 17.7 in



Self-portrait, 1998
charcoal on paper
55 x 45 cm | 21.6 x 17.7 in



Self-portrait, 1998
charcoal on paper
55 x 45 cm | 21.6 x 17.7 in



Dudu, 1998
oil on canvas
40 x 30 cm | 15.7 x 11.8 in

Photography captures what it is, captures reality, but it is also a way transcending reality, it makes reality into something else as well.' At the same time, Klabin began to engage with painting as the historical form of photography, or of documentation, and thus sought to explore both media in dialogue with each other. With this in mind, the artist joined the Art Students League of New York, where she undertook painting, effectively piecing together her own form of artistic education.



Untitled, 1998
oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm | 19.6 x 15.7 in

photography 2001–2002

Following her studies in New York, Maria Klabin enrolled in a Masters Degree at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts in London, UK. During this time, the artist put aside her affinity for painting, choosing instead to focus on photography and video. The body of work produced during this time derived from her experience of the home while abroad, as a place of safety but also of instability. The series of photographs capture details from the interior of the artist's home, extricating small, occasionally indiscernible segments of the apartment, that echo the sense of unfamiliarity underpinning her experience of a new home. Notably, the letterbox gave rise to a series of images and a video that document the thin beam of light—a straight line—that entered through the door's letter flap, and its sudden, abrupt and disconcerting daily interruption as the letters are thrown through. The imagery once more foregrounds an ambivalence between tranquility and disruption, reverberating Klabin's circumstances.

Mirror, 2001
lightbox
40 x 55 cm | 15.7 x 21.6 in



Door, 2001
lightbox
40 x 55 cm | 15.7 x 21.6 in



Lightbox Letterbox, 2001
lightbox and timer
40 x 55 cm | 15.7 x 21.6 in



Bed, 2002
inkjet on cotton paper
70 x 120 cm | 27.5 x 47.2 in



areias [sand] 2005–ongoing

Upon her return to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Klabin resumed painting and drawing, producing works on paper and on canvas. During this time, the artist lived by the seaside in Arpoador, where she began to find inspiration in the details of her everyday surroundings, working with objects or sceneries that she had seen and experienced exhaustively. The artist notably wrote, ‘The omnipresent view of the beach in Rio de Janeiro invades domestic spaces and installs itself in most interiors. In this way, it becomes as mundane as the furniture in one’s home. With such proximity, the object investigated and the artist’s gaze is combined, giving rise to a subject matter that lies somewhere in between the object depicted and the subjectivity of an intimate reality. This specific landscape also offers an ideal backdrop to the investigation of an array of questions concerning pictorial space such as the attempt of organization and representation of indefinable spaces for the elements that help tell this vague story of walking, –sand, water, and air–are as abstract and untamable as is paint.’

Beach walkers 1, 2005
crayon on paper
25 x 35 cm



Beach walkers 2, 2005
crayon on paper
25 x 35 cm | 9.8 x 13.7 in



Beach walkers 3, 2005
crayon on paper
25 x 35 cm | 9.8 x 13.7 in

In addition, Areias [Sand] extracts the cadence of the subject matter's recurrence, seeking to capture the formal rhythm embedded in the repetition, or banality, of the quotidian and more specifically, of passersby—individuality is thus subsumed by the mantric nature of the movement, in a melancholic representation of a daily scene suffused by the abyss of time.

From the series Areias [Sand], 2011
oil on wood
200 x 140 cm | 78.7 x 55.1 in

→
left
From the series Areias [Sand], 2011
oil on wood
200 x 140 cm | 78.7 x 55.1 in

→
right
From the series Areias [Sand], 2011
oil on wood
200 x 140 cm | 78.7 x 55.1 in









←

left

From the series Areias [Sand], 2011

oil on wood

200 x 140 cm | 78.7 x 55.1 in

←

right

From the series Areias [Sand], 2011

oil on wood

200 x 140 cm | 78.7 x 55.1 in

Sem título [Untitled], 2019

oil on canvas

270 x 325 cm | 106.2 x 127.9 in



Sem título [Untitled] (detail), 2019
oil on canvas
270 x 325 cm | 106.2 x 127.9 in



Sem título [Untitled], 2014
oil on wood
40 x 140 cm | 15.7 x 55.1 in

for the day was over when it all began 2014

This body of work emerged in 2014, and is characterized by assemblages of small paintings on wood anchored in a process of creative narrative. In the artist's words, 'I developed these pieces as if I were writing a story, or a diary, but a diary of things that didn't really happen. It's a narrative that could only be told through painting, but that touches themes that seem closer to writers than to painters. The boards are similar to books in scale; quite small, and I worked mostly while seated with the boards resting on my table. The nature of this process—small scale, work on desk—establishes the right relationship to the work, making it into an effective support for a faster stream of thought, as in writing or drawing, more thermal and less contemplative.' Indeed in this series, Klabin abandons the gestuality inherent to the process of painting mid to large canvases, engaging in a more silent, inward and intellectual set of actions. The nature of the process also serves as support for rapid streams of thought—like writing on paper, perhaps harnessing an unconscious mind—and once more, capturing the rhythm of her surroundings.

Sem título [Untitled], 2015–ongoing
oil on wood
variable dimensions



→
For the day was over when it all began, 2014
oil on wood
40 x 35 cm | 15.7 x 13.7 in (each)





*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
50 x 105 cm | 19.6 x 41.3 in



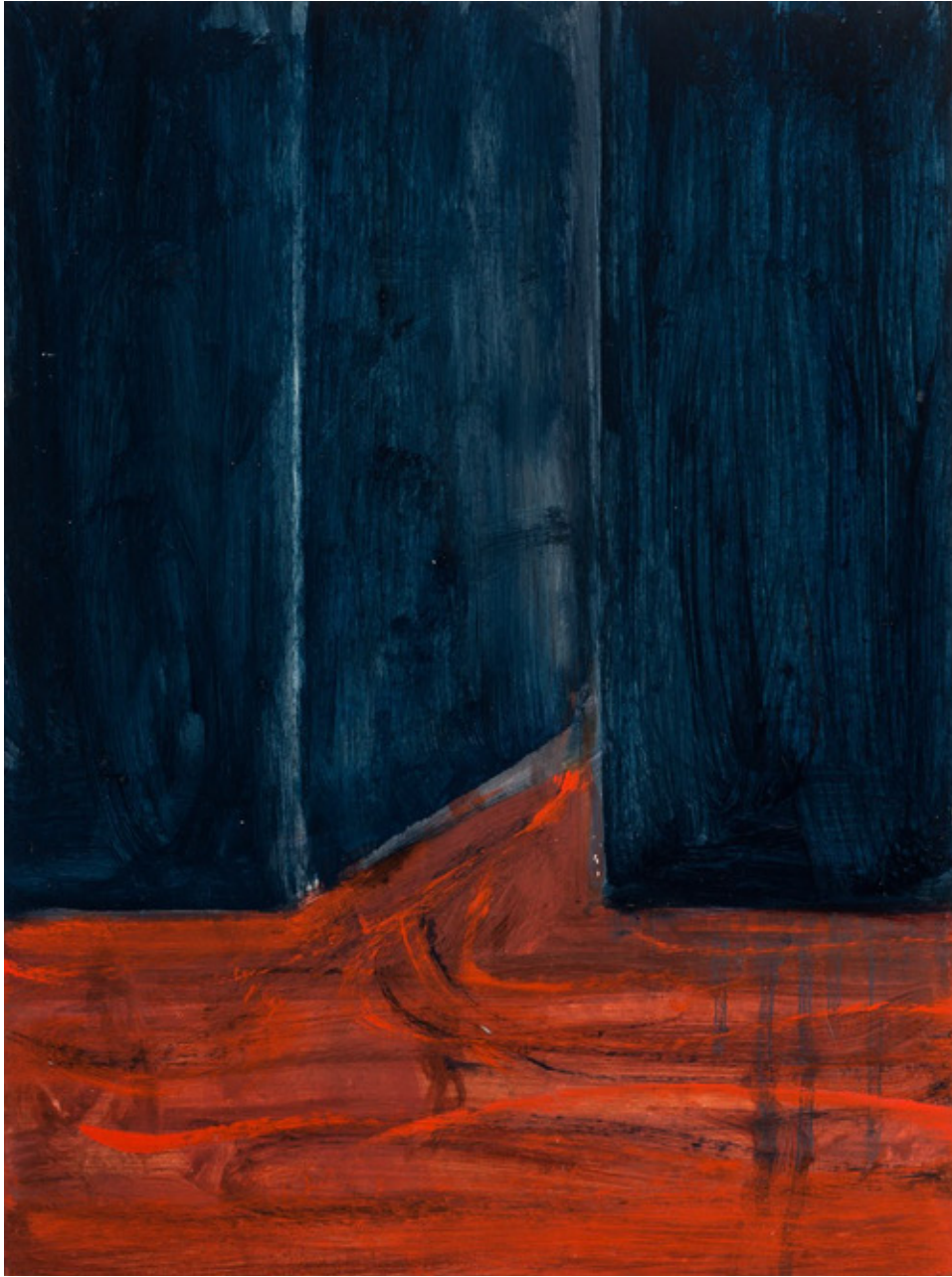
*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
30 x 50 cm | 11.8 x 19.6 in



*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
20 x 60 cm | 7.8 x 23.6 in



→
*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
40 x 60 cm | 15.7 x 23.6 in





*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
50 x 60 cm | 19.6 x 19.6 in



*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
35 x 75 cm | 13.7 x 29.5 in



Exhibition view
*For the day was over
when it all began*, 2014
Galeria Silvia Cintra,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
25 x 70 cm | 9.8 x 27.5 in



For the day was over when it all began, 2014
oil on wood
50 x 60 cm | 19.6 x 23.6 in



*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
25 x 70 cm | 9.8 x 27.5 in



For the day was over when it all began, 2014
oil on wood
50 x 60 cm | 19.6 x 23.6 in

→
Exhibition view
For the day was over when it all began,
Galeria Silvia Cintra, Rio de
Janeiro, Brazil





*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
50 x 90 cm | 19.6 x 35.4 in



→
*For the day was over when it all
began, 2014*
oil on wood
30 x 40 cm | 11.8 x 15.7 in



between river and rock 2017–2019

Following her experimentations with wood, Maria Klabin decided to return to painting, creating a series of works, which—as opposed to her previous production—emerged individually, rather than in groups, evoking the artist’s desire to free her paintings from past narrative constraints. Klabin eventually returned to portraiture, producing several paintings of the same individual whose daily actions served as impromptu sittings, giving rise to works such as *Sleep* (2017).



Sleep, 2017
oil on canvas
dimensions



Travessia, 2017
oil on canvas
140 x 200 cm | 55.1 x 78.7 in

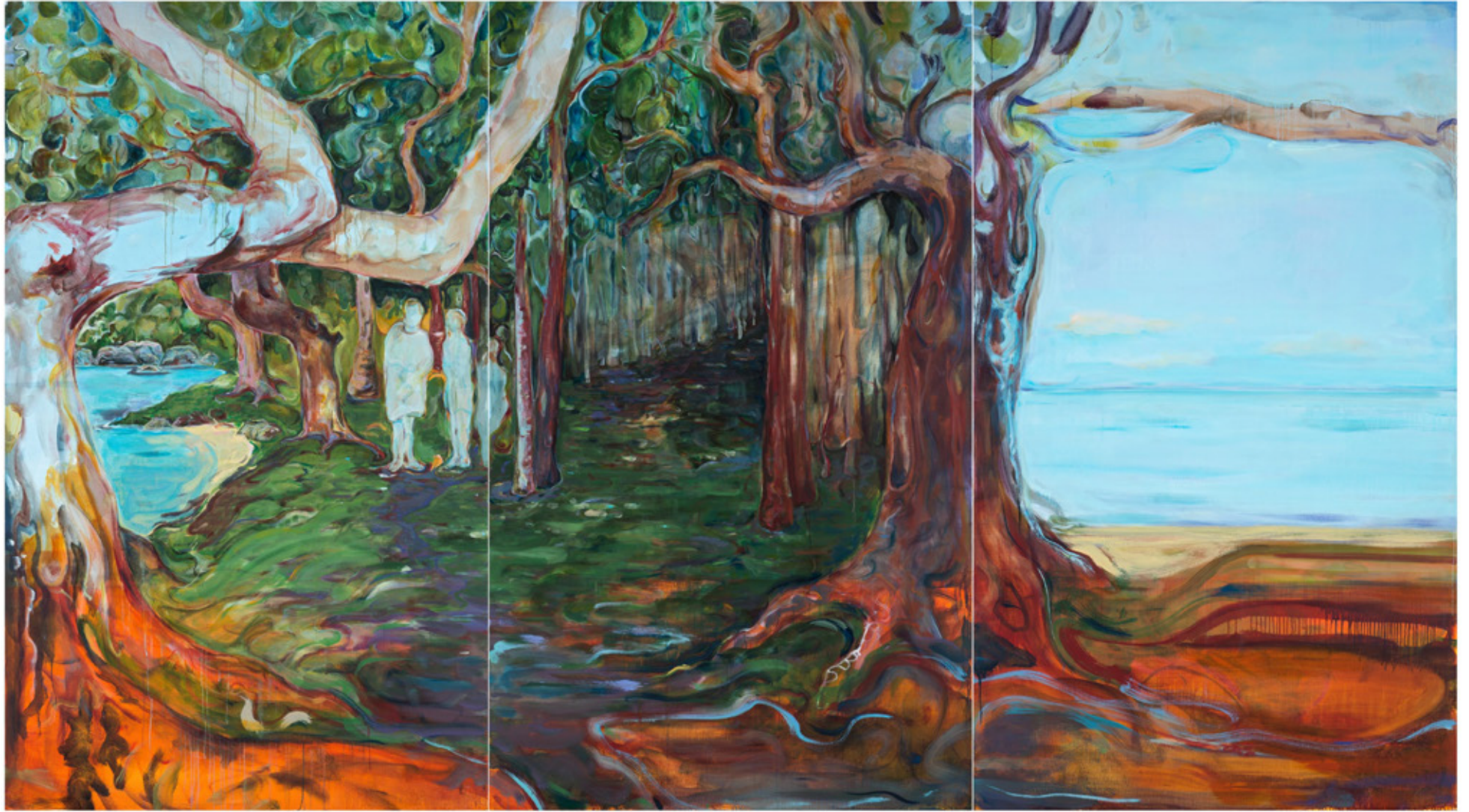
However, the artist quickly began to notice that she was becoming increasingly captivated by all the details that surrounded the subject. With this, she turned to a production geared towards landscape, which sought to offer amplified understandings of her previous series. The body of work that arose extricates the oneiric elements embedded within more objective subject matters, offering compositions that occupy a liminal space between the real and the unreal.



Sem título [Untitled], 2016
oil on canvas
181 x 220 cm | 71.2 x 86.6 in



Exhibition view
Between river and rock, 2017
Galeria Silvia Cintra,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Sem título [Untitled], 2017
oil on canvas
200 x 360 cm | 78.7 x 141.7 in



A ilha [The island], 2017
oil on canvas
140 x 200 cm | 55.1 x 78.7 in



Dois coqueiros [Two coconut trees],
2017
oil on canvas
200 x 270cm



exhibition view
Between river and rock, 2017
Galeria Silvia Cintra,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



A corda [The rope], 2017
oil on canvas
200 x 270 cm | 78.7 x 106.2 in

Lendo, 2018
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm | 39.3 x 39.3 in

→
O cochilo [The nap], 2018
oil on canvas
81 x 130 cm | 31.8 x 51.1 in









recent work 2020

Liquid Air, Maria Klabin's first solo exhibition in the US, at Nara Roesler New York, presented works that emerged from the recent developments in the artist's pictorial research. The exhibition included three bodies of works: portraits of sleeping individuals, a practice which the artist had been experimenting with since 2017, still life paintings of fruits, and large-scale landscapes. In *Liquid Air*, Klabin demonstrates her ability to engage with different scales, from intimate to monumental, as well her ability to play with the relations between matter and representation, creating a pictorial language that is at once imaginative, dreamlike, and unusual, as well as realistic and quotidian.

exhibition view
Liquid Air, 2022
Nara Roesler New York, USA

→
exhibition view
Liquid Air, 2022
Nara Roesler New York, USA



On the occasion, curator Luis Pérez-Oramas notably wrote: ‘The body in movement, the body in space, the tangible presence of notable tropical elements (humidity, atmospheric density, heat)—is implied in her practice, which paradoxically began with three-dimensional modeling. Her impressive paintings extensively feature the trace of her touch, the density of oil paint, her ample, ambitious, fluid, liquid brushstrokes being the main architectural medium for her compositions.’



Cecilia, 2022
oil paint on linen
50 x 62 cm | 19.7 x 24.4 in



Miguel, 2021
oil paint on linen
35 x 42 cm | 13.8 x 16.5 in

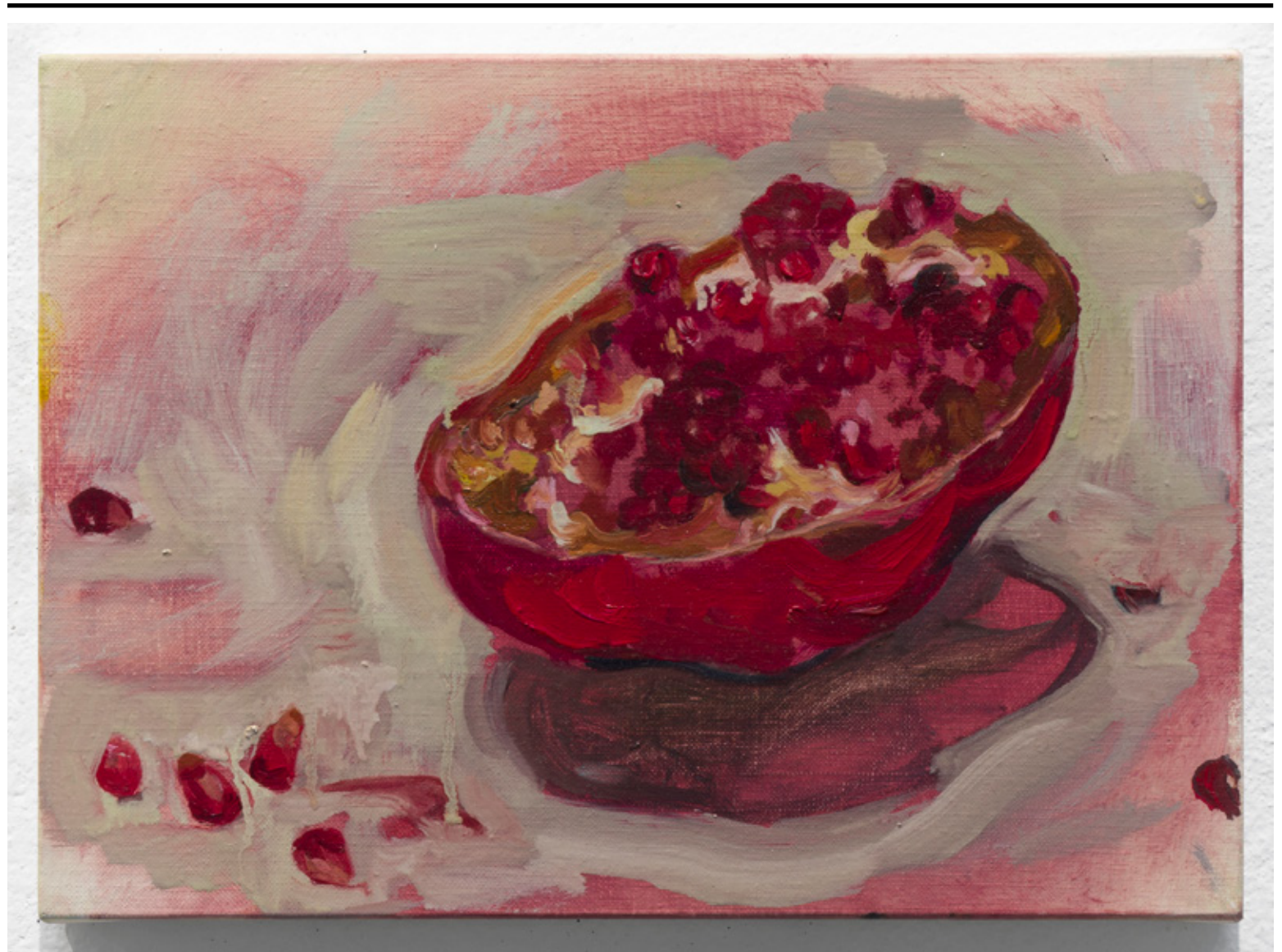


Joana, 2022
oil paint on linen
35 x 45 cm | 19.7 x 24.4 in



Almerinda, 2022
oil paint on linen
50 x 40 cm | 19.7 x 15.7 in





←

Costela de Adão, 2022
oil paint on linen
200 x 140 cm | 78.7 x 55.1 in

Pomegranate # 02, 2021
oil paint on linen
18 x 25 cm | 7.1 x 9.8 in





Tangerine, 2020
oil paint on linen
35 x 40 cm | 13.8 x 15.7 in



The nearly mural-sized landscape paintings that depart from fragments of autobiographical elements, distilled from what the artist describes as an improbable and fluid patchwork of memory, results in non-objectifiable, enticing yet daunting compositions. The theatrical aspect of those landscapes, drawn from its size and profusion, departs from fragments of the artists' environment, precisely the Atlantic forest. 'The natural environment, on one hand lures the viewer and/or its inhabitants, while also imposing a foreboding atmosphere', stated the artist.



←
exhibition view
Liquid Air, 2022
Nara Roesler New York, USA

Monkey, 2020
oil paint on linen
260 x 405 cm | 102.4 x 159.4



Untitled, 2022
oil paint on linen
260 x 406 cm | 102.4 x 159.8 in



Often, the artist uses an image photographed by herself as the starting point from which to develop her work on the canvas. Klabin finds in the photos visual pretexts that lead her to creating her own image. She begins with the movements of her body, drawing, with the brush, a choreography over the surface of the canvas. The physical attraction to the material is a manifest presence in Klabin's work, modeling the paint on the canvas to create figurations through the encounter between two bodies, hers and the painting's.

Klabin's most recent works thus engage with the viewer, perhaps in an almost sculptural, or rather three-dimensional manner, creating a bodily dialogue between the work and the spectator that invites a certain insertion into both, the composition and its internal narrative.

Blue landscape, 2021/2022
oil paint on canvas
270 x 325 cm | 106.3 x 128 in



Liquid Air, 2020/2022
oil paint on linen
210 x 315 cm | 82.7 x 124 in

→
Pregnant Alexia, 2022
oil paint on canvas
140 x 200 cm | 55.1 x 78.7 in



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