



View of
Dai Qing, 2009.

In a symphony of graphic angst, an army of broad-stroked, drippy portraits on paper and canvas lined the walls of Shopping Gallery's modest space. Populated by deranged goblins, melting clowns, profiles with oversize noses, and full-figure mutants straddling green dogs, no two pictures were alike. Caricatural to the point of the surreal and bordering on the grotesque, these painted faces screamed out like an incessant hallucination. In the center of the gallery stood a table coated with thick layers of clashing colors rendering the face of a rabid dog. While all of this symphonic painterliness was familiar enough, it was the mechanical clothesline system that took the exhibition an extra step. A parade of wild works on paper hung from a moving clothesline that spun around the gallery's perimeter, blocking the entrance and tunneling through internal walls in its path. This kinetic hanging created both obstacles for the viewer and an added conceptual dimension to the freakish visages. It was as if the images on this assembly line had been painted in rapid succession, one after the other, then torn from the artist's sketchbook and subsequently pinned to the clothesline as a way to exorcise the artist's inner demons.

Dai, the self-taught artist who presented this cacophony of colorful pictures, seems to have emerged onto the scene from virtually nowhere. Her tumultuous identities as a drummer in a rock band, nightclub owner, drug addict, dishwasher, documentary filmmaker, lesbian, and world traveler were recounted in a painted biographical narrative that was scrawled along the gallery's entrance wall. Sharing the same wall was a monitor showing a video made from photographs of the artist in various stages of her adventurous life accompanied by the music of the bands that she once played with. The smiling Dai appears posed in front of waterfalls, on a motorcycle in Thailand, shoulder to shoulder with Buddhist monks, playing drums, preparing food, and so on. The contrived, self-conscious posturing in these images stands in sharp contrast to the tortured portraits found in her paintings. It is this sense of incongruity that points back to the naïveté of the paintings themselves. Do the images in the photographs correspond in any way to the painted ones? Is the video just an offhand, narcissistic gesture, or is autobiography the adhesive that binds together these diverse components? Whether it is curatorial gimmickry or pure naïveté, this exhibition reminds us that neo-expressionism can still be startlingly neo.

—Mathieu Borysevicz

SÃO PAULO

Fernanda Chieco

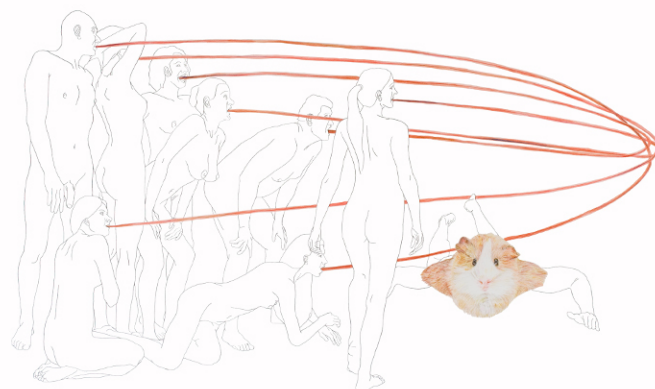
GALERIA LEME

Fernanda Chieco, a graduate of the University of São Paulo and Goldsmiths' College in London, is among the most promising of Brazil's new generation of artists. Her works are bizarre narratives of the body, strange stories that seem to echo the absurdity of human life. While her first pieces were sculptural objects, suggesting bodies whose openings were connected by tubes, conduits, and passages, soon her work with objects gave way to drawing, a medium in which, in her view, everything is possible. Her first large-scale drawing was *Tabula*

Prima, 2003, an enormous piece more than twenty-six feet in length depicting instruments invented to connect people.

Chieco is still thinking about bodies and their connections, as one saw in her recent show, "*Os Catamoscas*" (The Flycatchers). Using the techniques that have become her hallmark, the artist draws human and animal figures with clean, spare, graphite lines and uses color only for interstitial elements. Her new work focuses on the tongue as a means of interaction. And Chieco's tongues are quite singular. At the gallery entrance, a sculptural drawing, *Catando Moscas* (Catching Flies; all works 2009), laid flat on an elongated plinth, served as an introduction to the atmosphere of strangeness: Two crouching people, a man and a woman, are united by a flesh-colored tongue more than thirty feet long.

The artist explains that the tongue is the most powerful muscle of the body and as sticky as a flycatcher. In Chieco's alternate world, the tongue grows ad infinitum, connecting people and animals; if cut in two, tongues double their ability to connect bodies. Her figures may lack mouths, in which case they have tongues emerging from their anuses. If the anus, in turn, is blocked up, their bellies swell, looking pregnant, full of coiled tongues. The installation in the gallery was strangely clear and systematic, as if offering a scientific demonstration of some esoteric research on flycatchers. Each wall of the gallery's main space displayed four drawings featuring human bodies with



Fernanda Chieco,
*Prea levita em campo
magnético lingual*
(Guinea Pig Levitates
in Lingual Magnetic
Field), 2009, graphite,
color pencil, and
watercolor on paper,
22 1/4 x 37".

animal heads and, of course, elongated tongues. The bodies are drawn with graphite pencil; the only color lies in the tongues and the heads of some animals, interacting with them. To color the tongues, the artist used watercolor for the first time, relating the fluid medium to the organ's wetness.

One drawing, *Umedecendo a pele do sapo* (Moistening the Frog's Skin), shows a group of people with intertwined tongues above the body of a frog; they are keeping it wet, since the frog is accustomed to living near water. In another, *Prea levita em campo magnético lingual* (Guinea Pig Levitates in Lingual Magnetic Field), eight people join their long tongues to form a field in which a guinea pig floats. *Estimulação cerebral profunda do peixe bicéfalo* (Deep Brain Stimulation of the Bicephalic Fish) portrays a two-headed fish-person performing a yoga headstand, supported by the network of tongues formed by the people around him. In these curious, often grotesque fables, presented with refined technique and delicate line, Chieco redeems the power of the absurd.

—Katia Canton

Translated from Portuguese by Clifford E. Landers.

CORRECTION: In the September issue, in a preview text by Pamela Kort about a forthcoming exhibition by West German artist Markus Lüpertz [p. 148], it was erroneously stated that Lüpertz is an East German artist. *Artforum* regrets the error.