

Regina Silveira



**Regina Silveira**

February 18 – March 26, 2016

Alexander Gray Associates

## A Path In Transit

Over the course of my artistic career, I had not focused on a single medium; I was a painter, engraver, video and multimedia artist, went on to make books, objects and installations. Recently I have produced graphic interventions in interior spaces and on façades, video animations and graffiti alongside urban projections. In terms of the poetic and technical operations involved in the work, all this activity has always oscillated between hand-made and low-tech methods. My interest in different mediums and the recurrent use of new means of image production goes back to the 1970s. However, I have never been intensely engaged with any of the more radical trends that heavily rely on the use of technology.

Since my productions from the 1970s, my everlasting task has been to balance my constant curiosity for new material with an awareness that the medium cannot take over my ideas. My overriding goal has always been the search for meaning in any medium, with more emphasis on the politics of representation than on the means of production.

Shifts and complexities aside, over the last two decades my work has gradually developed a close relationship between architecture, its surrounding space, and its public dimension. This has paralleled my gradual migration from artisanal to digital productions, a natural step in light of the geometric operations that were cornerstones in my previous work.

Perspective drawings on graph paper have been a key stage when generating installations such as *In Absentia M.D.* (1983) and *Vortex* (1994), two large-format works that were entirely drawn on-site and painted by hand. This category of installations, based on enlarged perspective drawings, also includes the original version of *Paradoxo do Santo* [Saint's Paradox], realized in the project room of Museo del Barrio, New York in 1994. *Gone Wild* done in 1996 was the first commission I received to occupy a specific space in the interior of a museum, in this case, the entrance hall of the Museum of Contemporary Art of San Diego, which had been recently remodeled by architect Robert Venturi.

The following decade, these same works and their different iterations—including *Paradoxo do Santo* in a vinyl version (2001), *Tropel Reversed* (2009), *Abyssal* (2010) and *Gone Wild Reversed* (2011)—were made based on plans generated with computer software. This enabled interesting transformations in my work, such as: substituting ephemerality for permanence, increased control over the scale of a project, greater flexibility for altering configurations and adapting them to different spaces, and

broadened possibilities to create site-specific installations, both in Brazil and around the world.

The conditions that led me to use these new digital resources originally began with *Encuentro* (1991), a graphic work first conceived as a large-scale billboard, and produced using an industrial silkscreen process. The linearity and the outlines of the central image required a degree of precision that was only possible through the use of drawing software to ensure the rigorous sharpness I envisioned for that image. This could not have been achieved through hand-drawn enlargements.

*Escada Inexplicável* (1998) was among the first experiments during my transition from drawing into digital territories. This piece was followed by a more technologically driven work: the interactive video animation *Descendo a Escada* (2004). Both works are emblematic of how my previous explorations in projective spatiality grew to include larger possibilities and deeper meanings that were only possible by relying on more complex technical operations that always aimed to be poetically analogous.

Recently, I have produced works that rely on graphic patterns and images to cover the interiors and façades of various buildings and even commuter buses. My current production is marked by a growing interest in public spaces and in the development of ephemeral or permanent works, as projects that can exist outside the confines of art spaces. The long and complex negotiation process that is inevitably involved in these projects does not make them less stimulating—on the contrary, they enhance my interest, because they engage different audiences and invite an exchange of ideas between a significant number of collaborators and studio assistants, enabling partnerships with people from different fields.

Paradoxically, the production of many of these projects, even if planned digitally, has involved an even more intense use of artisanal techniques that requires the participation of different teams and a collective and concerted effort. Two of the most recent works I have done under this organizational structure have been *Paraler* (2015), installed permanently on the sidewalk of the Biblioteca Mario de Andrade in São Paulo, and *Phantasmata* (2015), a project done for the 12 Bienal de la Havana, Cuba that included images painted directly on the pavement in the tradition of street graffiti using large stencils. *Paraler* is a huge, handmade mosaic, that required the placement by hand of nearly two million small pieces, along a length of sidewalk in



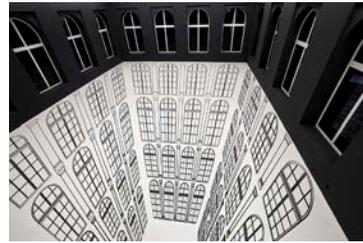
Top: *In Absentia M.D.*, 1983  
Installation view, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 2009.

Bottom: *In Absentia M.D.*, 1983  
Installation view, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 2009.



Top: *Paradoxo do santo*, 1994  
Installation view, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 2009.

Center: *Gone Wild Reversed*, 2011  
Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts at The University of Texas at El Paso (2011)  
Bottom: *Gone Wild Reversed*, 2011, detail



Top: *Abyssal*, 2010, installation view, Atlas Sztuki Foundation

Bottom: *Encuentro*, 1991

keeping with the size of the building and the large urban scale of the city's downtown district. *Phantasmata*, the extensive ephemeral painting made in a public area of Havana is even more artisanal in nature since the final image resulted from digital traces that were printed as outlines of cars, war tanks, and insects that were made using stencils and spray paint.

My current practice is quite different from the future that I once envisioned for myself decades ago. Back when I first began to work on large scale work, after all that time spent clambering around on scaffolding to detail those giant and ephemeral paintings. I imagined that after many years of this intense labor I would be inclined to focus on something comfortable like drawing or making watercolors on fine papers, in a protected environment, to the tune of good background music. Decades later, unlike that future I imagined, I continue to be increasingly engaged in many sorts of projects that outsize my own individual capacity to the point where I have become the artist collective that I am today.

Regina Silveira, São Paulo, Brazil, 2015



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2016

***Touchin' Black I* (2015)**

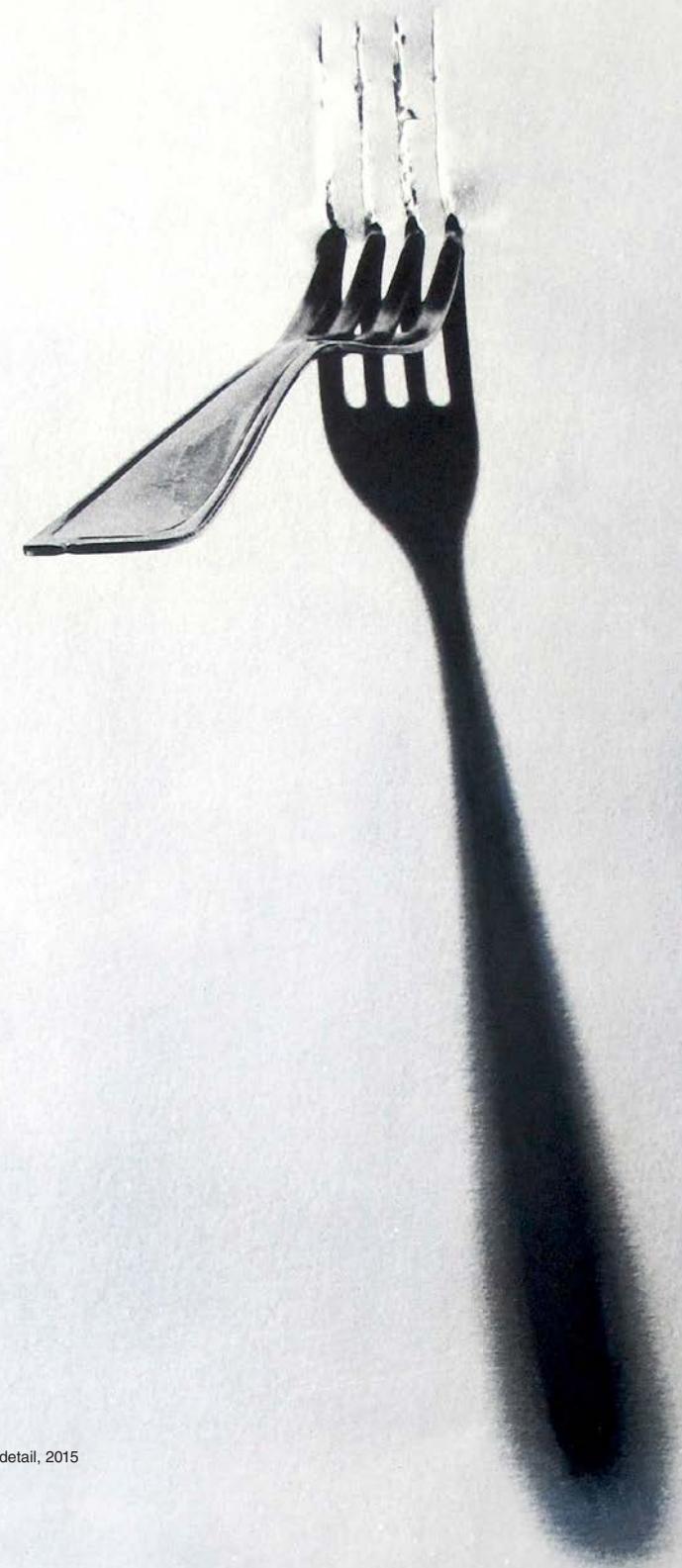
*Touchin' Black I* consists of 11 square prints on aluminum arranged in space as an irregular geometry depicting an oversize human handprint on the metal. Silhouetted hands have been a recurring motif in Silveira's work since the early 1980s. They represent, in the artist's words, "registers of our ancestry" and "signs of presence and identity covering the walls."<sup>1</sup> In *Touchin' Black I*, the artist imbues this familiar shape with mystery and fantasy by reproducing the handprints in an unnaturally large size. For Silveira, this alteration of dimension causes a "gap in perception," and ultimately leads the viewer to question the nature of representation and scale. The repeated presence of the handprint in a contained space exemplifies the artist's interest in creating "images with characteristics of aggregation and accumulation, with the power to cover surfaces and to function as graphic invasions."<sup>2</sup> Silveira has experimented with this exercise of visual alteration and repetition through the use of a number of indexical signs including animal tracks, human footprints, and tire tracks.



*Touchin' Black I*, 2016

***Voodoo Series*** (2015)

During the 1970s, Silveira began expanding her printmaking practice and engaging with new media and forms of experimentation which have become hallmarks of her artistic practice. Her four-decade study of experimental printmaking techniques, in which she often integrates photographic images, informs her transgressive visual language, which provides what she considers a “dry syntax that eschew[s] autographic aspects.”<sup>3</sup> Silveira’s most recent photoetchings, *Voodoo Series*, consist of images of a fork, screw, and scissor, which appear to pierce the paper on which they are reproduced, and to cast shadows that render a three dimensional quality to the printed object. Through formal distortion, she transforms these ordinary tools by conveying a sense of violence or aggression. These works question the reality of occurrence and the nature of representation while relying on the artist’s longstanding interest in skiagraphia (the study of shadows).



*Voodoo Series 3*, detail, 2015



***Amphibia*** (2013/16)

*Amphibia* is a large scale immersive work covering the walls and floor of the gallery space with varied sizes of frog silhouettes flowing toward a gilded metal grate in the center of the floor. The use of vinyl to intervene in and alter architectural spaces exemplifies Silveira's practice of transformation through graphic experimentation. During the 1970s, she began expanding her printmaking practice and engaging with new media, and since the 1990s her exploration of digital resources has enabled her to realize large-scale and site specific installations that explore notions of aggregation and accumulation in three dimensions. The placement of frogs, notably one of the biblical plagues, de-familiarizes the gallery space, employing allegory to evoke contemporary social and political concerns. The mass of frogs gravitating to a subterranean world through a gilded grate, evoke the embedded corruption that exists in political systems when people are motivated by the promise of wealth or power. Additionally, the metal grate serves as a threshold, which for Silveira is a space "for improbable and extraordinary happenings, as well as openings for the territory which can give rise to invasions and irruptions of every sort."<sup>4</sup>



*Amphibia*, 2013/16



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2016



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2016



*Fascination*, installation view, 2015

### ***Fascination* (2015)**

Silveira has collaborated with poets and writers since the 1960s. From 1960 to 1966 she illustrated poems in the daily newspaper, *Correio do Povo* published in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and in the 1970s she collaborated with Brazilian Concrete poet Haroldo De Campos. Her most recent artist book *Fascination*, was created in conjunction with the French publisher Gervais Jaussaud and renowned Korean poet Ko Un. Printed as unbound letterpress poems on paper, Silveira responded to Ko's words through visual motifs. Her depictions are not illustrations, but rather what Silveira describes as "a parallel universe of concepts; a parallel discourse,"<sup>5</sup> that runs across the pages interwoven with the poems. Silveira photographed and digitally silhouetted her own hand in various gestures, and collaged cutouts of these hands onto the pages. Additionally, she used images appropriated from mathematics and science vocabularies, and paired them with motifs from her own bodies of work. She digitally combined appropriated images, which were subsequently traced onto the pages of each book. While the 12 books that she produced contain the same set of images, each differs slightly based on the human touch inherent in the act of tracing the drawings.

### ***Simile (Red)* (1997; next page)**

This lithograph and serigraph exemplifies Silveira's four decade investigation into printmaking practices in which she has experimented with traditional concepts such as perspective as well as the manipulation of shadows. Here, she depicted a naturalistic fork, sitting atop a tilted red plane, across which an enlarged and distorted silhouette of a fork exists as a false shadow. The fork is emblematic of Silveira's penchant for depicting everyday objects, and its warped white shadow looms like a claw, conveying a sense of anxiety or possible danger. The two disparate interpretations of one household object represent the paradoxical relation between absence and presence and her interest in the physical and conceptual representations of reality. The title of this work alludes to the literary device, "simile" in that the two depictions, though formally different, are being juxtaposed and compared to one another for dramatic effect.

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#### Notes

- 1 Regina Silveira, "Touch and the Many Hands in the Exhibition Offscale" (2004).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Regina Silveira, "Marks of the Real, Marks of the Phantasmagorical. Tomasz Zaluski Talks to Regina Silveira," interview by Tomasz Zaluski, *Atlas Sztuki Magazine*, 2010.
- 4 Regina Silveira, "Touch and the Many Hands in the Exhibition Offscale."
- 5 Regina Silveira, conversation with Carly Fischer, February 2016.



*Simile (Red)*, detail, 1997

13/20

*Simile (Red)*

Pepin Weiss 97

## Checklist

*Simile (Red)*, 1997  
Lithography and serigraphy  
27.63h x 39w in.  
Edition 13 of 30

*Amphibia*, 2013/16  
Vinyl and metal grate  
Dimensions variable

*Voodoo Series 1*, 2015  
Photoengraving and graphite  
24.5h x 18.13w in.  
Edition 34 of 50

*Voodoo Series 2*, 2015  
Photoengraving and graphite  
24.5h x 18.13w in.  
Edition 34 of 50

*Voodoo Series 3*, 2015  
Photoengraving  
24.5h x 18.13w in.  
Edition 35 of 50

*Fascination*, 2015  
Letterpress, ink and collage  
on unbound paper  
12.7h x 10w in.  
Edition 7 of 12

Published by Gervais Jassaud,  
as part of the series "Collectif  
Génération," Fréjus, France, 2015.

*Touchin' Black I*, 2016  
Digital cut on aluminum plate  
Dimensions variable

Regina Silveira (b.1939) was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil and lives in São Paulo. Throughout more than four decades, Silveira, a critical figure in Brazilian conceptual art, has investigated the tension between movement and spatial perspective, threading political meaning into installations that respond to specific sites. She began her artistic training in the 1950s under the tutelage of expressionist Brazilian painter Iberê Camargo, studying lithography and woodcut, as well as painting. Renowned for her parodic explorations of space through geometric constructs, Silveira's work is celebrated for both its conceptual rigor and formal impact.

During the 1970s she experimented with printmaking and video, engaging with the dynamic developments of the Brazilian art world and the country's politics at a time of military repression. Throughout her career, she has investigated the representation of reality, and the meaning of visual imagery. Her artistic vocabulary includes various methods of perspectival projection, including *skiagraphia* (the study of shadows) and the appropriation of shadows of ordinary objects to create duality and tension. Silveira is particularly interested in the paradoxical relationship between presence and absence, a notion that she has examined by incorporating tracks and foot imprints into her visual vocabulary.

Regina Silveira has exhibited throughout Europe and the Americas, including recent solo exhibitions at Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba, Brazil (2015); Museu Chácara do Céu, Museu Castro Maya, Sta Teresa, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2015); Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico (2014); The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2012); Iberê Camargo Foundation, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2011); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (2009); the Køge Museum of Art in Public Spaces, Denmark (2009); Museo de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia (2008); Museo de Arte del Banco de la República, Bogotá, Colombia (2007); Palacio de Cristal, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain (2005); Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Brazil (2004). Her work is represented in public collections internationally, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Miami Art Museum, FL; San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan; Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Brazil; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil; and Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Brazilian Art Critics Association gave her the Award for Life and Work in 2012.



Regina Silveira, El Paso, TX, 2011

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