

LYA NAGADO

From Sao Paulo, Brazil. Lives and work in London, UK.

Email: info@lyanagado.com
Website: www.lyanagado.com
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lyanagado/>

STATEMENT

The body of personal choices that I have built in the course of my painting process represents, consciously or unconsciously, an attempt to enact the association between the territories of history and imagination that we all inhabit, akin to the universal symbolism of playing with dolls itself. Similarly, the title “Still Life” is a reference to the historical theme of painting inert objects, posing the question of life within apparently inanimate forms, in conjunction with the idea of cycle of life and rebirth.

As a subject, dolls can symbolise aspects of our primordial nature in the very core of the construction of the self. They are everyday objects that readily evoke childhood memories, a powerful sense of personal and family history and nostalgia for beauty and purity. At the other end of the spectrum, dolls can also be somewhat a source of anxiety, as empty vessels that hold the fear of the uncanny and the supernatural. Above all, they recall the potential of hosting a life force that connects us with the archetypal world.

The philosopher Giorgio Agamben suggests the hypothesis that all play (and games and toys) descends from what once belonged to the realm of sacred, but somehow had lost its meaning as the modern world has become more secular[1]. In Japan, toys (Omocha), as a taxonomical genre, have far trespassed the realms of childhood: “Indeed, most traditional toys originally were, and to some degree continue to be, talismans and amulets for the blessing and protection of the holder, tokens of and material links with certain holy places and their tutelary deities.”[2]. For the Japanese, traditional dolls have an even more profound quality of relics, as the embodiment of beliefs that are passed from generation to generation.

As an artist, the process of making paints from pure pigments and the preparation of supports from organic raw materials are ways to connect with my own work on a more ancient level. The transformation of matter from its primordial state invites one to a meditation on one’s own essence and origins, echoing the nakedness of being, which traverses time and borders. The historicity of materials in my practice, such as gesso, vellum, and earth pigments[3], performs as a medium to our common cultural memory. On these grounds, the images emerge gradually, through many transparent coats of pensive colours, witness to the passage of time and the superimposing of ideas.

The questions that “Still Life” poses in my work are consequently about how traditions can survive, fade or transform. This series of paintings look at fragments of rituals that are somewhat in dissonance with their original meaning. Through the agency of combining heritage and culture, we are constantly incorporating changes in the portrayal of the contemporary. However, concealed within these layers, we might just be able to see a glimpse of a deeper underlying nature.

Notes:

- [1] Agamben, Giorgio, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*, translated by Liz Heron, Verso 2007
- [2] Kyburz, Josef A. “Omocha: Things to Play (Or Not to Play)” in *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 53, No.1, 1994, pp. 1-28
- [3] Gesso is a fluid white coating that has been used for more than 3000 years, composed of a mineral whiting mixed with animal glue, applied over hard smooth surfaces such as wood. Coeval with gesso, Vellum is a surface made of animal skin that has been dried, cleaned, dehaired and scraped. Earth pigments are naturally occurring minerals, mainly iron oxides, used since prehistoric times.