

ana júlia vilela and dona roxinha: i woke up beautiful today 11.07.2023 – 02.24.2024

On September 11th 2001, one of the major news websites in Brazil in the 2000s, iG, decided to go against the fundamentals of journalism and publish good news only throughout the whole day. This very day, however, was the one when the attack on the World Trade Center's twin towers took place, taking any chance for a relevant news outlet not to publish such urgent and important bad news down the drain. At the time, the website's op-ed stated: *iG tried, but history didn't allow it.*

The thing is, regardless of the timing, there will always be good news and bad ones. And that's what we see in Ana Júlia's and Roxinha's art: statements announcing a sort of pictorial chronicle of their experiences, featuring both "good" and "bad" subjects. A given day, for instance, one wakes up feeling beautiful. At others, one wonders whether all men just hate women. They're compelling paintings, displaying statements spearheaded by female artists who seek to drive the gaze and the imagination of those who behold them closer to their experiences, to themselves.

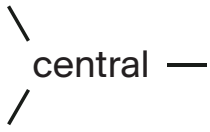
They're artworks that tell stories about a peculiar world and situate personal issues as political. As analyzed by the feminist journalist Carol Hanisch, what happens at a personal level is also collectively, socially and politically relevant. In her own words, "anything personal is also political". Sharing this perspective, ordinary subjects are approached by the artists straightforwardly, in a nearly naïve voice as they courageously place themselves in a first-person perspective within their narrative. So, however divergent their biographies might be, there's no room to question their involvement in the images.

In brief, Ana Júlia was born in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais; as a teenager, she trained as a manicure, pedicure and eyebrow designer at Embelleze; studied Visual Arts at Universidade Federal de Pelotas; and is currently participating in an art residence at Via Farini, Italy. Her first solo show took place at Museu de Arte de Ribeirão Preto, in São Paulo, in 2019. Roxinha, on the other hand, was born in 1956 in Lagoa da Pedra, Alagoas. In her youth, she worked in farming; as an adult, she broke gravel in quarries and worked as a street cleaner for nearly two decades. Self-taught, she took an interest in art at 59, taking up professional art painting in 2021 and holding her first solo show in 2023, at Museu do Pontal, Rio de Janeiro.

Beyond differences in social, cultural and regional standards they undergo, it's worth highlighting that while Ana Júlia belongs to a generation who grew up in the rise of the internet, Roxinha is from a period of time when memes were analogically created, such as bumper stickers. These facts are relevant to understand their aesthetic and conceptual choices, since, although coming from such diverse life references, they both employ in their works concisely written statements (regardless of language and spelling) and simple figures, often swathed in irony and levity in what concerns to daily ordinary issues, albeit intense at times.

The recurrent presence of hands or fingers in Ana Júlia's works may be connected to her training as a manicure and to female gesturality and performativity; *O pulso que cai* (Fabiana Faleiros, 2016) and *Um útero é do tamanho de um punho* (Angélica Freitas, 2012). There's a metalanguage to these images, as if the artist spoke through her hands. However, there is also a magical and mysterious dimension to what is being said.

Roxinha's works, on the other hand, are characterized by the presence of faces, so as to feature the human figure as protagonist, as a force of history. They're figurative paintings that narrate real



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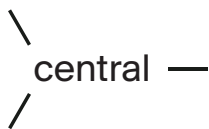
events or those invented by the artist, “whatever comes to mind”, as she states. Thus, there’s a series of visual portraits whose color closely resembles the artist’s skin color, in her own words: “such dark complexion, it’s nearly purple”*. These images are often framed by the painting itself and seem ready to chit-chat.

It can thus be said that both Ana Júlia and Roxinha present limitless-themed artworks, since they’re about life itself. As if there was always something more to be told, creating the need for the next work and so on. And because they are women artists who take their own experiences as references, addressing themes related to the female gender and to feminisms seems almost inevitable.

For all these reasons, it doesn’t come as a surprise that the exhibition states - especially to women - that no matter how hard some days might be, one can still wake up looking beautiful. Because there’s no such thing as good days only or good life only; although one might try, history won’t allow it.

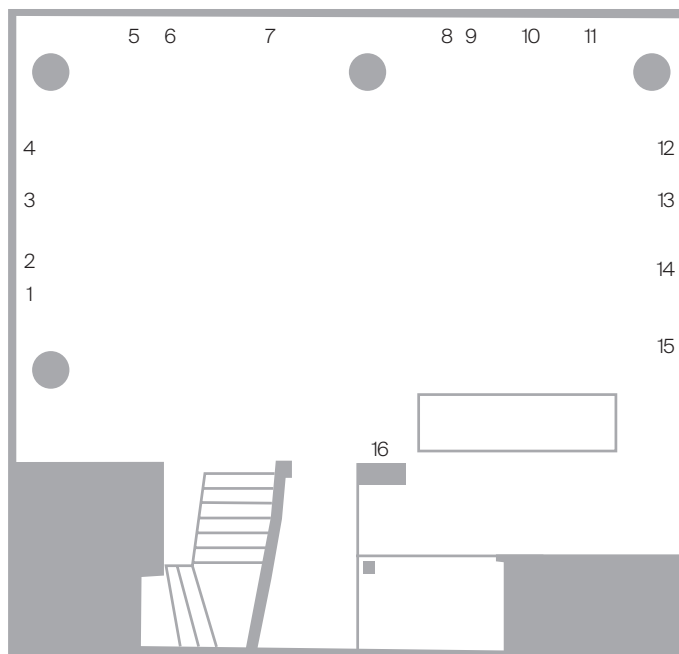
// Paula Borghi

* T.N.: “Roxinha” is Portuguese for “purple”.



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- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 dona roxinha
<i>fluminista</i> , 2023
acrylic on wood
35 x 30 cm | 6 dona roxinha
<i>i woke up beautiful today</i> , 2023
acrylic on wood
35 x 20 cm | 12 dona roxinha
<i>just chill</i> , 2023
acrylic on wood
50 x 30 cm |
| 2 ana júlia vilela
<i>the secret</i> , 2023
clay and glaze
27 x 59 cm | 7 ana júlia vilela
<i>the lighthouse of the stars</i> , 2023
oil on canvas
100 x 120 cm | 13 ana júlia vilela
<i>the cousins' hill</i> , 2022-2023
oil on canvas and clay
19 x 10,5 x 7 cm |
| 3 ana júlia vilela
<i>Kkkkkkkkkk xD</i> , 2023
oil on canvas
24 x 18 x 5,5 cm | 8 dona roxinha
<i>coffee together</i> , 2023
acrylic on wood
40 x 30 cm | 14 ana júlia vilela
<i>the holly hole</i> , 2023
oil on canvas
100 x 120 cm |
| 4 ana júlia vilela
<i>the mediocre artist 2</i> , 2023
oil and oil pastel on canvas
sobre tela
60 x 40 cm | 9 dona roxinha
<i>papaya tree</i> , 2022
acrylic on wood
35 x 30 cm | 15 dona roxinha
<i>cutting stone</i> , 2023
acrylic on wood
40 x 30 cm |
| 5 dona roxinha
<i>the barby are out of the box</i> ,
2023
acrylic on wood
40 x 30 cm | 10 ana júlia vilela
<i>the poet of the millennium</i> , 2023
oil on canvas and clay
73 x 50 cm | 16 ana júlia vilela
<i>the hands that rocks the
cradle</i> , 2023
oil on canvas and ceramic
44 x 30 x 5,5 cm |
| | 11 ana júlia vilela
<i>the famous maybe</i> , 2023
oil on canvas
25 x 30 cm | |