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Diogo Nogueira *The Sirens Will Sing Louder* 14.11.2026 – 16.01.2027

Song

I humbly weave my words of gratitude

around the beautiful ferocity

of your flesh, I raise my glass,

I hear the hidden murmuring of the spring,

I humbly dispel solitude, I accept your appeal

of semen

I deserve poetry.

— I humbly repudiate death.

Herberto Helder, extract from Ciclo – I, in Poesia Toda I, 1973.

There is a kind of perceptual oxymoron hovering over the works of Diogo Nogueira in this exhibition, entitled *The Sirens Will Sing Louder*.

Surrealism? No. The unconscious is here rejected as the driving force behind deviant forms of expression. What is at stake instead is a politics of desire, rooted in a claim for osmosis between beings and their possibilities of survival on a planet threatened socially, physically and emotionally.

Romanticism? Perhaps, if we consider the words of the great Caspar David Friedrich: "Close your physical eye so that you may first see your picture with the eye of the spirit. Then bring into the light what you have seen in your darkness."

Contemporary to the core, Diogo Nogueira exemplifies how art, through its classicising expressions, can make a disruptive incursion into the amorphous and confused reception of our times, serving as a testimony to an effective critical vitality.

An escape into the idyllic as a manifesto for a reality that seeks to remain in a state of heightened alertness, even in the smallest gestures: those of intimacy, of economies of scale, of ideologies that are crumbling and which, as such, must be replaced by micro-narratives of communal growth, in opposition to the idiocy of digital millionaires who toy with the world as though they were playing board games.

Diogo Nogueira's paintings appropriate models from the most diverse sources. As the artist explains: "Suspended between attraction and threat, these figures evoke fantasies conveyed by the imagery of pop culture, social media, pornography and magazines such as *Men's Health*. Through layers of references to the history of images, both highbrow and popular, an iconography is woven that evokes the dream of a natural state that never existed, in which the human, the animal and the collective cease to have clearly defined boundaries."

His paintings assert, with a plausibility that only art can accommodate, the interconnectedness of the human and the natural. A web without time or geography. Here, nudity is primordial before it is sexualised. The sirens are these beings in communion, engaged in harmonious coexistence, as though some unravelling end were anticipated amid the despondency of what lies ahead.

I am reminded here of the images that populate the imaginary of a holistic understanding of the body in relation to nature, as found in certain social movements of the early twentieth century, particularly *Freikörperkultur* (FKK), or "free body culture" — a German social and aesthetic movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century within the broader context of *Lebensreform* (life reform). The movement advocated a return to nature, outdoor physical exercise and non-erotic nudity as forms of health, hygiene and emancipation from industrialisation. During the Weimar Republic, several photographers documented gymnasts and dancers in outdoor settings, creating a modernist aesthetic that was later appropriated and politicised by the National Socialist regime.

Of course, this has always been the problem: a body is never just a body. The elegance of the male nude, set against the affirmative natural landscapes of the 1920s, would eventually be appropriated as a classical reference for the imperial fantasies conceived and reinvented under the Nazi regime. Form as manipulable content. The body as a territory of enduring ideological struggle.

As symbolic erudition tells us, Diogo Nogueira's sirens are beings whose allure is at once desirable and treacherous. Tie yourself to the mast of the ship, like Ulysses, so as not to succumb to the call of their enchantment.

But what if, instead of a ship, we were to hear their call on idyllic ground? Where would that path lead us? It is through this existential uncertainty that the artist, with his assured and masterful technique, confronts us with the great, timeless question. Between measured rationality and Dionysian abandon, which should we choose?

If rationality is the world as it presents itself to us today, then let us surrender to the unfathomable paths of this enigmatic pictorial forest. Let us return to the artist's words: "Their function and the secret prayers they hold remain unknown. A celebration of the body, or the dream of another community made possible."

These are reverberating tributes to the art of painting; sunlit moments in which desire is affirmed as a form of summertime hope.

Miguel von Hafe Pérez

Diogo Nogueira (b. 1999, Porto) lives and works between Porto and Paris. He graduated in Fine Arts – Painting from FBAUP and completed postgraduate studies at ESAD.CR. He undertook further training at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris (ENSBA), as a scholarship holder of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

His practice, which spans painting, drawing, ceramics and installation, is grounded in an investigation of the body, the landscape and the collective imaginary, using a scenographic approach to the image. In large-scale compositions painted on advertising tarpaulin, bodies intertwine in playful or ritual gestures, within natural settings that function as spaces of escape and transformation. Linking humour and eroticism, his work brings the propagandistic image into dialogue with historical painting and emphasises the power of images to forge connections and create shared mythologies.

His work is held in public and private collections in Portugal, Spain, Germany, England, Italy and Brazil, including the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the ARCO Foundation, the Cerveira Biennial Art Foundation, the Porto Municipal Art Collection, the Gulbenkian Museum – Modern Art Collection, Culturgest and MACE – António Cachola Collection.