

Pedro Vaz
Superstition Wilderness



Galería Enrique Guerrero
General Juan Cano 103, San Miguel Chapultepec
Mexico City, Mexico, 11850

June 8 - July 22, 2017

Opening: June 8, 19:00 h

Regular visit hours: Monday to Friday 10:00 - 19:00 h
Saturday 11:00 - 14:00 h

Superstition Wilderness Project, opening at Enrique Guerrero Gallery, in June 2017, continues the production model with which I have been establishing my artistic inquiry. In the last ten years I have been developing an investigation on landscape, mostly in painting and video-installation, concerned with handling the split between man and natural environment that comes to replace an ancestral Cosmo-anthropological unity, previous to human conscience. My work methodology is based on the proximity to real landscape, taking part in immersive artistic residencies, mostly in nearly wild landscapes. Recent examples are the participation in Labverde 2016 – Art Immersion Program in the Amazon (The National Institute of Amazonian Research / Manifesta Art and Culture), in Manaus, or the field tour to Caminho do Ouro, (connecting Paraty to Ouro Preto), developed while Pivô Pesquisa Artist in Residence, in São Paulo, Brazil. The starting point for Superstition Wilderness, to be shown at Enrique Guerrero Gallery, was Onloaded Artist Residency (phICA, Phoenix, EUA), that included a field tour to Superstition Mountains, Tonto National Park, Phoenix, EUA.

Superstition Wilderness

Landscape requires tours; more precisely, a displacement in the space, even if we only imagine it without entering on it. When walking, our visual perception appropriates the observed recurrently, so to legislate it. The landscape is a *measure* of a space with some symbolic predispositions. In Superstition Wilderness* the artist Pedro Vaz ventures in a geography traversed by American Indian's myths and wealth legends of their mines.

The Pimas believed that *Hauk*, an evil spirit, roamed the mountains; the Apaches, that the thunder god, *Thunder God*, lived in their caves and gorges. The Superstition Mountains, a name given by the Spaniards in the 19th century, to such volcanic formation was old Hohokam and Salados territory. But it was the Golden Fever what gave fame to this region, particularly for the mine founded by Don Miguel de Peralta, who did constant expeditions from Sonora's mountain range. The Peralta mine would become famous years later, although with Lost Dutchman Gold Mine as a name, the Lost Gold Mine of the Dutch. As expected, with time these legends created greedy adventurous legions looking for Jacob Waltz's precious metal, the fake Dutch, who was actually a German immigrant. The mine histories, plagued of fantasy, were never extent of disappearances and murders.

In Peralta to Boulder Canyon, a field trip, Pedro Vaz walked serious miles. In the video, of images that overlap each other, Vaz comes in a ground characterized at East for scrubs and carrascales, and at West for steep slopes, almost vertical. This layer-images, weightless for their pale luminosity, ochre and golden, suggest a tactile approximation to a topographic element and in consequence, to their mythic and legendary dimension. The ground is touched without forcing it, and the gesture makes apparent the landscape and the space that supports it. Something similar happens in the paintings: porous, persuade us that behind of landscape representation there is nothing, only emptiness. Vaz had mentioned that the one who witnesses such desolation gets closer to a more distant past, where the human and nature split didn't exist. So the analysis of this Vaz's oeuvre corresponds, to a more cosmological vision rather than anthropological. This foray in The Superstitions, as popularly known in the United States, includes a joint of bought maps at the souvenirs store in Phoenix, Arizona, where the walk through Peralta canyons is traced, as a way to realize that landscape exists and is by proximity. Not only visual but tactile.

Pedro Vaz's oeuvre will be on view at Galería Enrique Guerrero from June 8 to July 22, 2017.

Javier Ramírez Limón

*Superstition Wilderness is an earth surface of about 648 km², protected and administrated since 1964 for the Forest Service of America. It is located in Arizona, at the south of Tonto National Forest.

Superstition Wilderness

The separation between man and natural environment, which crosses all of my investigation, is also present at Superstition Wilderness project. The absence of mankind in a given place adds a paradigmatic quality to it.

The one visiting that place assumes the role of a witness. A paradoxical one: not only of the emptiness and absence of man, which is not possible, but also of the illusion that past is nearer, as if it would be more under reach in deserted areas.

Superstition Mountains, in the USA, are a rare prove of human kind and nature's reciprocal influence, even at the deep silence of wild nature. The mountains, which remained relatively untouched during a long time, spite several expeditions passing by at its bordering areas, were, after 1800, destiny of ambitious miners, some of them from México, as well as stage for episodes as dramatic as enigmatic.

One of most spread of those episodes, even so no more than an example of the endless stories linked to the mountains, refers to Peralta Family.

Don Miguel de Peralta, a mine explorer from North México, is told to have began gold prospecting in 1847-48, having successfully returned to México several times. At last though, all of the expedition was exterminated by apache Indians. One single surviving member of Peralta family is told to have returned to México in the

possession of maps of the exact location of rich gold mines, allowing the story to carry on.

Latter, the search for those mapped treasures, as well as others, will lead to everlasting misfortunes, which in any case also multiply in the mountains for other reasons including sinister disappearings and mysterious deaths.

After the gold search activity that leaded the mountains to fame has finished, mining was replaced by fantasy activity. In the region, survives the believe on fantastic mines, the location of which has been lost, and the universe of surprising unproved facts is very eloquent.

It is important to take the alchemic function of this mixture of soil, gold, ambition, blood, desire, anger, humanity, and ask what is it telling us.

For our disappointment, it is only telling us about soil, the ground bellow the horizon reached by the eyes.

To perpetuate our delight, it talks about the endless tentacles of nature over man and man over nature.

The Wilderness of a region is its wild centre. A forestall and topographic circumscription, attributed after the difficulty of acceding it and the inhospitality of its character: Etymologically, superstition is formed by the elevating element super:

There is, at the naming of a place, independently of its history, a latent declaration of its people that ceases to belong to the domain of reason.

At Superstition Wilderness exhibition, which has as point of departure Superstition Mountains in the context of an immersive artist residency in the United States of America, and which is presented in México City, I am interested in a sort of glare in which anthropological time keeps its values so steady that it resembles geological one. Resembling the stability of gold's value as reference for the currency exchange.

Nowadays, Superstition Wilderness is a protected area from which nothing can be taken and no trace can be left behind.

Pedro Vaz



Untitled, 2017
Acrylic on plywood
174 x 122 cm



Untitled, 2017
Acrylic on plywood
122 x 174 cm



Peralta to Boulder Canyon
(Still frame), 2017
Color, 1:1, 1080p, 55'55"

