

Inspired by Salvador el Bahia – and the possibilities of diluted paint

Giuseppe Marasco admires the delicately-structured almost ghostly paintings of Lara Viana

Lara Viana spent 27 years in the UK before returning to her native Brazil and settling into Salvador el Bahia, one of the oldest colonial cities in the Americas, renowned for its Renaissance cityscape, Afro-Brazilian culture and tropical coastline. She has found new inspiration in the Portuguese colonial architecture of the UNESCO World Heritage site.



Viana teases out inspiration from original found objects and vintage photographs discovered at car boot sales, then departs dramatically, to allow the materiality of the paint, intuition and her deep reserve of painterly knowledge lead her on.

There is a sculptural physical quality as well as a sense of the ephemeral and immaterial nature of life. In her light dreamy and sensitive evocations of mood, the surface stays alive.

The paint is so dilute, it resembles the fluency and transparency of watercolour.

Impressively delicate surfaces, which lend a quality of magical realism, are further accentuated by the climate of the artist's present equatorial location. Each brushstroke, turn of direction, pause and speeding up stands out with an intriguing interior hum. These are incredibly fresh paintings without a single redundant element.

Made in single sittings over one day often painted over earlier swiped-out attempts, Viana's work bears a resemblance to Frank Auerbach in her commitment to getting the intended image, gesture, freshness and energy of the composition right.

Composed in a relaxed succession, the paintings are presented in serial form. The brave choice pays off as tracking their evolution and different directions being explored adds to the pleasure of sharing the mind of the painter.

Giuseppe Marasco, London, 12 August 2016

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