

# GIL AMOUROUS

## SOBRE A VIDA

### À flor da pele [On the Edge]

By José Sousa Machado

"Art imitates nature, because nature is already an art"<sup>1</sup>

The exhibition that Gil Amourous is presenting at Galeria Sá da Costa – and which also marks his public reappearance after some years away – encouraged me to write, in analogy with it, a poetic preamble to the presentation text with a haiku seasoning. It reads as follows:

At dawn I went to pick flowers  
in my still sleeping garden  
and spring came into my dwelling

The paintings and drawings by Gil Amourous now on display, brought together under the title "*About life*", depict events from the artist's everyday life lived on the very edge. The horizon of their possible existence begins and ends in the contours of the artist's sensitive experience, in the skin vibration of everything that surrounds him, in the shivering of his corporeal density and in the subtle materiality of forms and colours.

It is as if the artist dragged everything down to earth, even the heavens and what is invisible, literally grasping trees, trunks, stones, grass, dirt, and clouds with his hands, and declared that only those things that can be touched and that offer resistance to touch do truly exist. These paintings and drawings by Gil Amourous define reality by what is corporeal and acknowledge in the feeling, in the sensorial perception, the only criterion for the evaluation of reality, in close harmony with the Epicurean philosophical system.

But this enunciated materialist affinity between the artist and the Athenian philosopher of the sixth century BC ends there, for while Epicurus, despite stressing the corporeal character of the real, proposed the moderation of earthly pleasures as a way to achieve happiness, Gil Amourous' paintings are a hypostatization of the real. They are, in most cases, a celebration of the exuberance and beauty of the natural world, and at other times

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<sup>1</sup> Aristóteles, Física II

they hyperbolically depict instants or mundane details of the artist's everyday family life – for instance, one of the paintings depicts in sharp detail what appears to be the entrance to a shabby home, and the two disproportionately large drawings depict intimate household chores. These overstatements intentionally assumed by the artist in his approach to frugal themes, inverting our usual hierarchies of assessment, derive from the hedonistic quality that underlies this entire exhibition, as if pleasure and willful satisfaction carried an intrinsic value in themselves – the pleasure associated with happiness, in this case sensory enjoyment, mobilising all the senses for this purpose.

On the other hand, in his artistic activity, Gil Amourous follows the example of the naturalist painters, who executed their works of art outdoors, immersed in the natural environments they wished to represent, absorbing with all senses the myriad of very different stimuli that each natural ecosystem provides; not only visual stimuli, but also hearing, olfactory, and even meditative and ethical stimuli, because the Earth is an eloquent living being, everything in it shining with vitality.

Staying for extended periods in intimate soliloquy with nature, Gil Amourous incorporated and reproduced in his paintings the musical and scented silence of the plants and the very fragrance of time which dilates under these circumstances; a time rich in never-ending materiality and sensibility. The South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han said that botany and "*biology are ultimately a theology, a teaching about God.*"

About this method of painting in nature, with the artist staying for long periods face to face with the object he wishes to depict, Proclotus, the 'divine' Proclotus, quoted by Maria Filomena Molder in "*O pensamento da forma*", spoke to us as follows:

*"so a man who enters a richly ornamented house, looks at and admires all these riches, before he has seen the master of the house; but as soon as he sees him, as soon as he loves him – that master who is not a cold statue, but who really deserves to be contemplated – he leaves everything else to look at him alone; he fixes him and does not separate his gaze from him; but looking at him so much he no longer sees him; the object of the sight ends up being confused with the sight itself; what was previously an object has become a vision (...) to the eyes of the visitor to the house, there appears not a man, but a god, who does not appear to the eyes of the body and fills the soul with his presence"* (Proclotus, VI, 7, 35).

It is also on this plane of mystical metamorphosis, of fusion between subject and object, that the essence of the Japanese poetic genre called haiku is based: a simple 'being' in absolute communion with each passing moment, offering us a physical testimony of that full and unrepeatable moment. The analogy referred to in the preamble to this text between Gil Amourous' painting and the haiku poetic genre is also rooted in this level of full existential awareness, as the voice of Matsuo Bashô states:

*"I still want to see  
in the flowers at dawn  
the face of a god."*

CO-PRODUÇÃO:



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## Gil Amourous

Gil Amourous (1971), lives and works in Lisboa.

2000, Painting Prize at the 45th Salon de Montrouge, France.

1999, Scholarship awarded by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – Project for Artistic Creation, Paisagem.

1996, Scholarship by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – Grant for Artistic Work, Paisagem.

1996, Advanced Course of AR.CO .

### **Individual Exhibitions**

2004, Drawing, Diferença Gallery, Lisbon.

### **Group Exhibitions**

2014, Animalia and Nature, CAM Collection, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum.

2007, Bazar AR.CO, CCB (Centro Cultural de Belém), Lisbon.

2000, 45th Salon de Montrouge – 55 Jeunes Créateurs Européens, Paris.

Young European Creators, SNBA (National Society of Fine Arts), Lisbon.

1999, Collection of Portuguese Art from the 80's and 90's, MEIAC (Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo), Badajoz.

7 Artists at the 10th Month, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon.

1996, Scholarship Students and Finalists, AR.CO, Lisbon.

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1994, Scholarship Students and Finalists, AR.CO, Lisbon.

1993, Scholarship Students and Finalists, AR.CO, Lisbon.

### **Represented in the Collections:**

. AR.CO Collection

. Collection of the José Azeredo Perdigão Modern Art Center (C.A.M)

. António Cachola Collection

. Victor Pinto da Fonseca Collection

. Colégio Moderno Collection