

nara roesler

andré griffo



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b. 1979, Barra Mansa, Brazil

works and lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

André Griffo's practice focuses on painting and its historical relationships with architectural representation. Rather than engaging in grand activist discourses, Griffo invites the viewer to pay attention to the minute details of his images, which depict the many violences that have given shape to the narratives relating to the history of Brazil and its ruins. In this sense, his canvases are complex visual archives in which the most diverse elements coexist, forming relationships that reframe and deepen the criticisms they present. Griffo's work deals with the critique of power structures, particularly the falsehoods they create to maintain control over individuals. Among these, the artist discusses the lingering effects of the economy of slavery on the historical formation of Brazil and the various mechanisms commonly used by religious institutions to subjugate their followers.

Griffo uses his background in architecture to create spaces where references to both historical and contemporary settings coexist. These spaces, usually deserted, are inhabited by traces, symbols, and signs, that highlight the permanence and influence of the past in current sociocultural issues. His production intertwines the factual and the fictional, exploring connections between the History of Art and Architecture and social issues, both Brazilian and international. By overlapping different temporalities and their complex realities, Griffo's work denounces constitutive elements of society, and testifies to the immutability of things.

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selected solo exhibitions

- *Voarei com as asas que os urubus me deram*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2022)
- *A quem devo pagar minha indulgência?*, Galeria Athena, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil (2019)
- *Objetos sobre arquitetura gasta*, Centro Cultural São Paulo (CCSP), São Paulo, Brazil (2017)
- *Intervenções pendentes em estruturas mistas*, Palácio das Artes, Belo Horizonte, Brazil (2015)
- *Predileção pela alegoria*, Galeria Athena, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2015)

selected group exhibitions

- *Sobre os ombros de gigantes*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- 21st Bienal de Arte Contemporânea SESC Vídeo Brasil, São Paulo, Brazil (2019)
- *Intervenções*, Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2016)
- *Ao amor do público*, Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2015)
- *Aparições*, Caixa Cultural, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2015)
- *Instabilidade estável*, Paço das Artes, São Paulo, Brazil (2013)

selected collections

- Denver Art Museum, Denver, USA
- Instituto Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil
- Instituto PIPA, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

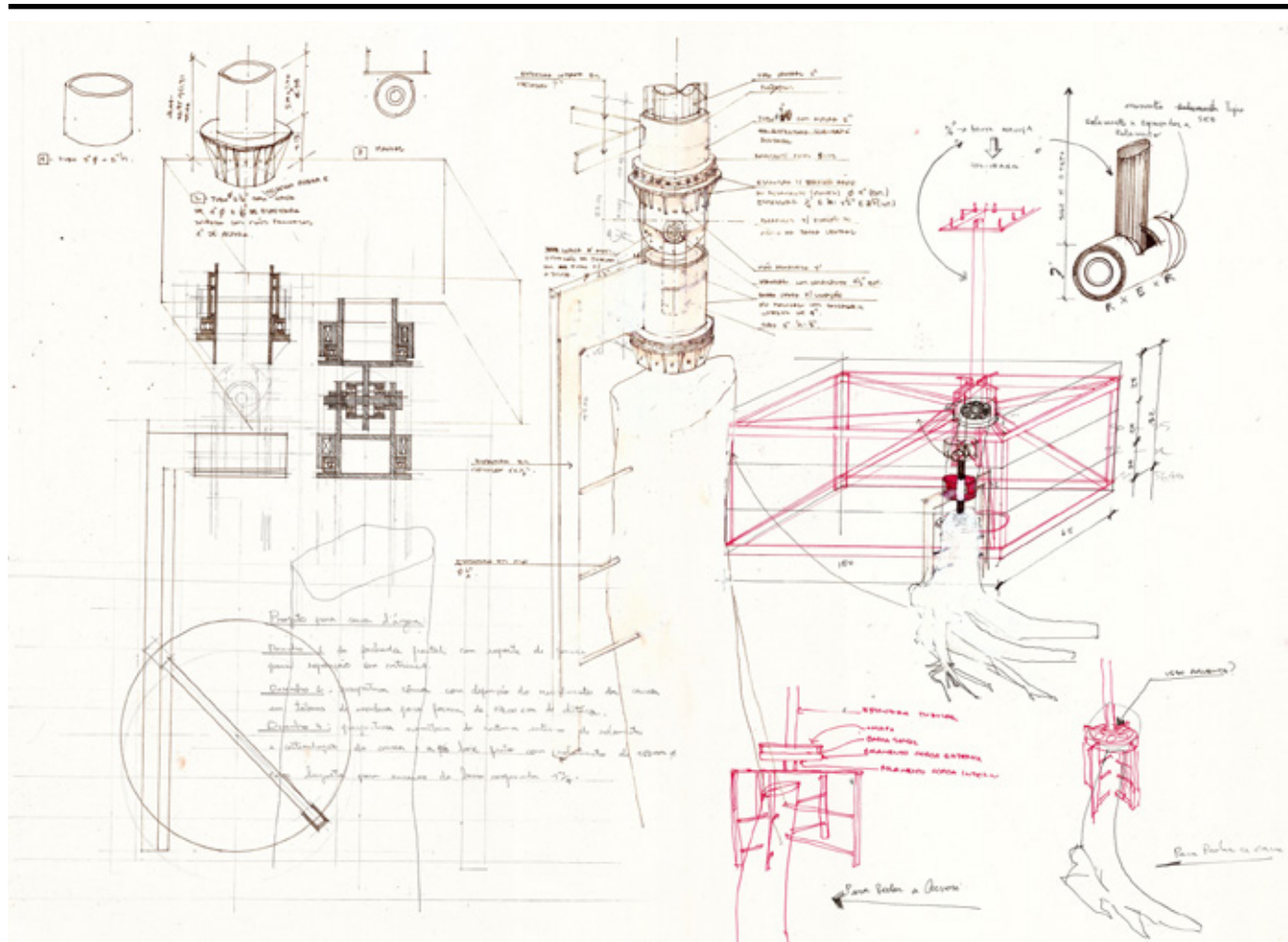
4	nature, spaces and machines
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nature, spaces, and machines early years

André Griffo's early works are permeated by a clash between the natural and the artificial worlds. In his paintings, drawings, and sculptures from this period, one notices the artist's interest in creating structures that bring together the universe of machinery—of human construction—with elements found in nature, both from flora and fauna. This body of work was created during a period of eighteen months during which the artist isolated himself on a small farm in Penedo, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. There, he immersed himself in his artistic process by engaging with elements that he found around him, specifically in the nature along the paths between the house and a mechanical workshop on the farmland.



*A mesa das iguarias, das refeições
e dos trabalhos mecânicos, 2014*
acrylic and charcoal on canvas
147,5 × 149,3 cm | 58 × 58.8 in



These works mark Griffo's transition from the field of Architecture and Urbanism, in which he has a bachelor's degree and work experience, to that of art. Driven by the desire to create installations from elements that were available around him, he began to organize his works into compositions that resembled architectural plans/projects, presenting them according to visual schemes or instructions that detailed specific structural arrangements. *Projeto para caixa d'água* [Water Tank Project] (2011), *Prótese* [Prostheses] (2013), and *Testes para pés de âncora* [Tests for Anchor Paws] (2013) are examples of this practice as they bring figures of different sizes and perspectives, as well as writings, detailing the assembly and functioning of the structures.

Projeto para caixa d'água, 2013
 graphite, hydrographic, colored
 pencils, corrector and acrylic
 on paper
 50 x 70 cm | 19.7 x 27.5 in

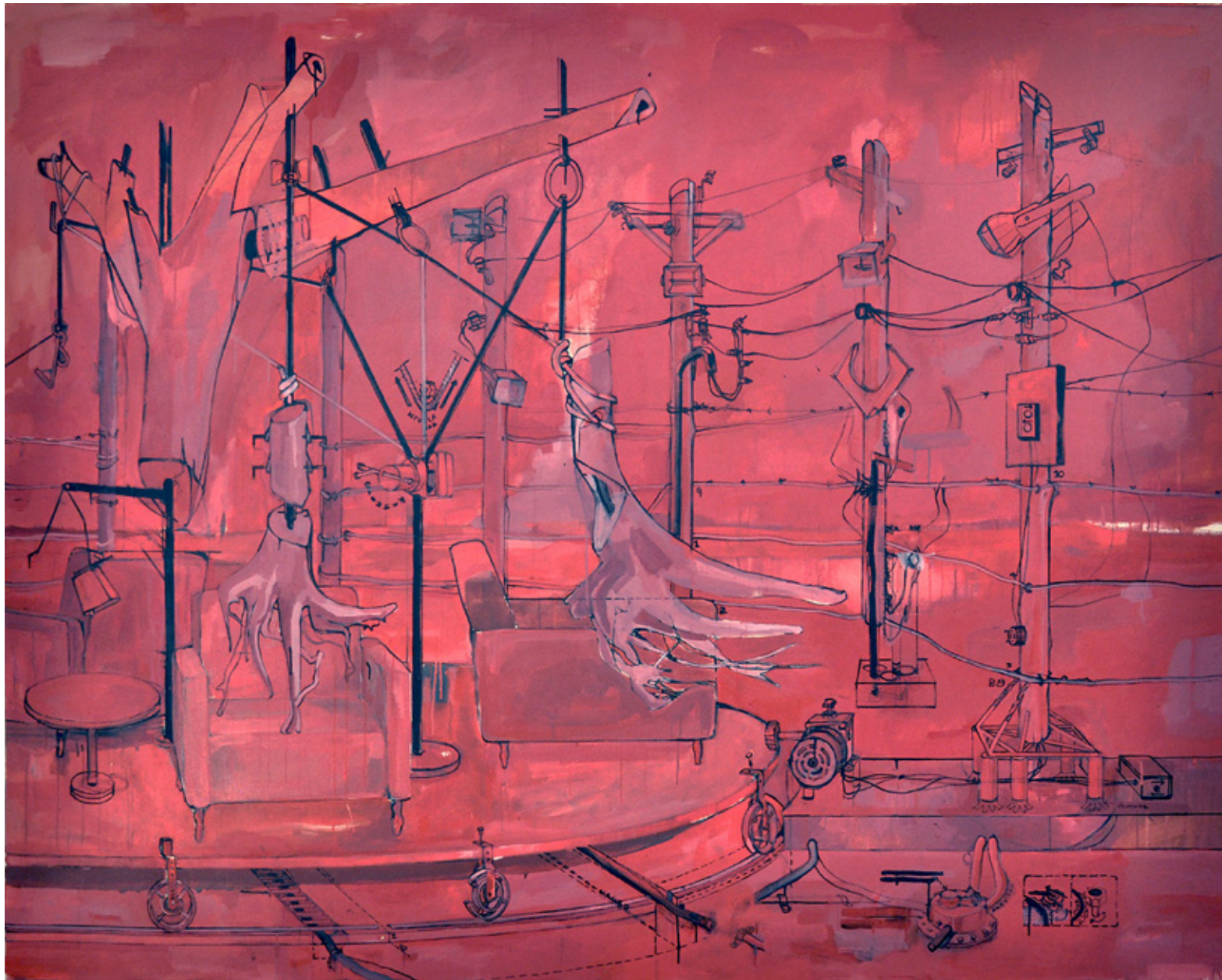
→
Próteses para indivíduos, 2013
 graphite, hydrographic, colored
 pencils, corrector and acrylic
 on paper
 50 x 70 cm | 19.7 x 27.5 in

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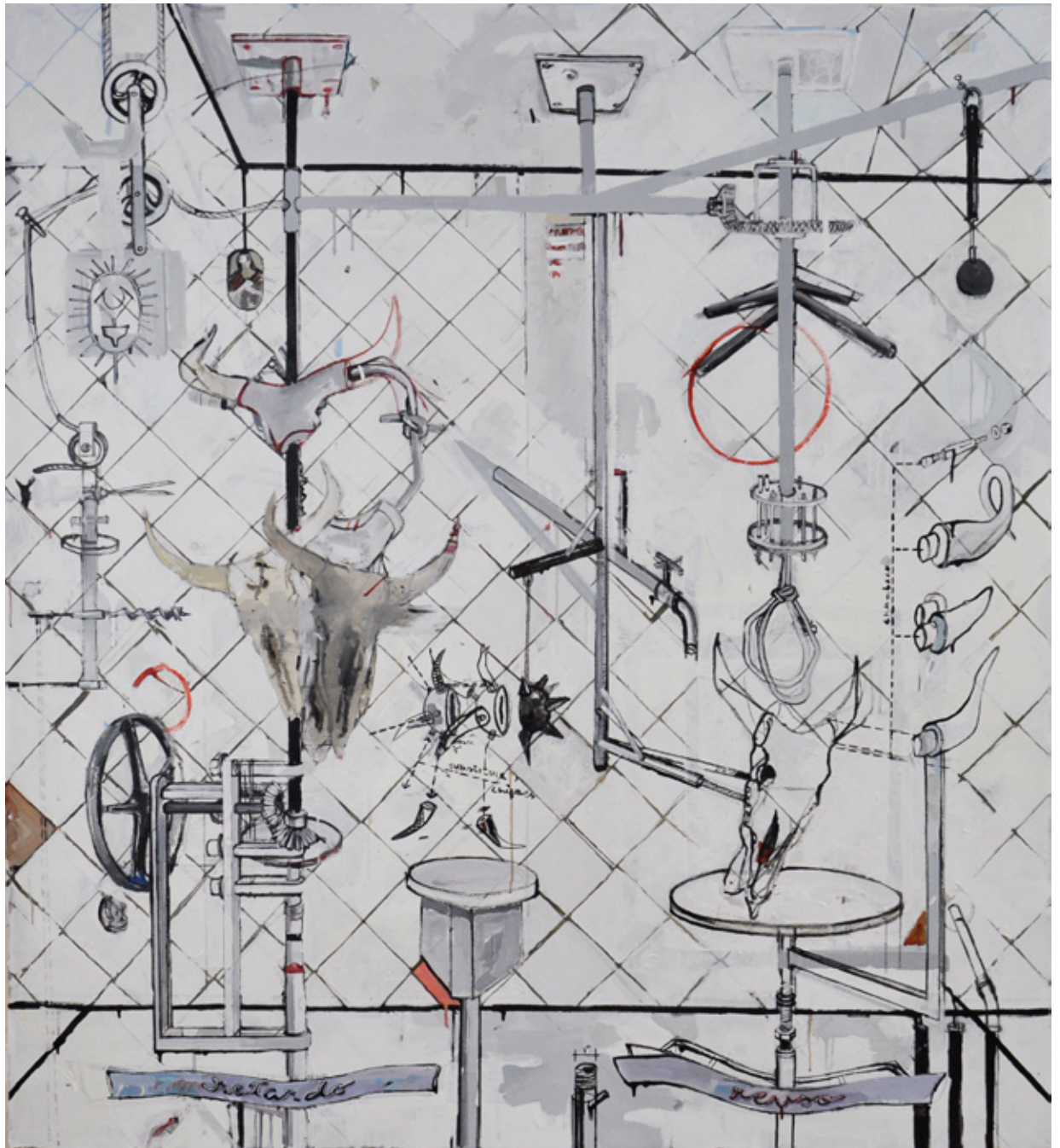
Teste para chumbadores, 2013
graphite, hydrographic, colored
pencils, corrector and acrylic
on paper
50 × 70 cm | 19.7 × 27.5 in

Chumbadores, 2013
iron, steel, polyurethane
and concrete
295 × 200 × 20 cm
116.1 × 78.7 × 7.87 in
Photo © Eduardo Masini





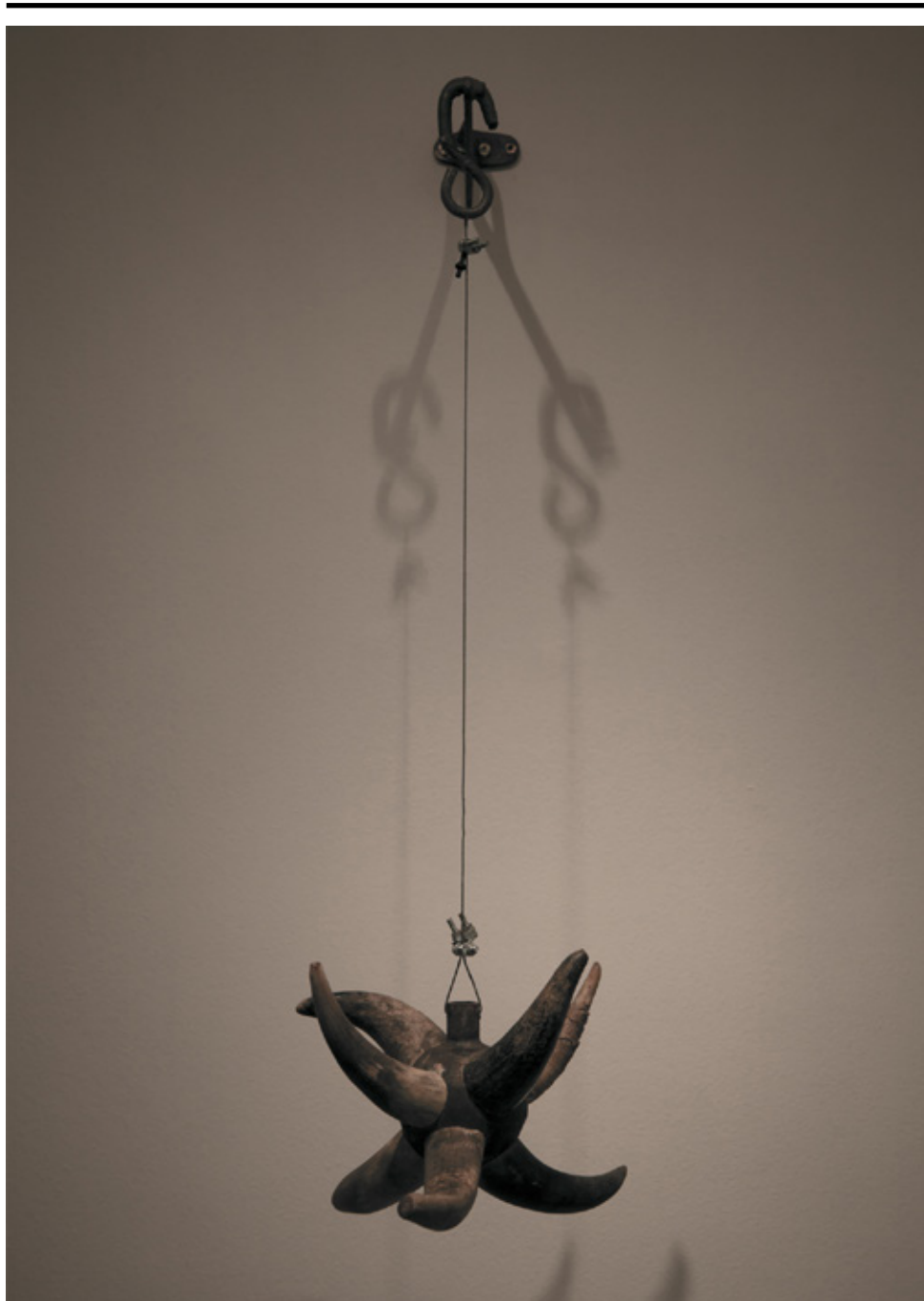
Reunião, 2012
acrylic and charcoal on canvas
198 × 249 cm | 78 × 98 in



Reuso e retardo, 2012
acrylic and charcoal on canvas
159 x 146 cm | 62.6 x 57.5 in



Relações específicas, 2014
acrylic and charcoal on canvas
146,5 x 154,5 cm | 57.7 x 60.8 in



His three-dimensional works, in turn, often appear hanging, creating tension in the space. *Sete chifres* [Seven Horns] (2013) and *Estrutura mista* [Mixed Structure] (2014) combine objects from the natural world, such as ox horns and tree trunks, with elements used in constructions, such as cables, motors, and steel structures. These elements take us to the universe of agriculture, alluding to colonial Brazil and life on farms and in the countryside, in which technology affects the natural world. This atmosphere would become even more present in later works, evoking the formation of Brazil and the continuity of colonial structures.

7 chifres, 2013
iron, steel and horns
320 × 40 cm | 126 × 15.7 in



Estrutura mista, 2015
tree trunk, rope, metal structure
and electric motor
variable dimensions



8 patas, 2013
iron, steel and polyurethane
60 × 60 × 80 cm
23.6 × 23.6 × 31.5 in

In his paintings from the end of this period, Griffo starts to conceive space with more defined architecture. While space appeared in the form of architectural plans/projects in his early works, his later use of space is made to fully occupy the canvas, also incorporating perspectival techniques—though distorted to include other structures and objects. From time to time, the artist also comes to include words and sentences that refer to architectural projects, breaking the illusion of actual space.

Gotejamento edificado, 2014
iron, paraffin, pvc and lead
pipes, faucet
variable dimensions
Photo © Daniel Mansur

→
Gotejamento estudo 2, 2014
graphite, hydrographic,
colored pencils, corrector
and acrylic on paper
50 × 70 cm | 19.7 × 27.5 in





A exibição de Giotto/Gotejamento contínuo/A vocalização da Mãe-da-Lua (Triptico), 2014
acrylic and charcoal on canvas
229,5 × 436 cm | 90.3 × 171.6 in
Photo © Daniel Mansur



ruins and religious images

In the following years, André Griffo delved into his pictorial research, elaborating compositions in which architecture became the protagonist. He created spaces in ruins and abandoned sites, in which we can envision a glorious past, even though what remains is the present decay. Many of these spaces came from real places that Griffo had visited while working as an architect and urbanist, which he collected as references that later supported his spatial fictions.

Acidentes não são territórios, 2015
acrylic and charcoal on canvas
198,5 × 156,5 cm | 78.1 × 61.6 in

→
*Impressões sobre
arquitetura fria*, 2017
oil on canvas
194 × 268,5 cm | 76.7 × 105.7 in



In the works from this period, there are no human figures. However, there are hints of their existence in a spectral, phantasmatic form as we find traces of their past presence. On the walls, we see various images and objects and, on the floor, vases with flowers. With these elements, Griffo makes reference to the history of art, either by alluding to the still life or by reproducing images taken from art books to ornament the space. Other images allude to black and white photographs from a Brazilian past, oscillating between images from the empire, the republic and religion.



Teorias em espaço transitório, 2016
oil on canvas
158 x 199 cm | 62.2 x 78.3 in

→
*À memória da memória ou à
memória do progresso*, 2018
oil on canvas
152,5 x 217 cm | 60 x 85.4 in





Gradually, these spaces gained more complexity. In *Problemas com formas primárias* [Problems with Primary Forms] (2018), we come across a room whose back wall opens to another room, and so on until we reach a landscape. Each division that opens to the next room is cut in a geometric shape: circle, square, and triangle. These elements break with the composition's conventional realism introducing a certain oddity. On the one hand, the work invites us to reflect on the pictorial space and the use of geometry in the construction of spatiality. On the other hand, the painting also uses primary forms in the opposite way, as a means of breaking from this illusion.

Problemas com formas primárias, 2018
oil on canvas
152,5 × 217 cm | 60 × 85.4 in

In *A sala dos provedores* [The Providers' Room] (2018), the artist delved further into the history of Brazil, taking the gallery of 'providers,' at Santa Casa de Misericórdia, in Rio de Janeiro as his reference. This room displays portraits of the 'providers,' an association that has supported the institution's services since the 17th century. Usually, the title of 'provider' is held by politicians and members of high society, highlighting how the brotherhood functions as a symbol of social recognition. In the painting, we see a room full of portraits of these figures. However, on the floor, we find elements that evoke existing contradictions with this group of people who, despite acting as benefactors, profited from the economy of slavery through human miniatures and structures that refer to this activity. The difference in scale between the small figures and the magnitude of the space and its decoration is an element that will become recurrent in Griffo's work, pointing to the disparities that exist between different classes in Brazilian society.



A sala dos provedores, 2018
oil on canvas
194 × 290 cm | 76.4 × 114.2 in

→
Instruções para administração das fazendas, 2018
oil and spray on canvas
150 × 221 cm | 59 × 87 in





During this period, Griffo also focused more evidently on the history of art, bringing the visual grammar of Renaissance painters to contemporary times. The series *Anunciação vazia* [Empty Annunciation] (2019), for example, is a commentary on famous biblical scenes in art. The first works in the series focused on compositions by Fra Angelico (1395-1455). However, Griffo moved the figures of the Archangel Gabriel and Mary to the bottom of the painting, allowing us to gaze at the entire architectural space elaborated by the Italian painter. Religious themes were also explored in *O poder e a glória do pecado* [The Power and Glory of Sin] (2019) and *The End Befitting the Beginning II* (2019), where the artist made explicit references to the tradition of Christian and Byzantine painting; while in the series *A Supressão do Santo pelo Ornamento* [The Saint Suppressed by Ornaments] (2018), he replaced images of saints in altarpieces with ornaments that refer to the Baroque period, positing that it is precisely the rich decorative elements that indicate the importance of the religious figure, and give it a sacred aura.

Anunciação vazia IV, 2019
oil on canvas and plywood
73,7 x 62,5 cm | 29 x 24.6 in



*A supressão do santo
pelo ornamento, 2018*
oil and acrylic
194 x 156 cm | 76.4 x 61.4 in



*Decidir quais demônios habitarão
o novo mundo, 2019*
oil on canvas
165 × 197 cm | 65 × 77.6 in



Os crucificados, 2018
ink and pastel oil graphite
and wax on paper
32,6 × 26,3 cm | 12.8 × 10.35 in



Mãe dos homens, 2018
ink and pastel oil graphite
and wax on paper
32,6 × 26,3 cm | 12.8 × 10.35 in



Santana mestra, 2018
ink and pastel oil graphite
and wax on paper
32,6 × 26,3 cm | 12.8 × 10.35 in

the ghosts of colonial brazil

In recent years, André Griffo has combined several of the themes he had previously addressed and transposed them into large-scale paintings. In these works, the interiors of seemingly abandoned places are complemented with images, miniatures of figures and buildings, and plants. Some spaces display religious images on their walls, such as murals and altars, while others show portraits of those who may own the house. The presence of doors, windows, and stairs in these compositions seem to invite us to sneak a peek beyond the scene. This is a strategy used by Griffo to avoid limiting the work to the space of the painting, taking us to imagine what lies beyond the canvas and to reflect on how the issues addressed in his pieces are present in our world.



Altar marajoara, 2020
oil on canvas
177 × 223 cm | 69.7 × 87.8 in





In a sense, one can understand Griffo's realism as a form of encouraging the audience to reflect on the presence of painted elements in our reality, acting as a mirror to our world, and thus making us consider the persistence of colonial structures in contemporary Brazil.

Luzes não indicam a saída, 2019
oil on canvas
177,5 × 113,5 cm | 69.9 × 52,6 in

→
Instruções para administração das fazendas II, 2020
oil and acrylic on canvas
177 × 223 cm | 69.7 × 87.8 in



*O lugar onde os inimigos
não morrem, 2020*
oil on canvas
160 x 120 cm | 63 x 47 in





O progresso do regresso 3, 2021
printer oil and ink on canvas
120 × 90 cm | 47.2 × 35.4 in

Griffo often employs the representation of newspaper pages as a form of indicating contemporary times. Indeed, the artist has developed a technique that allows him to transfer a newsprint to oil paintings and still maintain its legibility. This process speaks to the fact that the artist has understood the spaces that he represents as places where different temporalities can overlap in order to evoke the diversity of the constituent parts of our reality. Griffo's spaces end up becoming platforms for a discourse that sees in the juxtaposition of anachronic objects a strategy to discuss the permanence of structures in the formation of Brazil.



O lugar das abstrações e dos trabalhos mecânicos, 2020
printer oil and ink on canvas
160,5 × 121 cm | 63.2 × 47.6 in



O progresso do regresso, 2020
printer oil and ink on canvas
123,5 x 100 cm | 48.6 x 39.4 in



The atmosphere of mystery and melancholy remains in his most recent works, while the spaces have come to be mostly occupied by full-scale individuals. *Distant Eyes* *Camouflage Themselves in the Scenery* (2021) and the series *O vendedor de figuras em miniatura* [The Seller of Miniature Characters] (2021) present solitary figures that convey a certain sense of disenchantment or helplessness in their expressions and poses, and thus evoke a different sense of void that still resonates with his previous work.

Olhos distantes se camuflam na paisagem, 2021
oil and acrylic on canvas
177 × 133 cm | 69.7 × 52.4 in

→
O fim condizente com o começo 3, 2021
oil on canvas
177 × 223 cm | 69.7 × 87.8 in







O vendedor de miniaturas 2, 2021
oil and acrylic on canvas
177 × 133 cm | 69.7 × 52.4 in

→
O vendedor de miniaturas, 2020
ink and oil pastel, colored pencils
and graphite on canvas
177 × 223 cm | 69.7 × 87.8 in



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