

# APALAZZOGALLERY

FRANCESCO JOÃO

PROJECT ROOM

11 January – 15 March 2025

“When I was a child, looking at a seven-segment display, I used to think about future. Now the future has come and SSD is an obsolete technology, yet it still evokes an idea of future, this time seen from the past. Just like watching Robert Longo’s 1995 cyberpunk milestone movie *Johnny Mnemonic*, which foreshadowed topics such as digital ethics, philosophy of information and A.I.

It’s convenient that everything from the past has already been digested and accepted: we don’t struggle to recognize the beauty of the Sistine Chapel or Donatello’s pulpits at the San Lorenzo Basilica in Florence, even though they were highly criticized during their respective times of making.

On the other hand, it’s comforting - according to capitalist culture - to think about future as a constant investment potential - an ever-winning bet: “That’s going to be the next Joan Mitchell” or “We’ll live on Mars (so let’s continue to fuck up this planet)”. But the present - which separates past and future in the timeline - is what’s really interesting: in the present there are no hopes, there is no time for interpretation. The present is not predictable nor necessarily comfortable; in the present everything is just the way it is.”

- Francesco João

**Francesco João** (b. 1987, Milan, Italy) lives and works between São Paulo, Brazil, and Milan, Italy. He attended the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan. João’s research is defined around an awareness of the conceptual aspects of painting practice, such as the procedural aspects and structures that articulate painting, declining it from time to time in its various forms. In particular, the artist explores and deepens the ambivalence of the pictorial method, emphasising the duality between the immediacy of calculated reduction and its excessive complexity. Deconstructing the pictorial gesture, the João questions its principles and means, analysing not only its basic elements, such as the canvas but also its temporal dimension to return to the zero degrees of painting.

His recent exhibitions include: *SSD*, Glasshouse, Gathering, London, UK (2024); *Francesco João*, Lola Stong-Brett, Galerie Hussenot, Paris, France (2024); *Landscape for an Overview. Works from the Agovino Collection*, Zurich Bank, Naples, Italy (2024); *O Caminho do Meio*, Marli Matsumoto, São Paulo, Brazil (2024); *Seven Segment Display*, Fondazione Zimei, Rome (2023); *Sem título, por enquanto*, Marli Matsumoto, São Paulo (2023); *Cremona Contemporanea*, curated by Rossella Farinotti, Palazzo Guazzoni Zaccaria, Cremona, Italy; *x\_minimal*, curated by Friederike Nymphius, Cassina Projects, Milan (2021); *1550 San Remo Drive*, Hot Wheels, Athens (2020); *Francesco João*, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (2019); BRAZIL. *Knife in the flesh*, PAC – Padiglione d’Arte Contemporanea, Milan (2018); *Donkey Man*, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo (2017); *A Terceira Mão*, curated by Erika Verzutti, Fortes D’Aloia Gabriel, São Paulo (2017) and *Everything tends to ascend. Or not.*, Pivô, São Paulo (2016). João was awarded the Shortlisted – Ducato Prize (2023) and the Shortlisted – Dior Prize / Lady Dior As Seen By...

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**APALAZZOGALLERY** was founded by Francesca Migliorati and Chiara Rusconi in 2008 in Palazzo Cigola Fenaroli in Brescia, as a meeting and conversation place to promote contemporary art in all its manifold manifestations. The gallery offers an inclusive multidisciplinary and multicultural programme, supporting international and Italian, institutional and young emerging artists. Each project is designed and constructed through a long and careful dialogue between the space and the artist, the product of which is a solo or group exhibition that engages the space and its architecture innovatively. The gallery also supports this dialogue through art residencies and the promotion of artists through art fairs and international and local curatorial projects. The gallery represents Sonia Boyce, Ann Iren Buan, Edson Chagas, Giorgio Ciam, Raùl De Nieves, Nathalie Du Pasquier, Em'kal Eyongakpa, Estate of Larry Stanton, Paolo Gonzato, Ibrahim Mahama, Eva & Franco Mattes, Olivier Mosset, Servane Mary, Estate of Jonas Mekas, Lucia Pescador, Marta Pierobon, Nathalie Provosty, Alan Reid, Olympia Scarry, Augustas Serapinas, Alexandra Sukhareva, The Reader, Francesco Vezzoli and Luc Ming Yan.

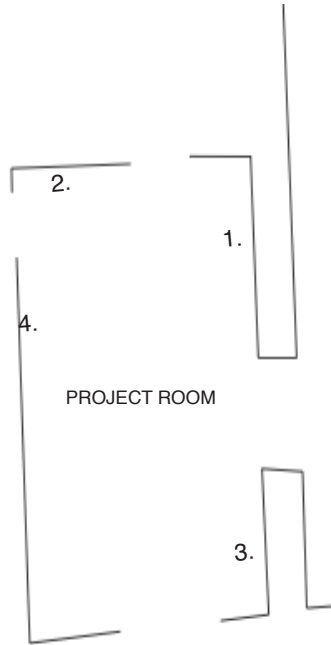
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1. Untitled, 2024  
Overlapped tarlatan, frame  
150 x 150 cm
2. Untitled, 2024  
Overlapped tarlatan, frame  
30 x 45 cm
3. Untitled, 2024  
Overlapped tarlatan, frame  
30 x 45 cm
4. Untitled, 2024  
Gouache, vinyl and acrylic on raw canvas  
30 x 45 cm

“For me, making a work of art is equivalent to performing a cognitive act, which rarely has anything to do with taste or aesthetics, but rather with relevance, which transcends any superstructure. That is why my subjects are not so much representative of something, but rather an expedient to achieve this goal.”

Although João uses the subject as a pretext, an excuse to make a painting, it is never chosen randomly, in fact, whether it is the Seven Segment Display (SSD) series or the Paesaggi, it always reflects specific interests. In this sense, the Paesaggi represent the artist's interest in the pictorial genre - landscape painting - within the history of art. For João, landscape, like abstraction and unlike portraiture, has managed over time to remain independent of the trends and fashions that have marked different historical moments.

“I started to focus on landscape [as a subject] in 2012 while working on my first solo exhibition *The Opposite of the Opposite, Gasconade*. At the time I was focused on the concept of the sublime in 19th-century German Romantic painting, especially in relation to the idea of the ‘unknown’ and the human dimension in relation to the universe.” In taking up the lessons of German Romanticism, however, the artist goes beyond mere iconographic quotation, concentrating on the very principle that defines it by transporting it and declining it to his filtered vision of that moment.

Through his work, João captures and delicately expresses that neuralgic tension between past, present and future that defines our contemporaneity, as well as giving voice to the sublime in the unpredictability and evolution of human perception in the information age. In his works, the present manifests itself as an elusive space whose imponderability makes it authentic.