



nara roesler

andré griffo
voarei com as asas que
os urubus me deram
nara roesler são paulo

opening saturday, april 2
exhibition apr 2 – may 21, 2022

*We are just a couple of men and nature has betrayed us.
There are the trees, the factories,
Rampant diseases, famines.*

—Carlos Drummond deAndrade

For André Griffo, not much is new under the sun, at least not as much as one would think. We continue to be harassed by the same anguish, guilt, humiliation, punishments of every kind, expected or unforeseen violence, and some hope, real or fabricated by our imagination. Like everything else, they are produced by those interested in the oppression of minds and bodies.

We can see, for example, in his painting *Antônio agredido pelos demônios* (Antonio Beaten by the Devils), 143 x 219 cm, a modern take on the work by Sasseta- Stefano di Giovanni (1392-1450), *Santo Antônio agredido pelos demônios* (Saint Anthony attacked by the demons). Painted between 1423-1426, the panel belongs to the altar of the Eucharist of the Carmelites of Siena, housed today in the collection of the Pinacoteca Nacional de Siena. According to Athanasius of Alexandria, after converting to Christianity, Saint Anthony gave away his belongings and went to live in the desert where he was tempted and tortured by several of the Devil's incarnations. The most famous of these is perhaps the precocious Michelangelo, who around the age of thirteen was fascinated by an engraving made years prior by German artist, Anthony Schongauer, in which the good saint was raised to heaven by angels and ambushed by a

swarm of hideous beings. Sasseta's painting is drastic—Saint Anthony is lying on his side with his torso half-raised, he is being beaten with clubs from the right, the left, and from behind by three hideous figures, fallen angels, identifiable by their sordid wings.

With his characteristic precision, André Griffo copied this original painting, reproducing its original gold detailing, and swapping only the image of the saint for a man dressed in a shirt, shorts, and beach sandals, while adding similar shorts onto two of the demons. He also changed the title, removing the sacred 'Saint' and leaving 'Anthony' only. These changes bring the painting forward in time, reaching us in just one of the countless forms of physical and psychological violence that are thrust upon us daily.

What is André Griffo proposing? That the polarity between good and evil remains intact? That there is, —who knows—something holy in the common man who is the target of extraordinary fury? That our fields and cities are modern versions of the desert where everything went wrong?

An architect by training, with years of experience in home design, André sees architecture with the dismay of someone who recognizes it as a machine—not of shelter but of resentment, fear, pain, and ghosts. Unlike modern architecture with its promises of wide-open spaces, safe from tragedy, his buildings are decadent, turned dark and sordid, with decaying walls and floors occupied by miniature scenes and figures, a testament to a

tragic and regrettable heritage, which won't be repaired anytime soon—if ever.

Alongside these interiors, the work celebrates majestic houses, lavish in their cynicism, which hides in their arched doors, their vaulted ceilings, their marble floors, corners with saints, and nostalgic tile decorations. Among other things, they efficiently materialize the worst and most historic ills perpetrated by the various forms of control, in an arc that goes from religion to police. Homes engender rites, attitudes, and relationships, in such a way that it is common, as Dalton Trevisan wrote—that we chew anger along with food at the table.

The seller of miniatures series engages with ideas that were not explored so directly through his interiors, demonstrating that much remains to be said about them. Here is an expressive portrait (177 x 223 cm) of a large and dark room, gloomy like a Gothic cathedral, with an exuberant and detailed stained glass window composed of religious images. On the floor, four diamond-shaped holes surround an octagon, reinforcing the somber atmosphere. In addition, pedestals are placed close to the supporting arches with statues of a martyr, a politician, a preacher shouting with a book in his hand, a militiaman, a policeman and a drug dealer pointing a weapon at the ground, a gesture that foreshadows an execution, or the threat of it.

Do homes carry the responsibility alone? Of course not. After all, the cities, with their trees, factories, rampant diseases, and famines encourage the aforementioned effects. Streets, corners, squares, subway stations are all stages for indifferent

spectators, while street vendors try their luck still, like the boy sitting on a fruit box, who may also have been the one who set up the figurines.

The miniature seller 3 (177 x 223 cm), fixes his miniatures onto the railings and positions them on a plastic tarp, which contrasts with the cold and gray concrete floor. There are figures of *Our Lady Aparecida*, pastors armed with microphones and speakers and the faithful kneeling before them, images of São Sebastião or a teenager lookalike, tied to a tree, as well as police officers and militia pointing guns at the same young man who now lies dead.



André Griffo first saw *Sant'Antonio battuto dai diavoli*, by renaissance painter Stefano di Giovanni (Siena, 1392 - 1450), also known as Sassetta, in a book and was drawn by the fact that the artist had chosen to apply gold leaves onto the faces and intimate areas of the devils. In fact, the painting was part of a triptic commissioned in 1423 by a church in Siena and was partially damaged by an individual who had been terrified by the image, later requiring restoration. The artist subsequently decided to cover the damaged areas with gold, creating a clash between the sense of wealth and the figures' grotesque character.

In his reinterpretation of Sassetta, Griffo similarly employs the use of gold, scraping the wood and then covering areas with gold leaves. *Antônio agredido pelos demônios* [*Antônio Beaten by the Devils*] (2021) is inspired by Sassetta's work, yet substitutes the saint by a common, contemporary citizen, entwining the plight of saints and adversities we face today.





Antonio assaulted by demons, 2021
oil paint and gold leaf
on marine plywood
143 x 219 cm | 56.3 x 86.2 in



Similarly, the idea of Saint Anthony's plight led Griffo to the work of another master, Michelangelo. *Descobri que sou um anjo e tenho 8 inimigos* [Found Out I Am an Angel and Have 8 Enemies] (2022) is a re-reading of *The Torment of Saint Anthony*, while *Corte onírico* [Oneiric Section] (2022) explores the creative possibilities of the representation of supernatural figures, producing ambiguities and juxtapositions between the supernatural and the natural.

*I discovered that I'm an angel
and I have 8 enemies, 2022*
oil paint and gold leaf
on marine plywood
220 x 160 cm | 86.6 x 63 in





Oneiric Section, 2022
oil paint and gold leaf
on marine plywood
270 x 177 cm | 106.3 x 69.7 in







Interrogation of Saint Sebastian, 2022
oil paint and gold on linen
33 x 25 cm | 13 x 9.8 in





*Jesus and his theocratic
project for the 2000s, 2021*
acrylic and oil on canvas
178 x 133 x 3,7 cm
70.1 x 52.4 x 1.5 in





*Distant eyes camouflage
in landscape, 2022*
acrylic and oil on canvas
177 x 132,2 x 3,5 cm
69.7 x 52 x 1.4 in







André Griffo has been developing the series *O vendedor de miniaturas* [*The Seller of Miniature Characters*] since 2020. The body of work represents different metro stations —inspired by that of cities such as New York, Berlin, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro— where informal street sellers display and sell their products.

The composition presents miniature figures that evoke both religious images and action figures displayed on tarp sheets on the floor or suspended on hooks hanging from the wall. In taking a step closer, one begins to discover that, alongside religious figurines that represent Our Lady Aparecida, the patron saint of Brazil, and Saint Sebastian, the patron saint of Rio de Janeiro, there are also figures depicting an Evangelical priest, a policeman, a member of the militia, a drug dealer, and a politician. The objects thus portray archetypal characters that are fundamental to understanding the territorial disputes of Rio de Janeiro, each symbolizing the city's—official and unofficial— institutions.

The Seller of Miniature Characters 4, 2022
acrylic and oil on canvas and 89 plastic dolls
canvas: 69.7 x 87.8 in | installation: variable dimensions







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Tickets



Embarque
Boarding

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ONLY FOR ASCENDING



The Seller of Miniature Characters 3, 2021
acrylic and oil on canvas
177 x 223 cm | 69.7 x 88 x 1.5 in





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On the occasion of the exhibition, André Griffo also produced three-dimensional miniature versions of these characters, which he displays in the actual gallery space using structures and arrangements that resemble those used by street sellers, such as tarp and hooks. The desire or impulse to purchase the figurines is thus challenged by the ideas that they stand for, both violent and sacred, entwining money, power, and religion.

In *O vendedor de miniaturas – Showroom* (2021) Griffo imagines a sort of promotional space where these figurines can be seen on a larger scale, like sculptures in a museum or church. The subjects are displayed on pedestals, facing each other and forming pairs that evoke violence and salvation. A stained glass piece at the back of the room narrates the journey of a young man and his encounters with each one of the characters, telling a violent story that navigates between myth and reality.



*The Seller of Miniature
Characters - show room, 2021*
acrylic and oil on canvas
177 x 223 cm | 69.7 x 87.8 in





exhibition view
Photo © Flávio Freire

*The materialization of
the poor-me-one's call, 2022*
variable materials
variable dimensions





The materialization of the poor-me-one's call proposes a reflection on patriarchal structures that continue to shape our society, setting a tridimensional space where the viewer enters the scene and is prompted to reflect upon how they sustain specific habits and inherited principles.

The title of the work makes use of the popular name for the Potoo, a typical South American nocturnal bird. The bird has a characteristic melancholic song that is associated with several folk tales, most commonly understood as a bad omen.

The installation is composed of the sound of the Potoo cry, along with two portraits, representing a military man and a bride, whose identity remains unknown as the canvas is cut at the neck. Between the figures, the artist places bullet capsules on the wall, which are complemented by copper projectile-like objects placed right above the plastic shell. The phallic shape evokes the proximity between notions of virility and aggression that is present in our culture. Ultimately, each element within the installation falls into the category of masculinity or femininity, pointing towards the intrinsic violence of the former versus the oppression of the latter, representing the traditional patriarchal structure, and its implications for society and national politics.





andré griffo

b. 1979, Barra Mansa, Brazil

works and lives 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.

selected solo exhibitions

- *A quem devo pagar minha indulgência?*, Galeria Athena, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (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 institutional collections

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

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