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Aquarela da série Visões, 1992 Arlesheim, Baselland, Suíça

#### Visions?

The view of a landscape is commonplace and banal; an area may be beautiful, or the mood charming, and yet can landscapes be regarded as visions? One may think on the inner landscapes of the soul, or of imaginary landscapes; paradise, and also hell, are visionary landscapes. Only a painted landscape can accurately reproduce an objective reality, the boundary between the image of a landscape and vision in an inner, deeply artistic dividing line. The visions of Fabia Livia and Martin Cleis are abstract landscape images, impressions of visits and journeys both at home and abroad. As landscapes of the soul, they portray the mood of the two artists; coming and going and returning, giving and receiving, kindred spirits: the pictures express all of these. Migration has become one of the catchwords of our age: Fabia Livia in Switzerland, Martin Cleis in Brazil, and both together in Spain and in Switzerland – not just anywhere, but in Arlesheim near the Dreiländereck, on the bend in the river Rhine at Basel; the two of them embody migration in their life and in their work. Here is a clear impression of how Martin Cleis opened up to the elusive Brazil, how he seeks out the vastness of the country, its splendidly colorful personality, and its turbulent and peaceful moods – feeling his way, yet at the same time applying considerable artistic intensity in color and form. Even his technique is aimed at his gestulations, with his long-handled paintbrush, all the better to give expression to his inner tensions and intuition on paper, as if with a dowsing rod. In spite of having been painted in the sun-lounge of Switzerland – in the Gambárognio – the tectonic landscapes of Fabia Livia surprise us with their cool tones; the differences between her homeland and the closely related Spain are also portrayed with sensitivity by the artist. How much more inner fire burns within the Brazilians and their landscapes – an ocean and centuries of divergent historical development lie in between. As a representative of Pro Helvetia, I consider myself fortunate to be involved in promoting this Brazilian-Swiss dialogue.

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#### Starting Point: Brazil

She, **Fabia Livia**, comes from Brazil, one of the largest countries on Earth, while he, **Martin Cleis**, comes from Switzerland where each border can be reached by a two-hour train journey from the center. Both devote themselves to painting. Since their paths have crossed, Brazil has become somewhat like a starting point for their art. She has to get used to living in a small autonomous country in the heart of a divided Europe. And she does, it through an inward journey. Unceasingly she watercolors wistful paintings happy and sad, frank and mysterious, bright and bleak. They are landscapes of dreams which show the expanse and great variety of her own country. The color washes are not defined as though the neutral white paper would open up to carry the eye further. Certain signs – childhood reminiscences – become apparent by following the sequence of pictures. In the process of work Fabia Livia is capable of finding the necessary patch to capture her native color combinations and apply them to paper.

**Martin Cleis**, on the other hand, tailored his picture of Brazil to emphasize impressions of a first visit of several weeks in 1992, when everything was new and different. The lush vegetation almost smothered in the extravagant life confused him, the atmospheric moods unsettled him. He could not withdraw himself from the whirlpool thus began to react with brush and color, sweeping rhythmically from left to right. He let himself be influenced by the different color rhythms, the constantly changing impressions during a day or just a walk. On the paper the colors appear so defined as the contrast to be found in Brazilian surroundings, and we can also recognize the emotional state reflected in broad brush strokes, splashes, hard outlines drawn with a pencil, characters reminding us of a Japanese calligraphy or delicate poetical color washes. 1994 see the result of their quest taking them back to the place of their inspiration. A new cycle can now begin.

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Martina Cleis  
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