

Anton Kern Gallery

Marepe *Peripheral Vision*

May 29 - August 9, 2024

In his first New York solo exhibition in ten years, Brazilian artist Marepe returns to the gallery with a new body of work that celebrates life in the periphery of mainstream culture. Working in the countryside region of Bahia, at a remove from the major art centers of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Marepe uses the vernacular of everyday materials around him to create formally sophisticated works with poetic potency. A keen observer, he draws inspiration from sources ranging from local street vendors to Marcel Duchamp to express a sense of place and share a romantic's view of his hometown of Santo Antônio de Jesus.



Olhar Periférico [Peripheral Gaze], 2023, Acrylic on canvas, 82 5/8 x 128 inches, (210 x 325 cm)

Marepe sets a welcoming tone for the exhibition by placing a two meter square formation of bricks excavated from his local community center on the floor inside the entrance to the gallery. Each of the roughly-hewn bricks bears a heart shaped impression, and in the brick at the center is an impression of a keyhole. Entitled, *The Key to Construction is the Heart*, this work is an homage to the labor and spirit of his community. This echoes the gesture he made for his contribution to the 25th Bienal de São Paulo, in which he relocated an enormous wall with a painted sign advertising the local hardware store where his father worked, presenting it unaltered in the pavilion.

Among the topics the artist touches upon in his latest exhibition is the act of listening. An aluminum head sculpture with closed eyes and oversized ears entitled *I'm all ears* communicates the importance of listening to one's community, and the artist's need for dialogue and creative exchange. A tunnel created out of copper rods and used LPs is marked with a sign that reads: Silence in this Place, and offers a space for reflection. Another installation *Silencer* consists of lemon tree branches extending from either end of a car muffler, a student's chair and speaker, and a bowl of pinecones, describing the importance of learning from the outside world.

Additional themes are pastoral dreamscapes, Bahia's tropical climate, and the artist's notion of a connection between heat and love. In his *Radiators* series, Marepe presents a group of drawings depicting fantastical creatures. Each scene is carved into an air conditioner radiator sourced from the metal scrap shop across the street from his studio. Marepe's ready-made sunglass stand sculpture *Summer* is the epitome of the season, and the ingenuity and work ethic that drives the local economy. In two paintings, both entitled *The lovers*, visitors encounter larger-than-life size couples, one pair meets our gaze, while the other is engaged in a passionate kiss. Marepe uses vibrant colors and exaggerated positions to express their heightened emotional states.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is *Peripheral Gaze*, a large surrealistic painting of a recumbent woman floating above a landscape. She has long gray hair and a beautiful face, her round belly is replaced with a hybrid image of an eye that is also a wheel, its spoke-like lashes propelling this goddess through the cosmos. The image could be read as a proposal for a flag representing the countryside's natural abundance, and its people with their wisdom and labor moving the country forward. Seen as a whole, the exhibition is Marepe's message of love, negotiating his position between his welcoming international audience, and his community that thrives outside of the central field of vision.

Marepe (Marcos Rejs Peixoto) was born in 1970 in Santo Antônio de Jesus, Bahia, Brazil where he continues to live and work. *Peripheral Vision* is the artist's fourth solo exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery since 2004. His work has also been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at Galeria Luisa Strina, Sao Paulo; and Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin and Paris. Institution exhibitions include Pinacoteca, Sao Paulo; Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris among others. He took part in the Biennales of São Paulo (2012; 2006); Sidney (2006), Venice (2003) and Istanbul (2003), and his work is included in prestigious public collections such as The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Tate Collection, UK, and Inhotim Museum, Brumadinho among others.