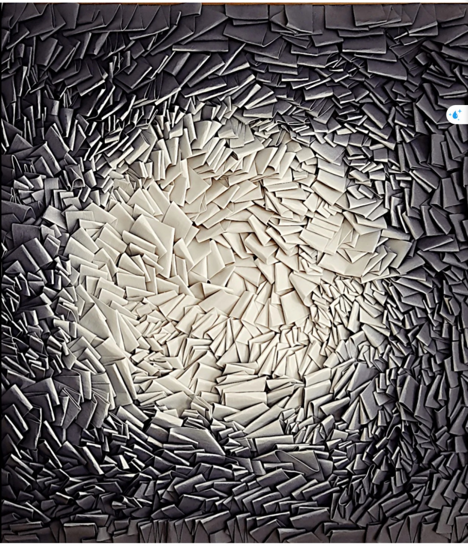
Magazine - Features



In conversation: Rodrigo Franzão

Explore the multifaceted journey of Rodrigo Franzão, an artist bridging continents and cultures between New Orleans, USA, and São Paulo, Brazil. His mixed media creations delve into philosophical and psychological realms, rooted in the observation of human behavior and societal dynamics. With exhibitions spanning across the globe and works housed in prestigious collections, Franzão's artistic footprint resonates from New York to Lisbon, Berlin to Seoul.

Joana Alarcâo

22 de fevereiro de 2024

Can you elaborate on your artistic journey and how it led you to become the artist you are today?

Since the beginning of my artistic journey, I have been deeply inspired by the beauty and complexity of nature. Growing up in Brazil, the Amazon rainforest somehow becomes part of your existence, with its natural resources, its lush fauna and flora, I developed a visceral connection with the nature around me, and this connection has been the driving force behind my work. Over the years, I have explored a variety of techniques and media, constantly seeking new ways to capture the essence of nature and convey it through my art. My quest for sustainability is also an intrinsic part of this journey, as I firmly believe that we must protect and preserve the environment that inspires us so much. Nature is the only stable source of survival we have.

You have a diverse educational background. How do these different disciplines inform and enrich your artistic practice?

My diverse educational background has been fundamental to my artistic practice. By studying Literature, for example, I gained a deeper understanding of the complexities of the world around me. Through Brazilian, Portuguese, Spanish, American, and English literature, I was able to rediscover the wonders of an era I did not experience firsthand, a world depicted without the presence of technology, texts that highlighted the aesthetics of the environment in a poetic way.

This knowledge directly informs my art, influencing my choices of materials and techniques. For instance, by using water-based acrylic paints and internationally certified sustainable paper, I am aligning my artistic practice with my environmental values. Furthermore, my education in different disciplines allows me to approach contemporary issues, such as climate change and biodiversity preservation, in a holistic and multifaceted manner.

Insights of an Eco Artist

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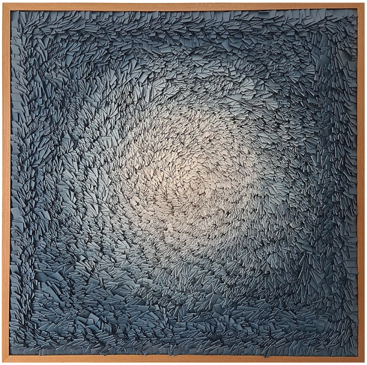


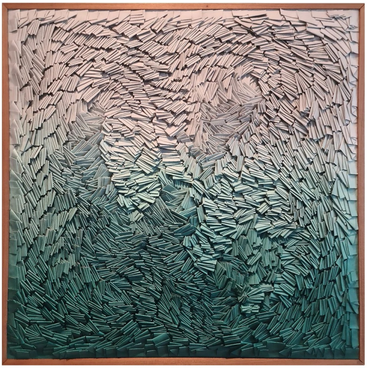
Mergulho no seu olhar e me perco by Rodrigo Franzão. Image courtesy of Rodrigo Franzão

How did your childhood exposure to materials in your mother's sewing workshop and your father's work in metallurgy shape your choice of materials and the narrative within your artwork?

Spending time in my mother's sewing workshop and watching my father work in metallurgy provided me with a unique appreciation for texture and raw materials. In both the textile and metallurgical industries, there is a lot of waste, and residues that are released into the environment without any promise. As I grew up and became aware, these observations from my childhood ended up shaping my choice of materials and my narrative approach, which somehow addresses the intersection between humans and the environment. When creating textile and paper art, I seek to reflect not only the natural beauty but also our responsibility to protect the environment for future generations.

In your practice, you often explore the distortions of the urban environment and the values of contemporary society. Can you elaborate on how your experiences living between New Orleans and São Paulo influence these themes in your art?

Living between two vibrant and culturally diverse cities like New Orleans and São Paulo has been an endless source of inspiration for my art. The rich history and unique architecture of New Orleans, combined with the lushness of the surrounding nature, provide a distinctive backdrop for exploring themes of identity and belonging. On the other hand, the pulsating energy and cultural diversity of São Paulo challenge me to reflect on issues of urbanism and sustainable development. My art often reflects this duality, exploring the tensions and harmonies between the natural environment and the built environment.



Louisiana Rain by Rodrigo Franzão. Image courtesy of Rodrigo Franzão

Your use of mixed media, textile art, and video art creates a dynamic interplay of form and color in your pieces. How do you navigate the relationship between two-dimensional and three-dimensional effects to convey the tension and harmony in your

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Art breeds change

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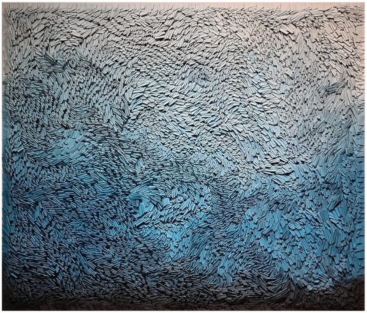
work?

By utilizing a variety of mediums, including textile art, paper, and video, I aim to create a rich and immersive sensory experience for the viewer. Each material offers unique possibilities for expression, from the tactile textures of fabric to the color nuances of paper. Navigating between two-dimensional and three-dimensional effects allows me to craft works that are both visually captivating and physically engaging. By exploring the interplay between form and color, I seek to convey the beauty and complexity of nature, as well as the pressing issues of sustainability that we face as a society.

One of your series called "Katharsis" features human organs contrasted against abstract-polychromatic backgrounds. What inspired this exploration of the human body, and how do you see it fitting into the broader themes of your work?

The "Katharsis" series is a visual exploration of the connection between the human body and the environment. By contrasting human organs with abstract, polychromatic backgrounds, I aim to highlight the vulnerability and fragility of the human body, as well as its interdependence with the natural world. Inspired by anatomy and physiology, my art invites viewers to reflect on their own connection to the environment and the impacts of their actions on the world around them. By showcasing the beauty and complexity of the human body, I hope to foster a greater appreciation for biodiversity and the interconnectedness of all forms of life on Earth.



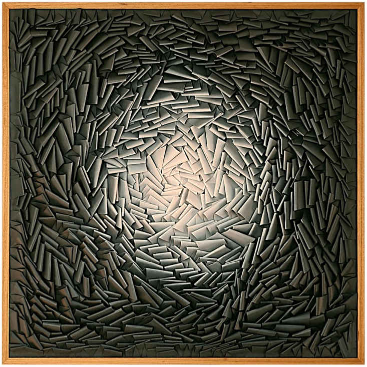
A Symphony in Emotion by Rodrigo Franzão. Image courtesy of Rodrigo Franzão

Could you expound upon the connection you aim to forge between the viewer and your artwork? What inquiries do you anticipate inspiring within the viewer?

For me, art is a form of communication that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers. By creating works that evoke an emotional and intellectual response, I aim to establish a profound connection with the viewer. My hope is that my art prompts reflection and inspires action, encouraging viewers to consider their own role in protecting and preserving the environment. By fostering a dialogue between the viewer and my work, I aspire to create room for questions and discussions about urgent issues of sustainability and environmental justice.

What can you tell us about your recent work, “From the Sounds of Nature that Music Was Born"?

This work represented an exploration of the intersection between sound and nature, marking my first foray inspired by the city of New Orleans. Immersed in a vibrant and lively atmosphere, the city inspired me not only with its peculiar sound energy but also with the enveloping nature that characterizes it. From the gentle whispers of the wind to the presence of swamps and the unmistakable notes of jazz that permeate every corner of the city, I sought to capture the connection between the beauty and complexity of the natural world and the human surrender to the city's energy. By intertwining elements of music and visual art, my purpose was to provide viewers with a multisensory experience, albeit predominantly visual, that connected them more deeply with their own nature and the lively, vibrant nature of the city of New Orleans.



From the Sounds of Nature that Music was Born by Rodrigo Franzão. Image courtesy of Rodrigo Franzão

In your opinion, what is the role of art in the contemporary atmosphere, and how do you see yourself as an artist within this role?

In the contemporary world, art plays a crucial role in raising awareness and mobilizing people on urgent issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental injustice. As an artist, I see myself as an agent of change, using my art as a tool to promote awareness and inspire action. By creating works that address sustainability and environmental justice issues, I hope to stimulate dialogue and catalyze change towards a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

What message or call to action would you like to leave our readers with?

The message I would like to convey to our readers is the importance of recognizing the power that each of us has as individuals to make a difference in the world. I encourage them to reflect on their own choices and behaviors regarding the environment and the global community. I urge them to consider how their daily actions can positively or negatively impact the planet and the people around them. I invite everyone to actively engage in sustainability, social justice, and environmental preservation initiatives, whether through supporting organizations dedicated to these causes or making changes in their lifestyle and consumption habits. Together, we can create a more conscious, equitable, and sustainable future for future generations.

Found more about the artist here.

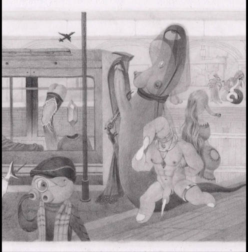
Cover image
Visual Illusions by Rodrigo Franzão. Image courtesy of Rodrigo Franzão

BIOGRAPHY
Lives and works between New Orleans, USA and São Paulo, Brazil, producing mixed media art, painting and video art. His research is linked to philosophical and psychological approaches, in which he takes place in the observation of human behavior, as a social being. He develops his ideas on different supports such as fabrics, recycled materials, natural pigments, as well as paper. His curriculum includes numerous individual and collective exhibitions, and his work is present in private collections in New York, São Paulo, London, Los angeles, Berlin, Portugal, Spain, Detroit, Miami, New Orleans and public collections such as National Arts Clubs, New York, USA, Exhibition Center Odivelas Museum , Lisbon, Portugal, Superior Court of Justice Museum, Brasilia, Brazil. The artist has already presented his works in individual exhibitions In Brazil, United States, Portugal, Greece, Germany, Ukraine, South Korea.

ARTIST STATEMENT

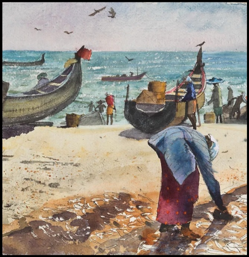
The search for existence, for the meaning of existing and for the experience with the world in the most diverse manifestations leads Rodrigo Franzão to reflect on the distortions of the urban, the values of contemporary society and the interventions of human beings in the world and their interaction with themselves. It develops different languages through mixed media, textile art and video art to highlight the details and mechanisms that are fragmented into dispersions, intervals and noises. Franzão combines two-dimensional and three-dimensional effects, creating a relationship of dependence between them, harmonizing the contrast between form and color, light and shadow, movement and inertia.

MORE



In conversation: Boyuan Wang

Meet Wang Boyuan, the London and China-based artist whose work delves into the realms of absurdity and fantasy. With a background in printmaking, moving image, and drawing, Boyuan challenges norms and provokes critical thought on identity, sexuality, and societal constraints. The artist's imaginative creations disrupt conventional perspectives and explore the coexistence of possibilities and desires. From androgynous worm-like beings to scenes of vigour in corporate settings, Boyuan's art invites us to ponder our place in a world filled with anomalies and paradoxes.



In conversation: Susan Beaulah

In this interview, artist Susan Beaulah shares her remarkable journey documenting the Kerala Chakara, a captivating fishing phenomenon along the Southern coast of India. Over two decades, Beaulah meticulously captured over a hundred watercolor studies, navigating the challenges of close observation amidst the curious gazes of local fisherfolk.

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