



nara roesler

daniel senise
the site of images
curated by luis pérez-oramas

nara roesler new york
opening november 8, 2023
exhibition nov 8 – dec 23

The site of images is the picture itself, the support of the picture, the process that produces the picture, the picture's coordinate, the place where the picture is made as well as any site where it is exhibited, revealed, reproduced, or concealed. The site of images is the story, the history, the legend of the picture.

All this could be evoked while looking at the selection of Daniel Senise's show at Nara Roesler New York, precisely titled *The Site of Images*. Most notably, the appropriateness of the title is immediately conveyed by the ghostly subject of most of the paintings included in the show: they are images depicting, through a labor-intensive process of material transfer, the inner spaces of emblematic museums located throughout the Americas and Europe.

And museums are, one can say, sites for images. Senise depicts them, however, as empty places, and when the framed pictures that they contain show in his paintings they happen to be erased. From the site of images, Senise's works only show the site itself, the haunting void of the museum or the poignant structure, almost funeral, of their architecture. It is telling that Daniel Senise has included, among the works depicting phantom images of museum's interiors, an example of his series devoted to the Vera Icona, the famous linen cloth where the face of Christ was miraculously imprinted.

A sacred site of images for Christians, the Vera Icona is also a theoretical object enlightening the power, and the paradoxes, of images. A picture made without human intervention, a prodigious image transfer, it resonates with the large paintings carrying by their contact with walls and floors of the artist studio the very materiality, the fragment-relic of images.

*Untitled (Museo Nacional
del Prado), 2020*
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on aluminum plate
150 x 250 x 5,5 cm
59.1 x 98.4 x 2.2 in





—
Untitled (MAM Rio), 2022
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on aluminum plate
150,5 x 325 x 5,5 cm
59.3 x 128 x 2.2 in





—
Untitled (Louvre), 2023
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on polystyrene board
199 x 199 x 5,5 cm
78.3 x 78.3 x 2.2 in







Untitled (Louvre), 2023
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on polystyrene board
199 x 219,5 x 5,5 cm
78.3 x 86.4 x 2.2 in



Untitled (MoAE
– Álvaro Siza), 2023
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on aluminum plate
140 x 143 cm
55.1 x 56.3 in







*Untitled (MoAE –
Álvaro Siza), 2023*
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on aluminum plate
157 x 122 cm
61.8 x 48 in



Untitled (MoAE
– Álvaro Siza), 2023
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on aluminum plate
157,1 x 122,3 cm
61.9 x 48.1 in





Untitled (Musée d'Arts
de Nantes), 2023
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on polystyrene board
200 x 300 x 5,5 cm
78.7 x 118.1 x 2.2 in







*Untitled (Biennial
Building)*, 2023
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on aluminum plate
220 x 150 x 5,5 cm
86.6 x 59.1 x 2.2 in



Verónica (El Greco), 2023
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on aluminum board
142,5 x 162,5 x 5,5 cm
56.1 x 64 x 2.2 in







Untitled, 2023
charcoal, iron powder
and acrylic medium
on fabric
19 x 22 x 5,5 cm
7.5 x 8.7 x 2.2 in



Untitled, 2023
charcoal, iron powder
and acrylic medium
on fabric
42 x 38 x 5,5 cm
16.5 x 15 x 2.2 in



Untitled, 2023
charcoal, iron powder
and acrylic medium
on fabric
23 x 35 x 5,5 cm
9.1 x 13.8 x 2.2 in

*Verônica (Blanchard
Jacques), 2022*
wall monotype on fabric
and acrylic medium
on aluminum plate
149 x 178,8 x 5,3 cm
58.7 x 70.4 x 2.1 in





daniel senise: the site of images

luis p rez-oramas

The site of images is manifold, multiple, numerous, ancient, mutant, transfigurative. It constantly drifts, following the vicissitudes of culture and society, the issues of time and history, the circumstances of tradition and innovation. At the eve of the great domestication, during the neolithic period, it was a cave, as we can see in places such as Lascaux, Altamira or Rouffignac. It was also a cave in Plato's Republic, where images are pure illusion. It is again a cave in Pliny's version of the origin of painting: the shadow of a young lover projected against the wall, so his mistress could delineate his profile as he leaves her. Since then, the site of images, at least for those images that can be considered at the root of painting, is also a shadow: shadows cast against any support, or *skiagraphia*: the writing of shadows, the primeval name of painting.

Even if numerous, the site of images has exponentially multiplied in our times: we might consider as such any support, any frame, any location containing images, any apparatus reproducing images, any mechanic or digital image reproduction itself; any matrix, any potential process or workspace resulting in images; any accidental situation resembling images. Theoretically, the site of images is also memory, as dreams only exist through images; and, albeit painting and art in general cannot be reduced exclusively to the instance of the image, the site of images is—at least since Antiquity—also

and literally the gallery, the exhibition space, the museum, the artist studio or the workplace of the producer of images.

It is telling that Daniel Senise, a leading Brazilian contemporary painter whose production spans since the 1980s, has decided to show a set of large canvases depicting empty galleries of landmark museums from all around the world in this exhibition. Alongside those eloquent, stormy, chalky, shadowy paintings that are the result of a painstakingly labor-intensive reflexion process and *faktura*, he has also included small abstract works where the image is entirely accidental, a chance-result showing free associations with reality.

Tellingly, Senise's canvases are made following a process that carefully avoids the use of conventional painting tools and actions: no brushes, neither brushstrokes are involved in the production of these paintings. A painter at the age of the (endless) end of painting, Daniel Senise has conceived his work beyond the physical actions that are emblematic of conventional painting: these canvases are therefore enormous monotypes, large puzzles made of fragments of fabric bearing the material trace of the artist's studio, its walls, and floors.

One might conclude that the consequence is an interminable process of 'mise-en-abyme': images depicting images that depict images. At the significant level of the very material support, leading to the nesting of the artist studio (as trace

of the site of production) with the art gallery (as tracing or image erased); namely, leading to the very nesting of the museum's image with that of the artist' studio, both reduced to traces, both sites where art is produced.

Much can be drawn as ideological implications from these works: the museum as entombment, as *sarcophagus*—literally: the phagocytizing of skins; the museum as mausoleum comes thus to mind; the emptiness of the museum being stressed in these canvases at a time when museums experience the unprecedented presence of multitudes.

The empty site of images where these have been voluntarily erased also conveys a significant interrogation on the nature of visibility, on the dialectics—inherent to the visual arts—between the too visible and the almost invisible.

The site of images is thus an abyss: abyss of erasement and obliteration of images, and maybe an abyss where the very *arkhè* of images lays as one can only imagine it—or conceive it as image—: as an instance of almost neutral potentiality. There, where no image, as well as all images, can surge.

Daniel Senise surely knows that paintings made avoiding the conventional action of the painter's hand are an ancient business in the history of Western art. Those works bear an archaic name with Greek etymology: *Achaeiropoieta*, meaning made without hand. The most well known

acheiropoieton being the image that Christians call *Vera Icona* or Veronica: the cloth where Christ would have dried his sweating face mounting towards the Calvary so it miraculously stayed imprinted on the fabric.

Senise has made some recent versions of the *Vera Icona*, based on works by old masters such as Francisco de Zurbarán or El Greco. The presence of Senise's *Veronicas* in this exhibition is particularly telling, as well as resonant, vis-à-vis the material specificity of the paintings depicting empty museum galleries.

One can argue that at least for the Western tradition of painting, the *acheiropoieton* is a matricial site for the image, the absolute image. As such Kazimir Malevich placed his famous *Black Square on White* in the first Suprematist exhibition at the same cultural location where the *Veronica used to be worshiped*: at the upper angle of the room's ceiling. In Senise's *Veronica* the face of Christ is instead erased, so by extracting from its layers the imprint of Christ's face the artist reverses the miraculous process of the *Vera Icona*, while echoing the pictures within the big canvases depicting emptied museums. It is as if this show points towards an ultimate category, universally relevant for the world of images: the site where they exist only in state of potency, as pure becoming.

daniel senise

b. 1955, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he lives and works

Daniel Senise is one of the leading representatives of Brazil's so-called Generation 80s, whose main endeavour consisted of a desire to return to, and reinsert painting into the Brazilian artistic scene. Since the end of the 1990s, Senise's practice can be described as a 'construction of images.' His process begins with imprinting the textures of surfaces—such as wooden floors or concrete walls—from carefully chosen locations unto textiles, similar to the monotype technique. Once ready, this material becomes the base or skeleton of his work, either as a canvas to be worked on, as parts used in a collage to create another image, or alternatively, as fragments added on to printed photographs.

Senise's investigations often relate to the memory of places and spaces. Not only will his works figuratively represent specific locations, but he also uses objects found in those specific places, such as broken ceramics, pieces of wood, dust or wall chippings. He therefore intertwines the representation of a site, with its debris, or in other words, its history—he juxtaposes time, memory and the physical presence which stems from them.

selected solo exhibitions

- *Biógrafo: Daniel Senise*, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da USP (MAC-USP), São Paulo, Brazil (2023)
- *Verônica*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2022)
- *Antes da palavra*, Fundação Iberê Camargo (FIC), Porto Alegre, Brazil (2019)
- *Printed Matter*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2017)
- *Quase aqui*, Oi Futuro Flamengo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2015)
- *2892*, Casa França-Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2011)
- *Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo, Brazil (2009)
- *Vai que nós levamos as partes que te faltam*, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2008)
- *The Piano Factory*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake (ITO), São Paulo, Brazil (2002)
- *Museo de Arte Contemporáneo*, Monterrey, Mexico (1994)
- *Museum of Contemporary Art*, Chicago, USA (1991)

selected group exhibitions

- 3rd Coimbra Biennial, Portugal (2019)
- *Modos de ver o Brasil: Itaú Cultural 30 anos*, Oca, São Paulo, Brazil (2017)
- *Os muitos e o um: arte contemporânea brasileira*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake (ITO), São Paulo, Brazil (2016)
- *Las Américas Latinas — Las fatigas del querer*, Spazio Oberdan, Milan, Italy (2009)
- 44th Venice Biennale, Italy (1990)

selected collections

- Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, USA
- Ludwig Museum, Köln, Germany
- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói (MAC-Niterói), Niterói, Brazil
- Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (MASP), São Paulo, Brazil

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