

An abstract painting with thick, expressive brushstrokes in shades of grey, blue, green, and brown. The composition is layered and textured, with some areas appearing more saturated than others. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

Claraboia

galeria
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Pedro Azaleia
Suspensa voluta

CURATED BY
Daniel Donato

06 Oct—14 Nov 26

Pedro Azaleia

Suspensa voluta

*Any trail followed by the flâneur
will lead him to a crime.*
Walter Benjamin

With the dissolution of the romantic sentiment before the idyllic landscape, the poets of modernity awakened to a somber illumination before the urban landscape, as Walter Benjamin observes in *The Paris of the Second Empire* in Baudelaire (1938). It is in the detective novel that this new relationship with city life finds its most emblematic form, portraying its most threatening and unsettling aspects. In these texts, the metropolis rises as the central character and driving force of the narrated events, not as a mere backdrop for grim occurrences. The *flâneur* is the figure who navigates among building façades, arcades, squares, and sidewalks: the man who feels at home in the crowd. The city passes under the scrutiny of his slow-paced observation, as one who charts the physiology of spaces and their inhabitants in search of clues to hidden crimes. To this passing detective falls the task of excavating the image of a city lost in collective memory, a form that can only be grasped through shattered, dispersed traces scattered across urban spaces.

This atmosphere of suspense and novelistic tension permeates Pedro Azaleia's recent paintings. In *Suspensa voluta* [Suspended Volute], the assembled canvases evoke a nocturnal ambience in which architectural forms emerge like watchful ruins, indifferently witnessing the events unfolding at ground level. In their haughtiness, they seem more to lie in wait for us than to offer themselves to our gaze. Like a chronicler of ruins, Azaleia dedicates himself to following the traces of a bygone time, gathered during walks through historic city centers, where he lingers over ornamental details — volutes, columns, and railings — of buildings, many of them

abandoned, of eclectic or baroque architecture. In the countryside and in the forest, the painter rediscovers these same spiral forms in passionfruit vines, boa constrictors, or certain fungal structures.

In the studio, Azaleia builds the pictorial surface through a dense palette-knife application of multiple layers of paint on canvas (nine to ten, on average, per painting). He then constructs the drawing by scraping the surface with a blade or tracing lines with a quite restrained use of the brush, superimposing architectural imagery onto natural elements, in a constant play of adding and removing matter. There is no nostalgic sentiment of return to an idyllic nature in this poetics, but rather an investigation of natural forces within urban experience. Proof of this is that Azaleia does not seek his subject matter in spaces devoted to the contemplation of nature, such as parks and public gardens (which are, in fact, abundant in the city where he lives). His grasp of the natural world is mediated by the geometrization of ornamental art: pausing before a jackfruit tree or the body of a boa constrictor, the artist decodes there the same visual ordering that governs volutes, friezes, and railings — an interpretation of the logic of the sensible, or of the ordering of formal patterns already present within nature itself. It is a stylized, graphic vision of the tropical landscape that resonates with the modern attitude of John Graz, for whom the country's fauna and flora revealed themselves, above all, as rhythm, synthesis, and decorative pattern.

The treatment of color in his production is curious. In the same tradition as Anselm Kiefer, Azaleia rejects the illusionistic dimension of color. Color is an essential element in the structure of his painting because it is matter and object. For this reason, the painter does not seek to lend the figures an illusion of volume through shading. In his works, chromatism

takes precedence over luminosity: color does not serve the drawing — quite the opposite, it constitutes the very material condition for the realization of the mark on canvas. His detachment from the traditional reasoning behind the construction of light and shadow values leads him to achieve the construction of brightness solely through pigment. Shadows, in turn, are likewise full of color, painted through tonal differences between areas of a single matrix.

The masses of paint used to build the surface are accumulated and compressed onto the canvas in juxtaposed areas with varying degrees of density. The chromatic selection, in each composition, results from an attentive observation of the history of painting. In his canvases, Azaleia investigates tonal relationships drawn from the refinement and reconstruction of the palettes of artists such as Paul Gauguin, one of his favorites. For this reason, the truncated gestural quality of the scraping in his painting is also a methodological operation for investigating the pictorial past. Devoid of illusory artifice, his use of color refuses allegorization: it is the matter upon which the painter's method is inscribed.

Azaleia's facture operates in the key of the palimpsest: the masses of paint allow gestures of subtraction to become a way of concretely sculpting the figures onto the surface. In this sense, the act of scraping down operates as an indecipherable script that harks back to the artist's own urban experience. During his skateboarding wanderings through the city, in vast areas lined with concrete walls, Azaleia developed an urban calligraphy through graffiti. As a scriptural regime, the graffiti is a calligraphy of the metropolis's own history. In analogy with the city walls, which accumulate heterogeneous temporalities and present different scriptural registers of the world, these layers of material sedimentation can be read as a text. All these scriptural traces point to a ruin opened up by history — history, in turn, understood as an accumulation of rubble, a superimposition of dense layers of debris. His painting becomes a form of historical writing in which the scrawled masses of color preserve something of the past, of urban experience, and of the history of art itself. We should look at them as one contemplates a Neolithic pattern or a set of calligraphic marks embedded in a building in the city center.

To the creation of space through the flaked-off subtraction of layers of paint on the surface is added, in this kaleidoscope, the drawing of figures superimposed from different points of view on the same plane. Azaleia, in an operation likewise of baroque accent, emphasizes an angling of the architectural elements from bottom to top — as one observing a *quadratura*, though stripped of its illusionistic device. In his canvases, the interweaving of these views, flattened onto a single surface, breaks with tendencies toward the virtualization of space through an illusion of three-dimensionality. If the ornaments appear suspended, it is because their traces on the canvas bring us close to the point of view from which Azaleia observed them. Soon after, however, the perspective is falsified — by the figure of a jackfruit tree, for instance, which is superimposed frontally onto them within the same plane of the image.

In the end, the impression that remains of the work is that we stand at the threshold of a labyrinth without being able to decipher its entrance. His canvases sediment layers of distinct historical, botanical, and geographical temporalities. The clues guide us along different significant vectors within Azaleia's painting: the construction of the masses of color, the scriptural gestuality, and the conjunction of perspectives in the drawing of architectural or natural elements. Our gaze, in the end, turns over different heterogeneous temporalities sedimented onto the canvas. It is a search for a time and space that have disappeared, or that we have not yet reached — a process decipherable only through highly dispersed traces. The painter's task is not to bring them into the clarity of thought, but to cloud our gaze toward a catastrophic past or future laden with crimes. It is this temporal distension that guides Azaleia to paint like one who goes about doing botany on the asphalt.

Daniel Donato, curator



Photo: Julia Thompson

Pedro Azaleia

1999, Niterói, RJ, Brazil

Lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

Pedro Azaleia's painting is built through gestures of erasure, palette-knife work, and compression. His scenes blur the boundaries between the urban and the natural, drawing on memory and imagination that emerge from his contact with territories where the artist has lived and through which he has passed. His relationship with his surroundings is expressed through sensory experiences, as in works that take the names of streets. In other cases, as in the series *Cosmogonias*, Azaleia imagines a nature in constant process of creation.

Through palette-knife application and scraping techniques, Azaleia sediments different layers of paint onto the surface of the canvas. The chromatic interplay that appears on the surface results from the interaction between several juxtaposed zones of color. In sequence, figures of eclectic-style buildings from downtown Rio de Janeiro, and drawings of various trees, fungi, or animal species, are worked out with a drypoint-style instrument across different overlapping planes on the surface.

For Azaleia, architecture is carried into his production through vestiges and ruins, transformed into texture and color. They are like traces left by places, or like palimpsests bearing different inscriptions of time. His experience as a muralist also runs through the artist's recent research, especially in the relationship between painting and space, with the surface of the work approached as an accumulation of lived experiences, in analogy with the city's walls.

Drawing on affective memories from the interior of Rio de Janeiro, the artist develops a painting practice that alludes to botany, with geometric elements and fluid forms that evoke the diversity of flora without, however, seeking to represent or catalogue it. Azaleia is interested in thinking about the integration of humanity with nature.

For years, the artist has developed work in graffiti, an experience that later led him to muralism and expanded his investigation of painting beyond the canvas. Among the murals he has completed are *Barka* and *Planta de poder*, at the Hospital Universitário Antônio Pedro (UFF), in Niterói, as well as *Terracota*, at Oncomed Oncologia, in Niterói, and *Rosa*, at the Oncomed Oncologia unit in Rio de Janeiro.

His production has been shown in group exhibitions such as *Moscas volantes*, Virtua3000, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2025), *Paredes invisíveis*, Sesc RJ, Macaé, Brazil (2023), and *O rio abaixo do Rio*, Atelier Teto Baixo, Macaé, Brazil (2023). His training includes open courses at the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, among them Painting Practice, with Chico Cunha (2019), and Color and Form, with Bernardo Magina (2023). He also took part in the artistic mentorship group GOA, with Thiago Honório and Ana Paula Cohen, and, for two years, in the Trem mentorship program, with Adriano Franchini, Julia Demeter, and Fernando Soares.



Pedro Azaleia

Pico de jaca, 2026
Oil on canvas
180 × 200 cm (70 7/8 × 78 3/4 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Ao fim da noite, 2026
Oil on canvas
140 × 160 cm (55 1/8 × 63 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Praça XV, 2026
Oil on canvas
160 × 140 cm (63 × 55 1/8 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Suspensa voluta, 2026
Oil on canvas
160 × 140 cm (63 × 55 1/8 in)

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Ponto zero, 2026
Oil on canvas
160 × 140 cm (63 × 55 1/8 in)





Pedro Azaleia

0 tempo nos parece mais pesado que o físico, 2026
Oil on canvas
160 × 140 cm (63 × 55 1/8 in)

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Pedro Azaleia

Redoma, 2026
Oil on canvas
160 × 140 cm (63 × 55 1/8 in)

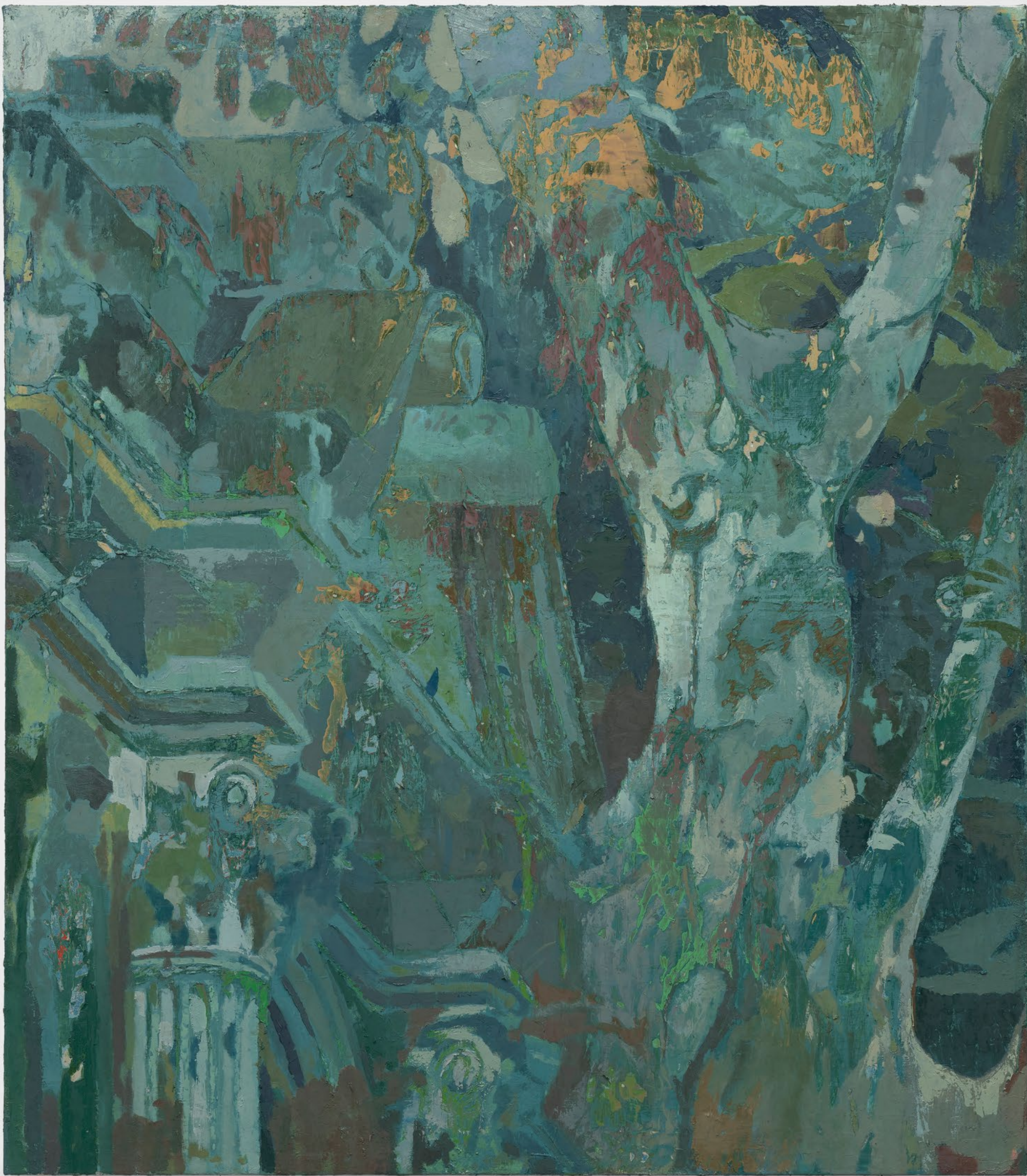
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Pedro Azaleia

Disputa pelo sol 2, 2026
Oil on canvas
160 × 140 cm (63 × 55 1/8 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Fragmento 1, 2026
Oil on canvas
50 × 40 cm (19 3/4 × 15 3/4 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Fragmento 2, 2026
Oil on canvas
50 × 40 cm (19 3/4 × 15 3/4 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Fragmento 3, 2026
Oil on canvas
50 × 40 cm (19 3/4 × 15 3/4 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Fragmento 4, 2026
Oil on canvas
50 × 40 cm (19 3/4 × 15 3/4 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Praça XV 2, 2026
Oil on canvas
100 × 80 cm (39 3/8 × 31 1/2 in)





Pedro Azaleia

Praça XV 3, 2026
Oil on canvas
120 × 100 cm (47 1/4 × 39 3/8 in)







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