

Press Release

The River that Covers Me

Feliciano Centurión, José Leonilson and Matheus Chiaratti

8 October - 20 November 2025



Matheus Chiaratti, *Noites de Maio (Abetarda)* [*Nights of May (Abetarda series)*], 2023, glazed ceramic, 20 x 18 x 15 cm (7 7/8 x 7 1/8 x 5 7/8 in)

Cecilia Brunson Projects is pleased to announce a forthcoming group exhibition featuring Feliciano Centurión (1962 – 1996), José Leonilson (1957 – 1993) and Matheus Chiaratti (b. 1988), produced in collaboration with Gisela Projects. New works by Chiaratti construct a dialogue with Centurión and Leonilson, two artists who gave soft and poetic form to queer identity in Latin America in the 1980s-90s. An imaginary friendship between these artists from two different generations, who never crossed paths, is articulated by Chiaratti through letter writing, visual references and a shared artistic sensibility centred around love, passion and intimacy.

Centurión and Leonilson shared remarkably symmetrical stories, unfolding in post-dictatorship Argentina and Brazil, respectively, when artistic discourse turned from the political to the internal. Both cultivated a space between the disciplines of painting and textile, producing gentle work, electrified in its political defiance of gender conventions and reframing of tradition to express queer identities. Both contracted HIV, a subject confronted in their late works with raw honesty, and died in their 30s. Their use of language – lines of poetry, internal monologues, dedications stitched into their work – made for radically clear and tender vocalisations of queer love, and make it feel possible to know these artists who left behind such finite bodies of work.

The exhibition highlights Centurión's early painting practice, including works not exhibited since early in his career, with subject matter ranging from Donna Summer to the tropical wilderness of his native Paraguay. Painted soon after the artist left his mother and grandmother's home for the comparatively cold and urban Buenos Aires, in their untamed brushstrokes and disco palette, they are expressions of freedom and of yearning.

A painted textile by Leonilson reflects the artist's use of encoded symbolism to both convey and protect intimate thoughts. A pair of fish at once evoke Catholic fraternity, Pisces and its mythological associations with Aphrodite and Eros, and the queer motif of the double, in an image both guarded and meaningful.

Works by Brazilian artist Matheus Chiaratti function as an emotional cartography – a way of sorting out the world from a restless and deeply curious perspective. Throughout Chiaratti's practice, his maternal grandmother's gardens are restored as a territory of desire, memory and theatricality. Nature emerges as a scenery of abundance, a romantic monument to the most primal feelings.

Across textile, ceramics, painting and photographic collage, the investigation of words and their poetic capacity is a central theme in Chiaratti's production. Through evocative images of nature, art historical reference and a mapping of images and thoughts, he arranges his universe as a visual diary, a sketchbook: a world that is mythical and banal, intimate and sacred.

His composite images take notes from Centurión and Leonilson, and other queer guides – Leonilson's fountains, Centurión's flowers, Frida Kahlo's intense and violent love for Diego Rivera branded on her mind and her skin, and Jean Genet's explicit writings. Amongst his own deeply personal expression is the inheritance of a culture created before him.

About Cecilia Brunson Projects:

Founded in 2013, Cecilia Brunson Projects is the leading London gallery championing Latin American art. The gallery's specialist programme places overlooked historical voices in dialogue with burgeoning contemporary talent, often for the first time. Our mission is to platform exceptional Latin American artists across generations and increase awareness around their role in shaping global art movements.

About Gisela Projects:

Gisela Projects is a nomadic gallery that represents a group of international artists and believes art needs to be experienced — dynamic interactions that can happen in many ways and places. Collaborating with other galleries and institutions, we create projects presenting new, exciting and more flexible opportunities for people to engage with contemporary art. Since 2021 we have held more than thirty exhibitions around the world and participated in art fairs in Brazil and the United States, such as ArtRio (2022 and 2023), SP-Arte (2023 and 2024), NADA Miami (2022 and 2024) and New York (2024).

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