Hamilton Aguiar

“ REFLECTING LIGHT, LANDSCAPE, AND LEGACY ”

by Adriano Gomide

In celebration of his 25th year as a full-time artist, Brazilian-born Hamilton Aguiar (b.1965) presents a compelling body of work that spans landscapes, art history, and his evolving stylistic expressions. Since moving to the United States in 1987 and then to Miami in 2013, Aguiar has developed a distinctive approach that transforms landscapes into atmospheric, almost metaphysical reflections on light and place.

Aguiar’s early work, rooted in the winter landscapes of the Hamptons and Rochester, NY, draws inspiration from the American Hudson River School with a uniquely personal divergence: he focuses on snowy, shadow-laden winter scenes of upstate New York. His compositions, defined by stark black verticals and diagonals, evoke a contemplative minimalism. These scenes, punctuated by red barns, warm sunset hues, and brown hills emerging from snow, possess a stark serenity, a meditation on nature’s stillness under winter’s veil.

A hallmark of Aguiar’s style is his innovative use of silver leaf, a technique he mastered while restoring churches and historical buildings across the United States, where metal leaf was often used to enhance the play of light. On canvas, silver leaf serves both as a mirror and as an ethereal backdrop, creating a luminous glow that imbues his landscapes with a spiritual, otherworldly quality.

Complementing this technique is his use of a dry-brush method, inspired by Gerhard Richter’s 1999 New York exhibition. By dragging dry brushes across semi-dry oils, Aguiar introduces a deliberate blurriness, reminiscent of long-exposure photography or the fleeting glimpse of landscapes seen in passing.

After a decade exploring New York’s winter landscapes, Aguiar’s return to Brazil from 2010 to 2013 provided an opportunity to reconnect with Brazilian landscapes, drawing influence from painters like José Pancetti and Guignard. However, his permanent move to Miami in 2013 marked a pivotal shift in his art. Inspired by Florida’s coastal landscapes, his “SeaScapes” series captures bands of color in deep blues, pale greens, and ochres. Here, the reflective aluminum surface intensifies the coastal light, with occasional resin coatings that echo the tactile presence of water.

In recent years, Aguiar has embraced the art-historical concept of appropriation, drawing comparisons to Sherrie Levine and Marcel Duchamp, infusing his work with both irony and homage. His monumental steel sculptures, “Walking Man and Dog,” pay tribute to Giacometti, but with a playful twist: priced at a symbolic 99% discount compared to the original’s auction value, Aguiar explores themes of authorship, originality, and value in the art market. His abstract “Flowers” series, rendered with solid colors, drips, and resin—now extended to wall and three-dimensional sculptures—invokes echoes of Andy Warhol and Donald Sultan.

Furthering this self-referential approach, Aguiar reintroduces his earlier techniques—paint-dragging and dry-brushing—but now foregrounds the act of painting itself. Bold, sweeping brushstrokes have become compositional elements in their own right, as he explores the interplay of color, resin, and gloss in creating tactile, dimensional surfaces in his “Opticals” series. Unlike the monochromatic minimalism of artists like Pierre Soulages and Jason Martin, Aguiar’s work pulses with rich hues and vibrant textures, merging past and present into a dynamic, evolving dialogue within his oeuvre.

Aguiar’s expansive 5,000-square-foot studio in Miami provides the space and flexibility to realize his creative vision, enabling him to produce works of remarkable scale and ambition.

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Photography by Toddy Holland.

“ Infinite Calm “ 70 x 70 x 3 inches, Oil on aluminum panel with clear coat, 2024 HA_241177