

nara roesler

sérgio sister
linked paintings

nara roesler rio de janeiro

opening nov 3

exhibition nov 4 – dec 23, 2021

On the occasion of *Linked Paintings*, Sérgio Sister's solo exhibition at Nara Roesler Rio de Janeiro, artist Maria Klabin visited his studio in São Paulo undertaking a conversation about the practice of painting.

Sister is known for his monochromatic abstract painting on varying surfaces, such as canvases, wooden strips, and boxes, engaging with the materiality of the medium through the study of color and light. Klabin, in turn, has developed a figurative practice focused on everyday scenes, occurrences, and landscape. The conversation between the two artists offers an encounter between generations, and intertwines distinct approaches to painting, raising overarching questions and thoughts about the medium.

Below are excerpts from this conversation, including comments by curator and art critic Luis Pérez-Oramas:

Maria Klabin Ultimately, painting is pure materiality. It is essentially a physical relationship between two bodies—it is a collaboration between artist and matter.

Sérgio Sister What dignifies painting is its physical expression, the qualities in handling materiality, whether in a baroque canvas or a contemporary abstraction.

MK No matter which path you take, a painting is always about itself.

SS You previously asked me if I create figurative work. I have done it a lot; I was a Pop artist in the 1960s. It's just that I don't feel like working with figures at the moment. Do I like figurative painting? I do. I have no problem with it, in fact many of my friends, especially the younger ones, work with figurative work and produce great bodies of work.

MK There's a wave of figuration at the moment.

SS Yes, these things come and go; it is always the same. Nowadays, there is a diversity in art form, a rich coexistence. I specifically worked with the question of plane recognition, which had become a means of waving goodbye to Brazilian Modern Art and of being able to make a painting that revealed new visuals, broadened the field. In Brazil, Modern artists were very attached to figurative tradition, they were somewhat connected to Cubism. It was relevant at the time. We have had great Modern painters in Brazil, excellent painters that I very much like, but I wanted to broaden my field. The idea of planes, of non-figurative painting, was

powerful and intriguing for part of artists from my generation and for myself. In fact, Concrete artists started the movement in Brazil. Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica exerted a significant influence. In São Paulo, we were also influenced by great painters like Volpi and Milton Dacosta.

MK Volpi manages to occupy these two universes. He thinks in a Concrete way, and, yet he simultaneously captures the affection of daily life. I see this in your boxes, I thought it was so beautiful. On one hand, your boxes are inevitably permeated with the object's affection and function, which have the power of conveying, welcoming, gathering, bringing together; and, on the other, the color strips are like brushstrokes, totally independent from one another, underlining the object, you know? It sheds light, it helps you see more clearly.

SS In fact, the object is more of a support. In the boxes' case, the initial idea was to extend painting into space; that was the goal. Then, to incorporate virtual elements, such as shadow, into painting. Shadows will always exist inside the box, they might change places slightly, but they remain there, constantly interfering with the painting. They project themselves onto colors; they permanently stain the work. There is also the matter of air: when a color is placed at the back versus the front of the box, the tone changes—even if it is the same pigment—. That's because of the air, right? Besides, one immediately recognizes the box as an object in this series, which is more or less what we learnt from Jasper Johns' "targets." An object, in being defined as such, triggers familiarity, allowing

for painting to take form. This is the origin of painting, in its autonomy in relation to the object.

MK They merge. As much as they have autonomy, I can't dissociate one thing from the other. Maybe only occasionally, right?

SS Yeah. I wanted to paint in space. I created works made of stripes that project colors with high light intensity, using iridescent pigments and such. It was a problem. I wanted something that projected outwards, so I turned to boxes.

MK The little boxes remind me of Agnes Martin.

Luis Pérez-Oramas I find Maria's reference to Martin interesting. I hadn't thought of it, but just as Agnes Martin's works depend on—a very subtle—linear stripping of the visual field, Sérgio's boxes respond to an equally divided modular space but ready-made.

MK I love [Agnes Martin].

SS Me too. There is a lot of Barnett Newman, as well.

MK Totally!

SS Barnett Newman, and....

MK Frank Stella? Back then, Frank Stella used to make those stripes.

SS It is true...though I don't feel that Stella influenced my work. I can say that my references



were Willys de Castro, Barnett Newman, Josef Albers, and Brice Marden.

LPO I remember Paulo Herkenhoff's decision to install Stella and Lygia Pape side by side in his exhibition at MoMA. It was a brave gesture. But it is a question of scale, isn't it? Stella said he wanted to be able to be Velázquez but couldn't, so he made stripes!

MK All of them have more materiality. Jasper Johns, for example, makes that connection, a bridge between Pop and Minimalism. They anticipated Minimalism.

SS Jasper Johns is another artist who was of great influence in Brazil.

MK I agree with what you are saying about materiality. I am aware of the fact that, when I paint, whether looking outward in a more objective/figurative, or in a more introspective painting like those I have been making recently, it is always about how it is translated onto the surface. How did you get interested in materiality? Was there something in your surroundings that led you to it?

SS E I wanted to make a flat painting; I didn't want anything to do with illusion, perspective, none of that. I wanted a painting that was on the plane.

From the plane, anything can happen, so I painted. I actually began to paint with black. I began to cover many of my older paintings in black. Then, I began to differentiate black from surfaces with brushstrokes, and began to add metallic pigment to reflect external light. I also mixed black with other colors in order to create chromatic variations. In the beginning, there was still volume inside, a certain geometry. Then, everything disappeared. The new works in this exhibition in Rio have some interference; they are not purely planar.

MK They have a lot of texture, and the texture ends up giving a sense of depth.

SS I started putting together different paintings, juxtaposing different methods of painting, linking them, and creating a colorful connection that joined my canvases. The matter of the medium is of fundamental relevance; it creates another atmosphere for the painting.

MK It is interesting because this link between the paintings provides even more depth.

SS Yes because it is the link that ends up gaining prominence, despite it seeming foreign to the canvases it joins.

MK And how do you choose the color of these junctions?

SS [laughs] I never know ahead of time.

MK I was going to ask you about that. In these works with layers, several layers, is it an intuitive process?

SS Very, very intuitive. There is a moment when you know that the painting works, or it doesn't. There is one thing: all my paintings need to have a certain luminosity. It will define itself by the luminosity it can produce. If it doesn't have luminosity, it doesn't work. If it doesn't, then I go back to painting. Whether it's black, or white, luminosity is what needs to be achieved.

MK You accumulate layers to make your painting, while many artists use them to erase things. There are times that I think you use them to erase, and other times that you use them to create color.

SS That's it.

MK I see that you build layers, but it sometimes feels like you are excavating, extracting. It is almost like the work of an archaeologist, in trying to find that light. However, ironically, this process occurs through the accumulation and overlapping of color.

SS That's it. However, if I need to, I remove it all because, sometimes, the luminosity emerges if you take everything away.

MK You add numerous layers, and take others out until you create something interesting and concrete.

SS I remove and add layers until it is luminous. Sometimes there is not much of a method, you know? Sometimes, it is about the way I spread the

color. Sometimes, I apply the paint with a spatula or trowel, which I use a lot. Other times, I spread it with a cloth to create some surface tension.

MK Your research is about light; it is painting in its first and foremost element, probably.

SS With its initial element, which is the brushstroke.

LPO Right, Sérgio and Maria, initial, but also, above all else, indexical: the brushstroke that marks and leaves a trace. There is the light and the painted elements; whether they are abstract or figurative.



Pintura com ligação turquesa, 2020
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
41,9 x 30,6 x 2,4 cm
16.5 x 12 x 0.9 in







Ripas verdes, 2018
oil paint, vinyl paint,
canvas, aluminum and wood
79,9 x 89 x 2 cm
31.5 x 3.5 x 0.8 in





Caixa # Q3, 2020
oil paint on wood
37,6 x 24,6 x 8,7 cm
14.8 x 9.7 x 3.4 in







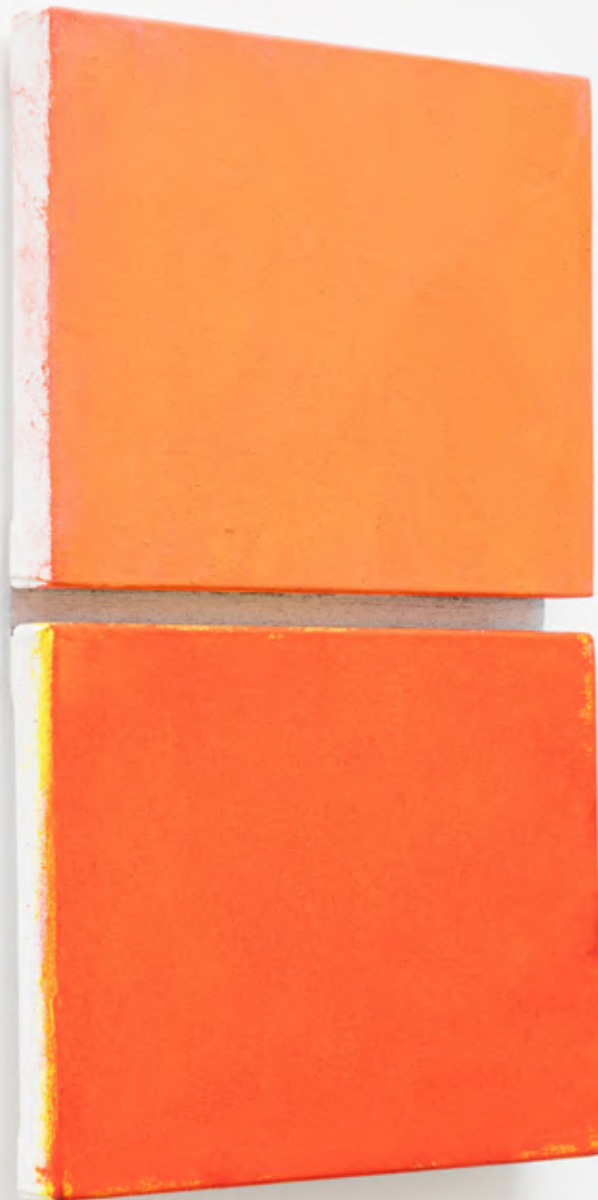
Ripas terra, 2018
oil paint, vinyl paint, canvas,
aluminum and wood
79,7 x 8,1 x 2 cm
31.4 x 3.2 x 0.8 in





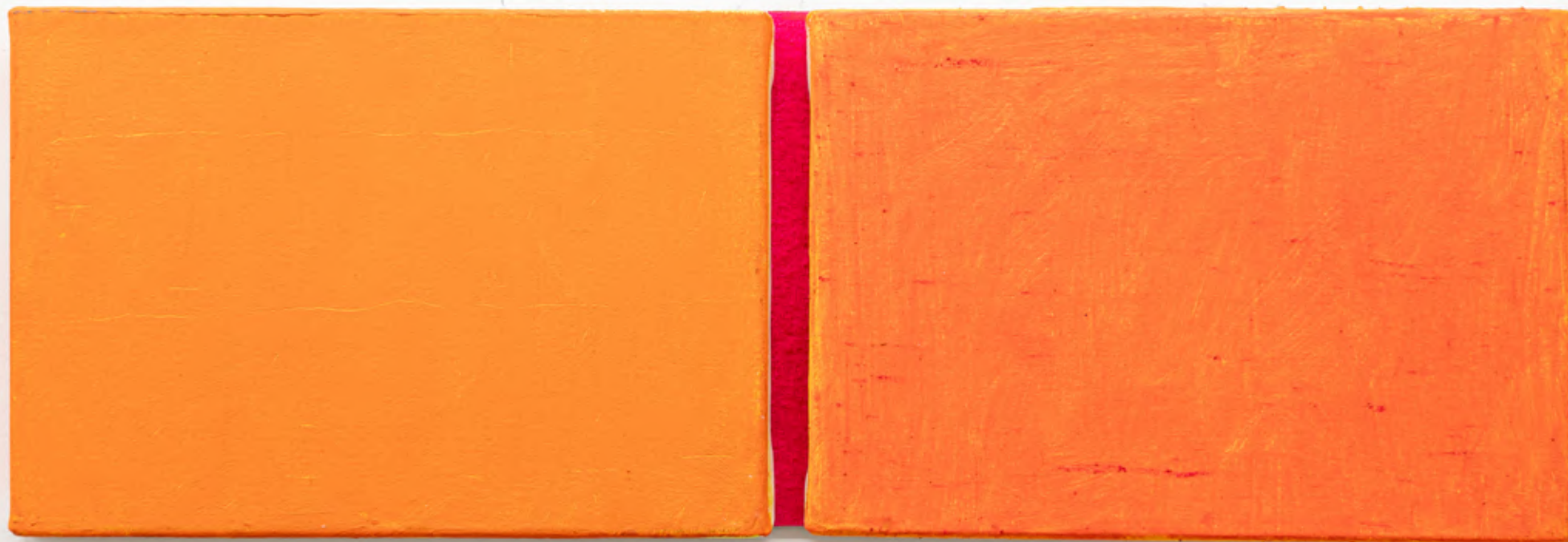
Pintura com ligação branca, 2019
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
30,5 x 41,5 x 2,5 cm
12 x 16.3 x 1 in





Pintura com ligação prata, 2020
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
37,8 x 24,3 x 2,3 cm
14.9 x 9.6 x 0.9 in





Pintura com ligação rosa fluo, 2021
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
17,1 x 50,3 x 2,5 cm
6.7 x 19.8 x 1 in







Pintura com ligações bronze e ouro, 2021
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
35,5 x 84,6 x 2,5 cm
14 x 33.3 x 1 in





Untitled, 2018
oil paint, vinyl paint,
canvas, aluminum and wood
64,2 x 7,6 x 2,5 cm
25.3 x 3 x 1 in





Pintura com ligações rosa e alumínio, 2020
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
45,7 x 121,6 x 2,9 cm
18 x 47.9 x 1.1 in





Laranjas, 2019
two pieces of oil paint on canvas
35,2 x 27,1 x 1,6 cm each
13.9 x 10,7 x 0,6 in each





Pintura com ligações azul e prata, 2021
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
24,3 x 53,6 x 2,5 cm
9.6 x 21.1 x 1 in







Caixa # Q2, 2020
tinta óleo sobre madeira
37,6 x 24,6 x 8,8 cm
14.8 x 9.7 x 3.5 in







Untitled, 2014
oil paint on canvas
30,2 x 24,2 x 2 cm
11.9 x 9.5 x 0.8 in





Pintura com ligação cinza, 2021
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
24,5 x 35,7 x 2,3 cm
9.6 x 14.1 x 0.9 in





Pintura com ligações roxa e azul, 2021
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
35,7 x 84,8 x 2,5 cm
14.1 x 33.4 x 1 in







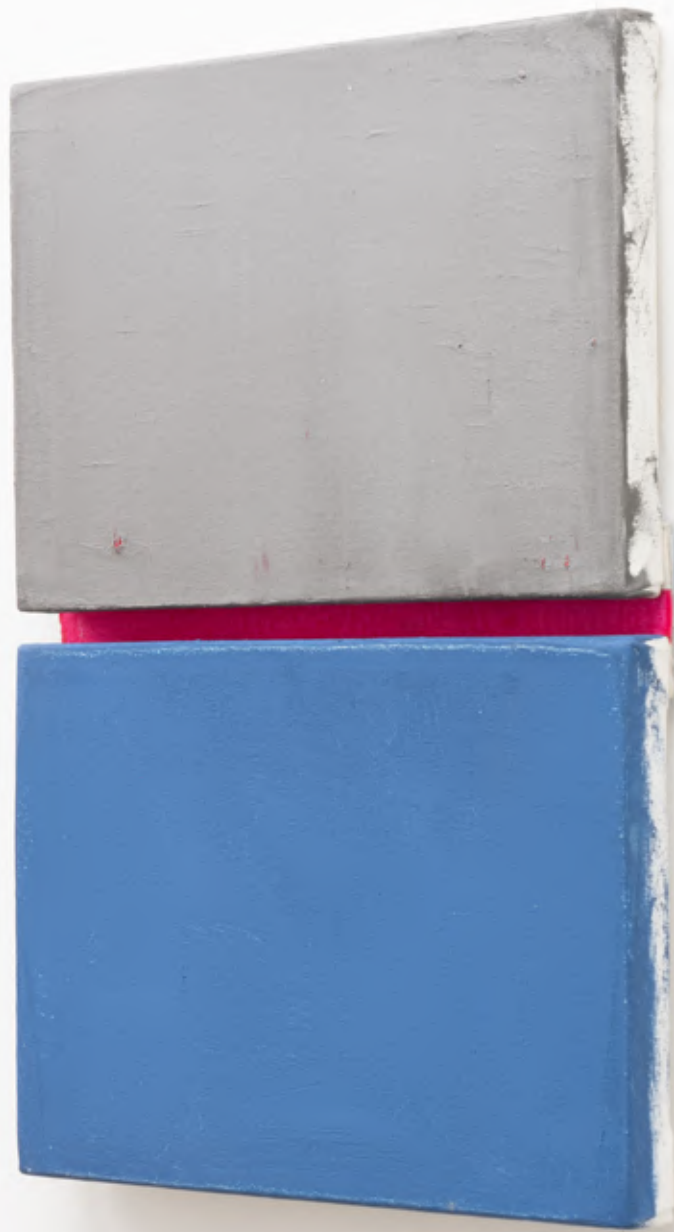
Pintura com ligações turquesa e roxa, 2020
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
24,2 x 53,8 x 2,4 cm
9.5 x 21.2 x 0.9 in





Caixa # Q4, 2020
oil paint on wood
37,7 x 24,6 x 8,7 cm
14.8 x 9.7 x 3.4 in





Pintura com ligação rosa fluo, 2021
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
35,5 x 24,5 x 2,2 cm
14 x 9,6 x 0.9 in



Untitled, 2006
oil paint on canvas
36 x 400 cm
14.2 x 157.5 in







Dois cinzas, 1998 / 2018
oil paint, vinyl paint, canvas,
aluminum and wood
48,3 x 5,7 x 2,2 cm
19 x 2.2 x 0.9 in







Ripas parede 6, 2019
oil paint, vinyl paint, canvas,
aluminum and wood
2 pieces of 64 x 11 cm | 25.2 x 4.3 in
3 pieces of 80 x 7,5 cm | 31,5 x 3 in





Pintura com ligações verdes fluo, 2021
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
24,4 x 53,2 x 2,2 cm
9.6 x 20.9 x 0.9 in







Pintura com ligações prata e ouro, 2020
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
24,5 x 73,9 x 2,5 cm
9.6 x 29.1 x 1 in





Untitled, 2018
oil paint, vinyl paint,
canvas, aluminum and wood
48,2 x 12,5 x 2,6 cm
19 x 4.9 x 1 in





Pintura com ligações laranja e preto, 2021
oil paint on canvas and aluminum
35,5 x 112,8 x 2,5 cm
14 x 44.4 x 1 in





sérgio sister

b. 1948, São Paulo, Brazil, where he lives and works

Sergio Sister started painting in the late 1960's, at the same time when he was working as a journalist and became engaged with political action. In 1970, Sister was arrested for his militancy. While detained for 19 months at the Tiradentes Prison, in São Paulo, Sister attended painting workshops held at the institution. As a part of Geração 80, Sister revisits an ancient theme in painting: the interplay between surface and three-dimensionality, in an attempt to liberate painting in space. What marked his production at that time was the superimposition of autonomous chromatic layers coexisting harmoniously side by side.

Today, his work combines painting and sculpture. He uses supports derived from found structures and from systems designed to serve our everyday needs, as we can see in the *Ripas* series, produced since the late 1990s (strips), and in *Caixas* series, produced since 2009, whose names are appropriate of the manufactured products from which they derive. These are sculptural paintings made from found wooden beams that resemble crates, porticos, or window frames. Sister paints the beams different colors and assembles them into configurations that allow various depths, shadows, and experiences of color to emerge.

selected solo exhibitions

- *Then and Now*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2019)
- *Sérgio Sister: O sorriso da cor e outros engenhos*, Instituto Ling, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2019)
- *Sérgio Sister*, Kupfer Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2017)
- *Sergio Sister: Malen Mit Raum*, Schatten und Luft, Galerie Lange + Pult, Zurich, Switzerland (2016)
- *Expanded Fields*, Nympe Projekte, Berlin, Germany (2016)
- *Ordem Desunida*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2015)

selected group exhibitions

- *A linha como direção*, Pina Estação, São Paulo, Brazil (2019)
- *The Pencil is a Key: Art by Incarcerated Artists*, The Drawing Center, New York, USA (2019)
- *Géométries Américaines, du Mexique à la Terre de Feu*, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France (2018)
- *AI-5 50 anos – Ainda não terminou de acabar*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake (ITO), São Paulo, Brazil (2018)
- *MAC USP no século XXI – A era dos artistas*, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP), São Paulo, Brazil
- 25ª Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2002)

selected institutional collections

- François Pinault Collection, Venice, Italy
- Fundación/Colección Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico
- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Sérgio Sister in his studio, october, 2021



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