



nara roesler

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ARPA 2026

booth C2

andré griffo

preview

wednesday, may 27

open to the public

thursday – sunday

may 28 – 31

mercado livre

arena pacaembu

charles miller square,

são paulo

André Griffo and the Dream of Constantine

Luis Pérez-Oramas

André Griffo paints, as an artist full of attentiveness, in the presence of countless paintings and multiple temporalities. Each of his works implies a collision of chronologies, an eloquent anachronism of figures. Each painting by Griffo is, to a certain extent, a manifesto on multiple temporalities, which translates into a baroque variety of iconographic registers: sacred, secular, Afro-Brazilian, contemporary, urban, architectural, popular, etc.

As if truthful to a *motto* by Édouard Glissant—according to whom one writes today in the presence of all languages—Griffo’s painting speaks to us in the presence of all creeds; its figures drawing nourishment from all times.

It occurs to me, then, to think of Griffo as a “Glissantian” painter: according to Glissant, what is proper to “*creolization*”¹ is the unpredictable dimension that emerges from the confluence of diverse symbolic and cultural constellations. From their clash or encounter arises the ember of the unpredictable that we experience as a *whole-world*.

In one of his magnificent baroque hybrids of painting, André Griffo evokes the celebrated dream of the emperor Constantine, whose lack of images—because only the dreamer can recall the images he had dreamed—were supplied, supplanted by the magnificent forms of Piero della Francesca in Arezzo.

From that work in which Griffo evoked Constantine’s dream, the artist decided to single out a background landscape that, amplified in another work and occupying its entire visible field, turned out to be André Griffo’s first rigorously abstract painting.

It is striking that in Griffo’s work the emperor’s dream—a legend of legends, of which we will never know whether it truly occurred, or whether it was a stratagem rather than a dream, a convenient shortcut to win the new religion for the old empire—translates into an image without a name, into an abstract image.

The artist’s recent abstractions thus arise and develop from that gesture, from that seminal moment: works whose chromatic and gestural surfaces resemble walls marked by the patina of time, as seen in the baroque architectures that abound in his works, or in the tunnels of the subterranean and modern city that also appear in his paintings; friezes worn down by time, sediments of temporal and chromatic thicknesses that appear at once as abstractions and as landscapes—landscapes that represent vast, tempestuous



O grande crucifixo pintado em vermelho e dourado, tendo como moldura e fundo os afrescos de Piero della Francesca na Capela Bacci, na Basílica de São Francisco em Arezzo, Itália.



Piero della Francesca, *Sonho de Constantino*, 1458-1466. Localizado no coro da Basílica de São Francisco em Arezzo, Itália.

places, landscapes of time passing over the skin of the world, leaving its cryptic and beautiful mark in the form of ruinous, enigmatic, impenetrable surfaces.

Dreams, too, are impenetrable. Dreams are nothing more than memories of a dream—Paul Valéry seems to have written. And what we remember of a dream is, like the surfaces cryptically worked by time in Griffo's paintings, the ruin of a dream. The dream—which Sigmund Freud claimed, strictly speaking, lacks thought, rather works within us from its mnemonic ruins: condensing them, displacing them, re-elaborating them, offering them an unpredictable figurability.

Like that abstraction Griffo found in the ruin of a landscape painted on the wall of an ancient enclosure where Constantine dreamed, every dream is the ruin of its own memory. André Griffo and I spoke, one afternoon of wanderings in New York, about these irresolvable and ancient matters as we walked, evoking that dream of Constantine. I ventured to recall an ancient fragment by Aristotle, from his *On Divination in Sleep*. Here it is, taken from *Parva Naturalia*:

“The most skilled judge in matters of dreams is the one capable of observing similarities—writes the Stagirite—[...] I wish, however, to speak of similarities insofar as images are formed more or less like reflections on water [...] In this case, if the movement is great, the reflected image and the reflections bear no resemblance whatsoever to real objects. He will truly be skilled in judging reflected images who is able to discern quickly and grasp at a single glance the scattered and disordered reflections, and thus say that here there is a man, there a horse, or something else...”²

It is, at first glance, fascinating that Aristotle focused, for the interpretation of dreams, on the metaphor of a mirror of water upon which reality would be reflected and distorted. If dreams do not think, images do—but through alternate, extraordinary, uncertain paths. The image is, in language, a protuberance, a salience, as Pseudo-Longinus reminds us: it is what halts us in language, what makes us return to what we thought we had left behind or understood, what strikes us as well, like an unexpected slap. But images do not speak like dreams, they are muted. They require, like paintings, that another one could speak for them—for example, we ourselves, who, following Aristotle's suggestion, must attempt to recognize in the deforming surface of reflections, or in shifting clouds, or in the worn patina of ancient friezes, the presence of other beings, animals and plants, storms and clearings, mountains and buildings, men and centaurs—all forms and their names.

Just as mirrors have long been present in the archaeology of dreams, they also served as early protagonists in thinking about painting, at least in the West, where the mirror has been a foundational figure, the *arkhè* of pictorial art in the deformation of Narcissus's reflection—to whom enchanted by his image as if it were another Leon Battista Alberti, the first great theorist of painting, came to attribute the invention of painting.

It is no accident that the Baroque, so cherished by André Griffo, is a magisterium of mirrors, an art fully anchored in a rhetoric of mirages. “Life is a dream, and dreams are dreams,” recites Segismundo in Pedro Calderón de la Barca. The baroque mirror of dreams becomes there an instrument of disenchantment—if we manage to transcend its mirages, if we find in its reflections the true name of things.

Constantine's dream was, according to tradition, a swerve for civilization, a cultural mutation, the end of the ancient world. It was also, in this sense, a disenchantment. André Griffo has found in the ruinous landscape of an ancient fresco, in the enclosure where that dream took place, a path toward abstraction in his painting. But perhaps this abstraction is, like so many images of the in-between of sleep, a mirage, a vortex, another source of water with reflections: the mirror in which painting itself, beautifully deformed, must attempt to see through its illusions and recognize itself.

Notes

1. The philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant developed the concept of creolization (*créolisation*) to describe cultural processes shaped by the encounter between heterogeneous elements that generate new and unpredictable forms. Unlike *métissage*, understood as a stabilized fusion, creolization is open and ongoing, and does not result in a final synthesis: it maintains differences in relation, without reducing them.

For Glissant, this process is not limited to the Caribbean but characterizes the contemporary world (*Tout-Monde*), in which identities cease to be fixed and instead become relational, formed through contact and transformation. A central aspect is the notion of opacity: the right of individuals and cultures not to be fully transparent or translatable, preserving their complexity.

2. ARISTOTE. *Petits traités d'histoire naturelle* (Parva Naturalia). Traduction, introduction et notes par Pierre-Marie Morel. Paris: GF Flammarion, 2000, p. 160.



“My artistic practice is deeply guided by an interest in drawing historical comparisons, especially between projects of power that articulate religion and politics. It was precisely one of these investigations, which until then had been entirely focused on the production of figurative paintings, that led me to create my first series of abstract works.”

— André Griffo

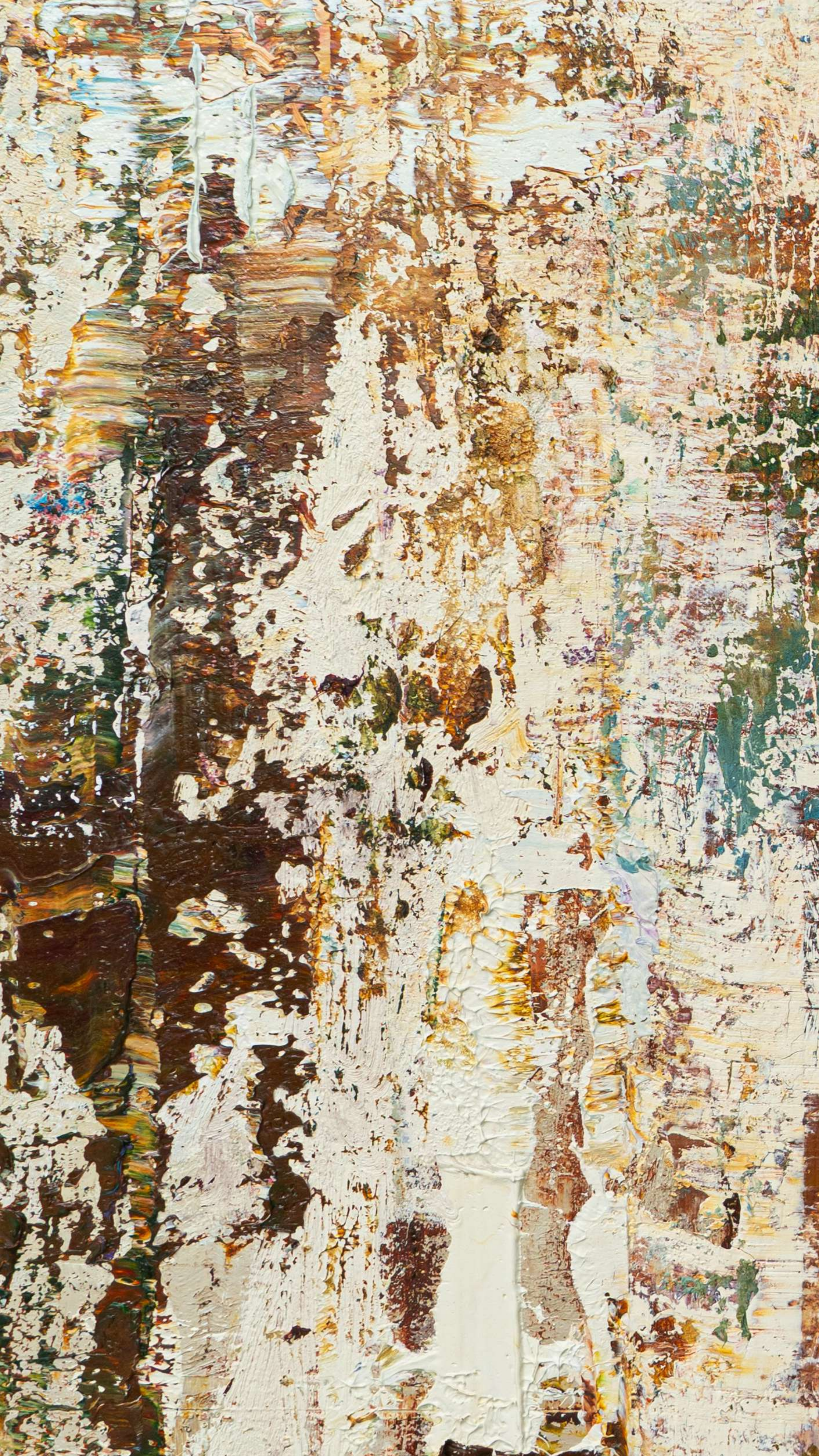
Constantine's Dream #02, 2025

oil on canvas

200 x 250,5 x 3,5 cm

78.7 x 98.6 x 1.4 in





“One of the starting points of this research came when I visited the cathedral in Arezzo painted by Piero della Francesca, whose narrative is based on a key moment in Western history: when the Christian religion was legalized by the emperor Constantine the Great in the 4th century. This marks a profound turning point in civilization—the end of the ancient polytheistic world and the affirmation of Christianity as the dominant religion.”

— André Griffo

Constantine's Dream #03, 2026

oil on canvas

200 x 200 x 3,5 cm

78.7 x 78.7 x 1.4 in





Constantine's Dream #04, 2026

oil on canvas

200 x 200 cm

78.7 x 78.7 in



“The narrative established by Western art history—and represented by Piero della Francesca—suggests that Constantine’s decision came after receiving a divine message in a dream. Historical facts, however, indicate that the legalization of Christian worship was actually a political strategy to secure support and consolidate power. Constantine seems to have understood that the emperor’s legitimacy granted by a single God would provide the stability he needed. That is where my interest lies: in the use of religion for political ends. And this episode involving Constantine is yet another example, not so different from what we see today.”

— **André Griffo**



Constantine's Dream #05, 2026

oil on canvas

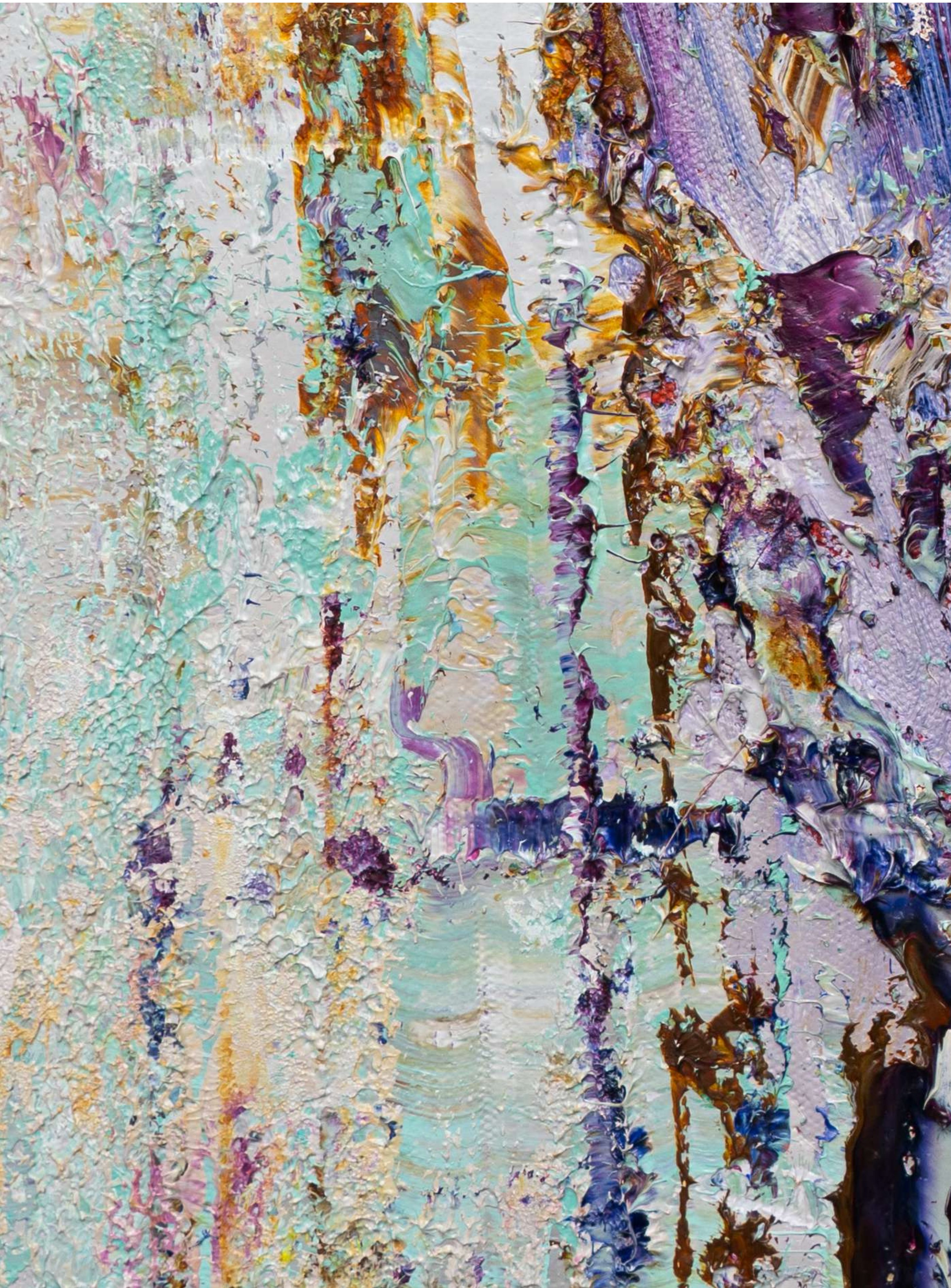
200 x 249,5 x 3,5 cm

78.7 x 98.2 x 1.4 in



“If there are different interpretations of such an important moment, and if art history has been based on a medieval fable, what did Constantine actually dream before the battle that would legitimize him as emperor? In the absence of this image, these works are simply another attempt to translate that dream.”

— André Griffo



*Farm management
instructions #12, 2025*
oil paint on canvas
242 x 194 x 4 cm
95.3 x 76.4 x 1.6 in





andré griffo

b. 1979, Barra Mansa, Brazil

works and lives in 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.

[click to know more](#)

selected solo exhibitions

- *Alto Barroco*, Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2025)
- *Exploded View*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2024)
- *Voarei com as asas que os urubus me deram*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2022)
- *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)

selected group exhibitions

- *From the Ashes*, People's Palace Project, London, UK (2024)

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- *Contratempo*, Casa Museu Eva Klabin, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2024)
 - 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 collections

- Denver Art Museum, Denver, USA
- 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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