

Paolo Salvador
Misterios inscritos en tela
September 7 – November 12, 2023
Opening Thursday, September 7, 5–7PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *Misterios inscritos en tela*, Paolo Salvador's (b. 1990 in Lima, PE) fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, and his first at our Seoul gallery.

In his analysis of Francis Bacon's *Figures*, Gilles Deleuze pondered one of the perennial questions in postmodern painting: how does one make invisible forces visible? In the case of Lima-born and Berlin-based artist Paolo Salvador, the answer lies in the depiction of sensuous and esoteric realms that are imbued with affective resonance. Using a reduced visual lexicon and harmonious composition, the limitless forces of Nature, culture, and memory become manifest. The works represent not only a continuous exploration of the past, both personal and historical, but also innermost reflections on the human condition—vividly demonstrating that to paint is to simultaneously engage with the world at large, with the canon of Western art, and with one's own history.

In line with the Deleuzian prerogative, the force of Nature in particular is rendered visible in the rhythms and flows evoked through Salvador's use of line and color. His vibrant compositions consistently celebrate the natural world as an all-encompassing force: depictions of mountains, trees, and wildlife are ubiquitous throughout his body of work. Nevertheless, this straightforward iconography rises above mere simplistic symbolism. While Salvador consistently draws from ancient Andean ontology in his depictions of wildlife, his art is deeply rooted in the contemporary. Not constrained by a single perspective, he routinely borrows from a rich reservoir of mythology in order to extract and develop meaning within his practice. His universalist ambitions are channeled by this syncretic impulse to revisit and re-define concepts taken from such disparate sources as indigenous cosmology, Old Masters, and postmodern philosophy. The blending of influences spanning time and geography aligns with contemporary Peruvian culture, itself a product of centuries of cultural hybridisation and interracial union.

In this amalgamation of influences, there is a constant negotiation between the artist's Latin American roots and his identity as an immigrant living and working in Europe. The idiosyncrasy of his native Peru is evidently contained in the pre-Columbian signs that characterise his artistic approach. But allusions to his home country likewise emerge from the paintings' materiality: the surface of the picture plane, with its varied brushstrokes and textures, evokes the heterogeneity of the Peruvian landscape, characterised by a uniquely diverse topography embracing a wide variety of altitudes and microclimates. Much like his native country, each of his works articulates an ecological system made up of individual parts.

However, the expansive plains and mountain landscapes that emerge are equally inspired by his homeland as they are by the invocation of a spiritual dimension that surpasses the constraints of geography. The recurrent depiction of boundless space speaks to the universal quality of his work. Following Kant's concept of the sublime as an attribute of the mind, the unfolding of space in Salvador's compositions conveys a sense of infinity and the unattainability of desire in the viewer's consciousness. This is especially evidenced in impossible landscapes containing multiple horizons at once, or trees whose branches seem to disperse into the ether. The paintings become attempts at galvanizing the cosmos, or analogies for the painter's own attempts to grasp knowledge.

In Salvador's works, the human body is often portrayed in conjunction with an animal, generally rendered in a feline or canine form. The humanlike forms appear to preside over their animal counterparts or, significantly, to be riding or holding them. The image of man's dominion over beast historically represents a desire to harness nature, which in the postmodern conception of the self is replaced by culture. In this way, the coupling of these figures introduces the modern man's struggle by placing it within the larger fabric of civilisation, a force that is at once indomitable and imperious. Salvador's animalistic figures appear as spectral entities that accompany and guide humans in their search for meaning. In this way, the forms that inhabit these atemporal spaces are constantly shifting and morphing, becoming avatars of consciousness. Notably, the human figures themselves remain unbound by specific nationalities, genders, or ethnicities. They allude to the biblical conception of the creation of Man out of soil and, in this spirit, are all painted using the same material but with various densities. Salvador consistently renders his human forms with a clay-based pigment, echoing Prometheus' gesture and imbuing his creations with a shared life force.

In this new series of works, Salvador introduces the triptych as a novel configuration in his practice. The three paintings lack a linear progression or narrative framework—instead, they are connected through an identical color scheme tied to a circular organisation. Each one embodies a rhythm that is in turn closely tied to the Amazonian understanding of time as both cyclical and holistic. Through this format, the force of eternal time is made visible. In the central panel, the human form peers beyond the boundaries of the frame, directing their vision towards something that also exerts a gravitational pull on the prominent feline form. This gaze outward, a reference to the very act of seeing, is recurrent in Salvador's painting. In an enigmatic vertical work, a solitary human figure in the centre of an endless expanse of blue likewise directs their look beyond the confines of the frame, this time directly confronting the spectator. In this way, we as viewers are made aware of our own vision—we are engaging in an active process of interpretation. Crucially, the gaze here alludes to the metaphysical equivalent of seeing, *perceiving* or *knowing*. Herein lies one of the guiding principles of the artist's practice, indeed, of his life.

Ultimately, Salvador's art hinges on the same universal themes and ideas that connect the pre-colonial subject to modern thinkers, the Andean cosmovision to natural science, and the Western tradition of painting to contemporary art practices. Through recurrences, his work can be said to exist within a continuum, outside teleological time; like the artist's own identity, it morphs and expands, continually revisiting and uncovering its past in an ongoing exercise of remembering.

— Julia Tavares Grünberg

This is Paolo Salvador's fourth solo exhibition with Peres Projects and his first in our Seoul gallery. His recent solo exhibitions include *Silencios entre el mar, los ríos y montañas*, Goodman Gallery, London (2023), *Los últimos días del gato de fuego*, Peres Projects, Milan (2022), *Ensueños en el amanecer*, Ilwoo Space, Seoul (2021), *Nuevas Mitologías*, Patricia Low Contemporary, Gstaad (2021), and *Resonancias oníricas*, Peres Projects, Berlin (2021). He has participated in a number of group exhibitions including *The New, New*, Peres Projects, Seoul (2023), *Futurismo*, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo (2022), *Heroic Bodies*, the Rudolph Tegnens Museum, Dronningmølle (2022), *Les Yeux Clos*, Perrotin, Paris (2021), and *The Nomenclature of Colours*, Slade Research Centre, London.

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