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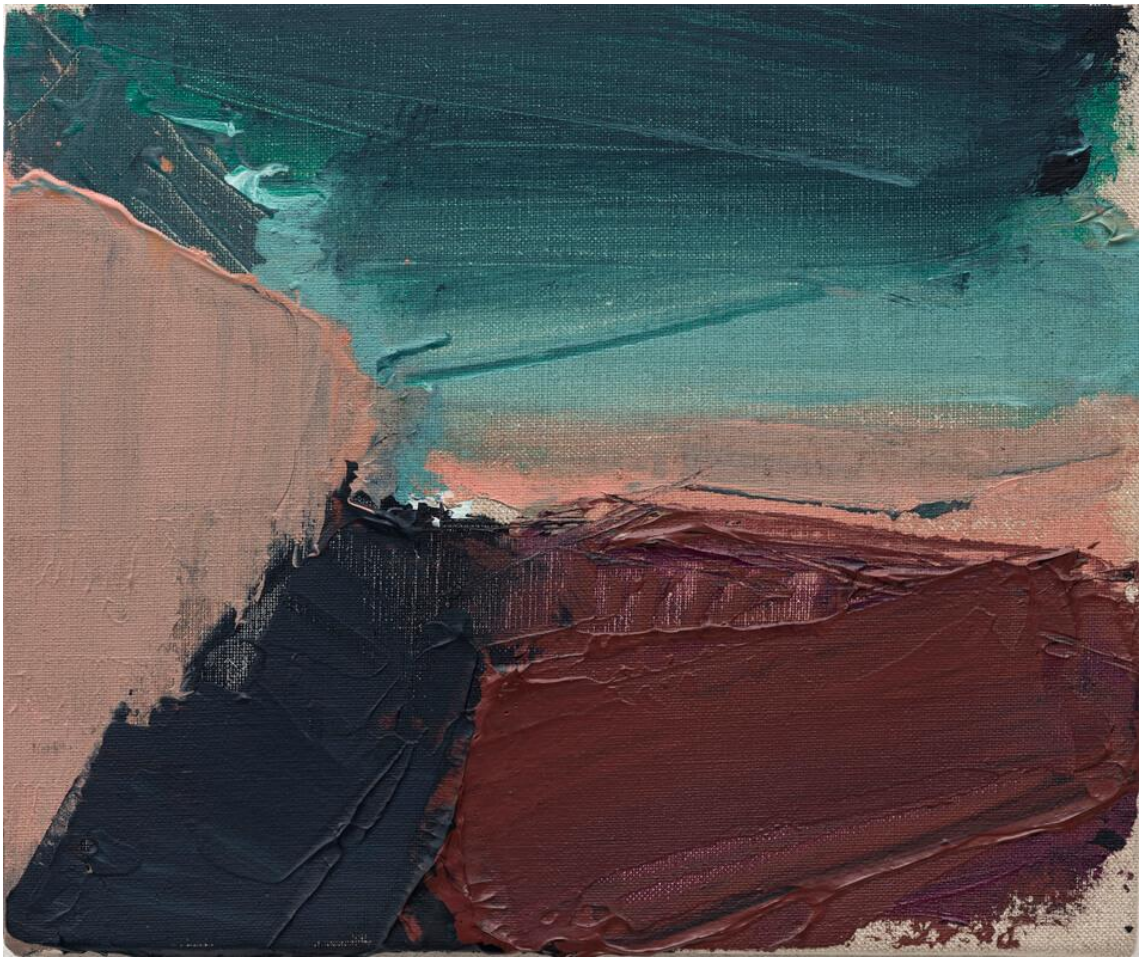
Interview: RENATA PELEGRINI



Luca Curci talks with Renata Pelegrini, one of the winners of

ARTIST OF THE MONTH – SEPTEMBER 2020.

“The present interests me as time and mainly as a place. Architecture and my surroundings have always informed my body on how to relate between the now and the consecutive. In my paintings and drawings this tense dynamic is in the presence of the gesture and in the speed of the execution; both building an architectural structure that is ambiguous and a place that is unstable: a fragile solidity”. Renata Pelegrini (1967) lives and works in São Paulo downtown, Brazil. She has a BFA in Visual Arts, BAs in Language Teaching and in Education. She is also a translator and has a Neurolinguistics Diploma. Having majored in painting, Renata has worked her expression around figuration and abstraction and has used this layer-in-between both to communicate with images. Calligraphy has been one of Pelegrini’s triggers to her artistic work. The massive training in this field has intensified the awareness of the movements of the hand and body, such as pressure, direction, and angulation. This

continuous exercise has guided the artist in her process and has marked her work in different levels along her career. As painting became more familiar, Renata transformed the calligraphic metric into free and intuitive brush movements. In this sense, the perception of the body in the space around her also becomes noticeable once the surroundings start to integrate the artist's creative process. Thick and quick brush strokes bring about architectural structures and non-places are constructed. Horizontal and vertical lines are applied to the minimum so that the perspective comes alive. Settings like these, however, go beyond the limits of plain representation and prepare the background where the practice of the unconscious, the memory and the observation coexist. The marks of the process are kept clear even when Pelegrini's expression moves toward installation, where the experience with the context is revealed both in her poetics and in the presentation of the work. This decision imprints in the artwork itself the object, such as the table used to make the drawings or even rubbings and clay molds of the architecture of the city, namely the texture of an iron fence. Memory, experience, and time are issues that make up Renata Pelegrini's work.

Luca Curci – What is art for you?

Renata Pelegrini – Art is where freedom lives. And as freedom is inclusive, art is a powerful tool. Exercising my expression in art has led to the state of not knowing and many times unlearning so that I advance in my investigation. This means that to me art is process based. And in this way, it allows me to work on sensitive-to-reality pieces. The traces of the environment I live in are there in the choices I make in my artistic process. Living in a reality that is based on inequalities and ruled by conflict has contributed to the spirit of tension and ambiguity one may find in my expression. What I have been trying is to make the disquieting condition a possible image where differences can find a way to be all together.

LC – Which subject are you working on?

RP – I am not sure if I am working on something or if it is this something that is working on me, exactly. I like to think that I am being transformed while I transform. I have been looking for some kind of expression that is within my work, but that right now, I can only sense it. This expression is still formless, nameless and yet it is sensitive to the world I live in and to the people I connect. Since artists have the capacity to learn from the surroundings through sensations, I have taken the time of the pandemic to learn and work on this issue of interconnection of the body-work-environment, a cohabitation of times, in fact. Since the end of 2018, after a month in an artistic residency in HANGAR Lisboa, away from my hometown in Brazil, I realized how porous my artistic process can be to the geography I experience. Being far from the metropolis, free from the city grid, took my look away from the man-made architecture, to trigger my interest in the natural horizon and the gravity forces – inside and outside the body. New projects were born. For some months now, when private and public lives became porous just the same, I have subscribed to online talks and seminars trying to share the

density of time and multiplicity of layers that COVID 19 has put us under. Among many, the opportunity to take part in Ocean/Uni program in Venice was definite so that I learn from the art/science views. This immersion has made me connect to the present of care and action both in my artistic process and in surviving in this planet. The result is that in my current series of paintings, marks of bandages have shown and for the time being it feels just right to continue working on them.

LC – Did your style change over the years? In which way?

RP – What I paint or draw has to connect to what I believe in. Sometimes thoughts are ahead of the means I have at hand. Other times, the expression in art comes to me before I can understand it or recognize it as my own production. In both cases, I have to act further pushing or being pushed for change. Having worked with education and lived in different countries has broaden my interests and respect for differences. This is a positive change that I understand as an asset in my expression. I think it is key when I express myself in images that have more than one possibility to be read. This is a way to welcome different observers and their views of the world to construct meaning.

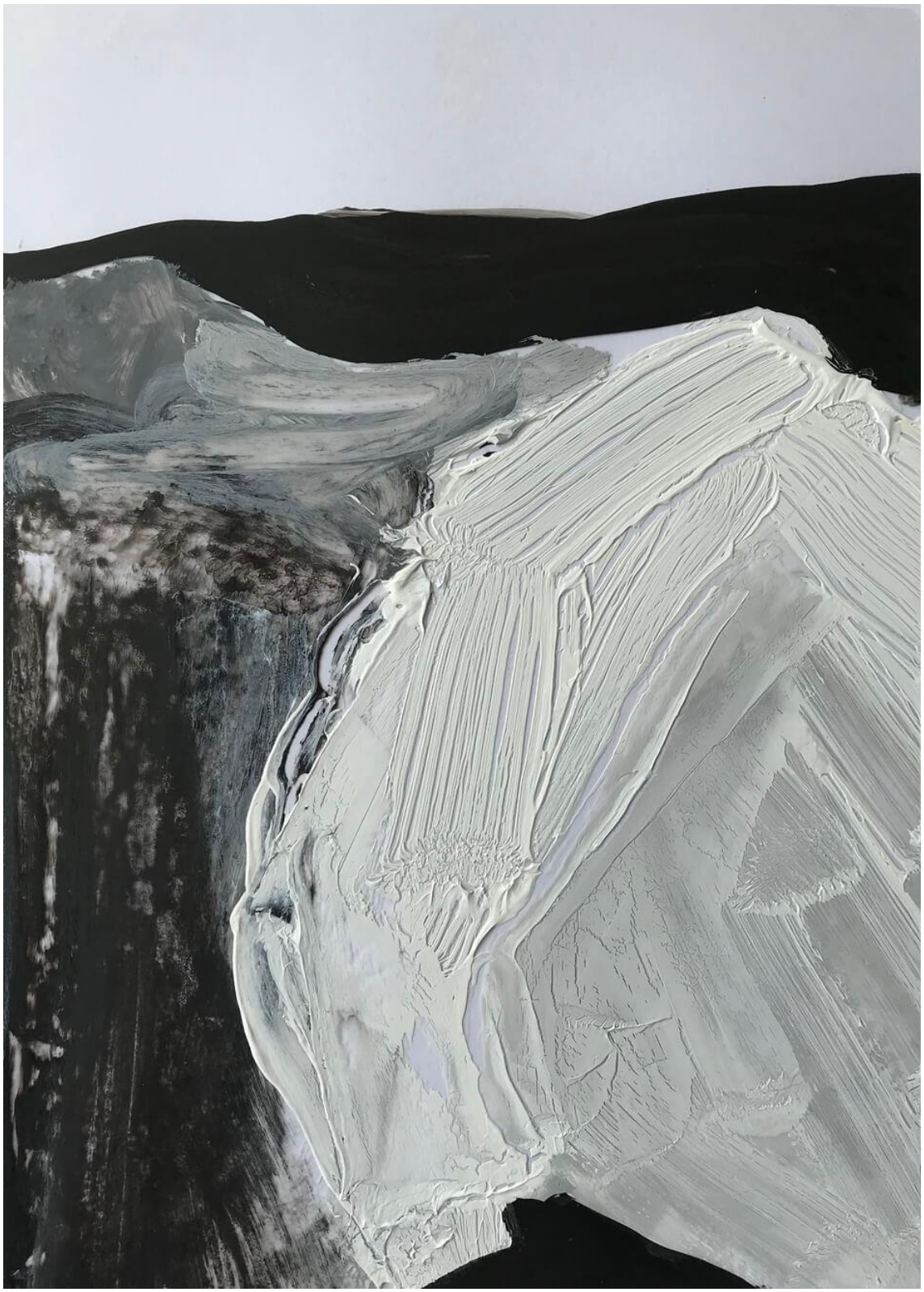
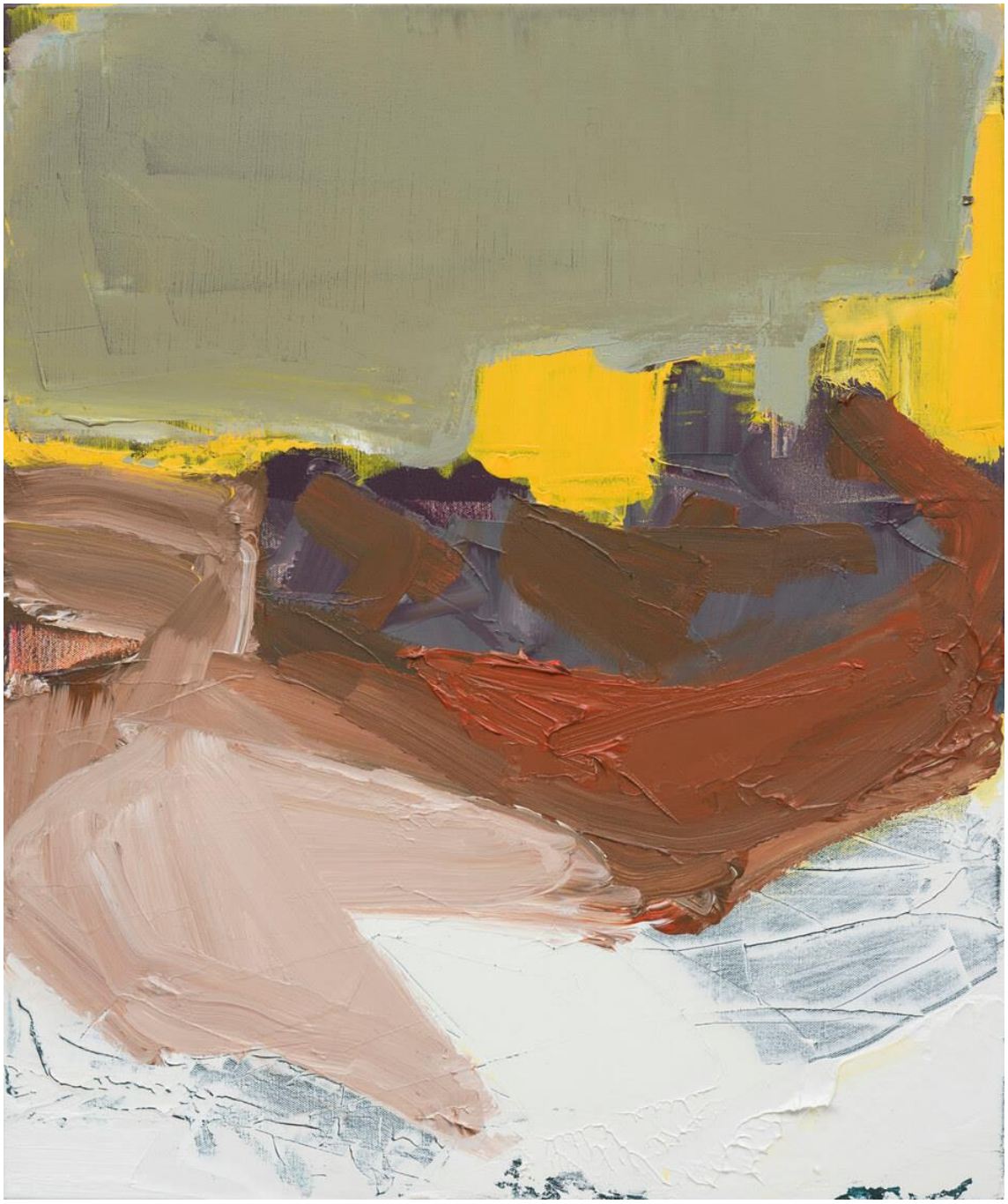
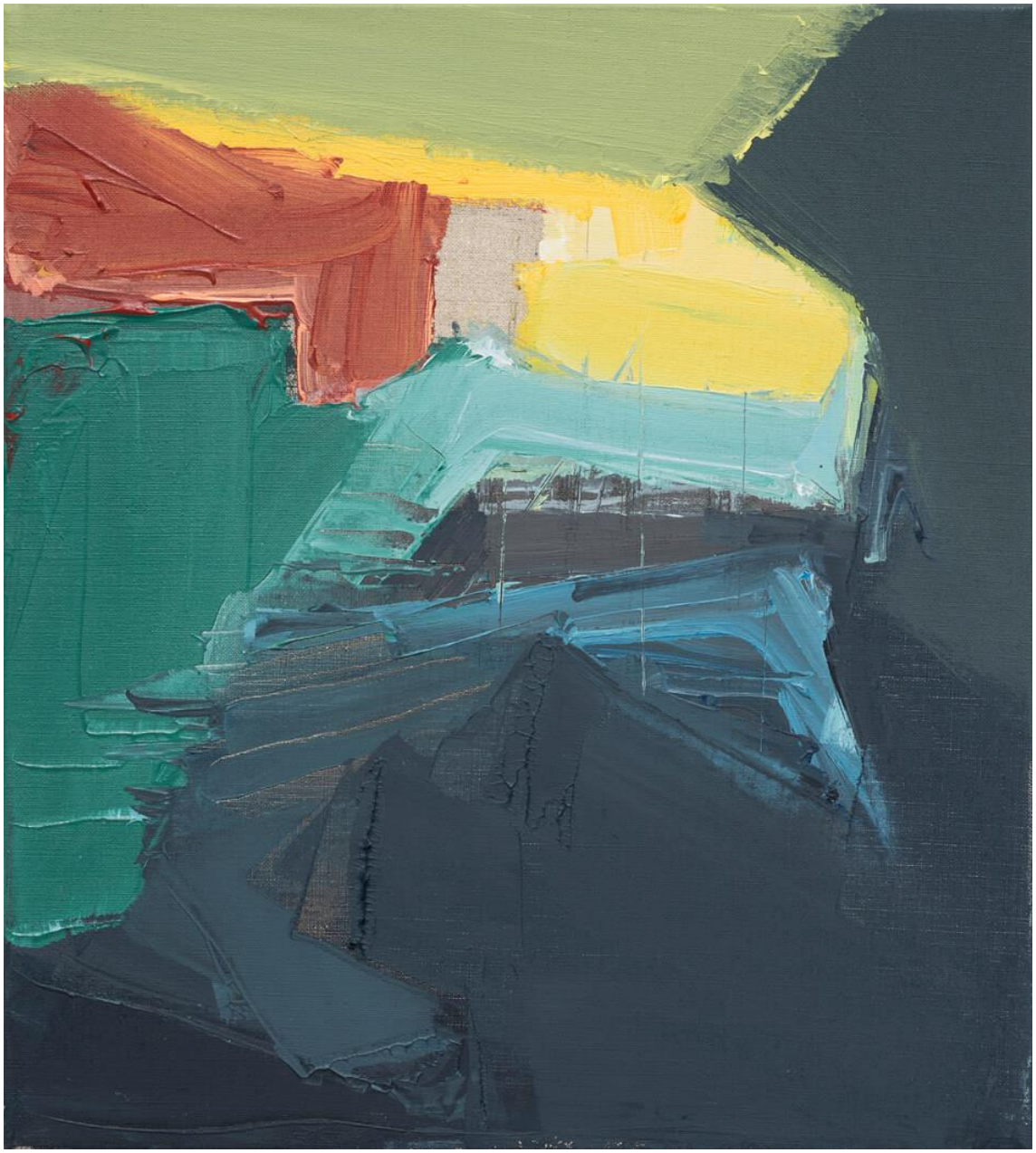
LC – Which art themes do you pursue? What is your preferred subject, if there is any?

RP – I am interested in presenting an expression that is part of my process at the same time that it welcomes different possibilities and narratives that connects the observer to the piece. For this reason, I usually have no title determined for each work. Just very recently the name of series appeared as sign of shared familiarity among pieces. Besides this instance, another that I do appreciate is when I am successful in putting together a pictorial idea made of a variety of micro- constructions acting together as a whole. Or an unexpected combination of colors that bring harmony, to mention another example. They are signs that if one can imagine and put differences side by side on canvas, that fact could as well happen among humans.

LC – Which is the role the artist plays in the society? And the contemporary art?

RP – Artists and art are not interested in exclusion. On the contrary, art has the power to shorten the gaps and shed light on invisible topics. In this case, it may act as a mean to prevent the disappearance of some issues. Most importantly, art may bring new narratives to historic debts and facts. And it may also promote action to a more inclusive and equalitarian future. I hope each and every actor in the art world can operate their small piece for a better world.

LC – Where do you find your inspiration?

RP – At the moment, what attracts me is to be connected to a group of people to discuss and question present practices in order to respond to the urgent needs of our living together under limited resources. Being attentive to the present is what excites me the most in life and in my process of work. Presence is a key word to me.

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