Alfredo Volpi and Fábio Miguez
Alvenarias
March 11 – April 15, 2023
130 East 64th Street
New York, NY 10065

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of works by Alfredo Volpi (1896 – 1988) and Fábio Miguez. The show brings together significant works by Volpi, one of the most celebrated Brazilian painters of the 20th century, as well as a series of new and recent paintings and a sculpture by Brazilian contemporary artist Miguez. Though working decades apart, these artists utilize similar techniques and art historical references, resulting in two distinct yet interconnected approaches to artmaking. Infusing Brazilian architecture, design, and art historical traditions, with a focus on Italian Renaissance, into their compositions, the presentation demonstrates the powerful, intergenerational bond between these two visionary artists.

Alfredo Volpi was born in Lucca, Italy in 1896 and emigrated to Cambuci, São Paulo as a young child. Without many resources afforded by his family, he worked in residential construction, specifically as a decorative painter for houses, from an early age. It was through this work that he learned to make tempera paint from egg whites and pigment, which he would use throughout his future career as an artist. Although he was academically untrained, Volpi was influenced by art history and movements like Concretism, the mid-century Brazilian artistic development that artists such as Tarsila do Amaral and Waldemar Cordeiro were affiliated with, which focused on a celebration of geometric abstraction. Angular forms and the everyday elements that he came across while walking through the city, such as streetscapes, building facades, and flags, became critical to the development of his visual language. Teetering between figuration and abstraction, Volpi's singular style did not fit neatly into one category of artmaking during his lifetime, but has helped distinguish him as a pioneering artist who left behind an impressive oeuvre of works that continue to have a remarkable impact on contemporary art.

Working since the 1980s, São Paulo-born Fábio Miguez has continued to develop an interdisciplinary approach to artmaking that incorporates many significant throughlines seen in Volpi's work. Early in his career and alongside Carlito Carvalhosa, Nuno Ramos, Paulo Monteiro, and Rodrigo Andrade, Miguez founded the artist's space Casa 7, which was created to reaffirm painting as an essential art form. Later, Miguez began to explore the potential in mediums such as sculpture and photography, which have contributed to the multidimensional, conceptual rigor of his layered practice. In 2011, he began a series called Atalhos (Shortcuts in English), which acted as a small-scale, painterly complement to his ambitious three-dimensional works and connected his work to his background studying as an architect. Certain forms and architectural vignettes, like doorways, arches, and walls, are transposed with precision while employing a vibrant palette of colors.

This body of work led to Miguez's more recent Volpi series, which further abstracts these structural details into inventive color field compositions. Paying direct homage to Volpi's influence on his own inventive approach to exploring the everyday elements that encompass his life, these works continue the legacy and importance of abstraction in Brazilian art.

On view in this exhibition are a series of paintings from Volpi's most significant series', which demonstrate his curious eye and perceptive ability to form abstractions through the figurative elements that encompassed his everyday life and art historical studies. Similarly, the works presented by Miguez are carefully considered, with some revisiting paintings by Renaissance masters and others by Volpi himself. Stripping their referents of all extraneous elements and thus presenting often abstract fragments, both artists offer tableaux that examine the spacial elements of the canvas and the illusory qualities of the painterly field. What brings these two artists together is this shared fascination with the worlds they inhabit, from the art historical traditions they have studied, to the overlooked, everyday objects and structures they have encountered while living in their respective environments. Through the modality of painting and artmaking, Volpi and Miguez offer entry points through which the viewer can access the lived experiences of these formidable and curious artists.

Alfredo Volpi was born in 1896 in Lucca, Italy, and died in 1988 in São Paulo. Throughout his lifetime, Volpi had solo exhibitions at Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo; Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil, Porto Alegre, Brazil; Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Campinas, Brazil; Biblioteca Municipal Mario de Andrade, São Paulo; Companhia do Metropolitano de São Paulo - Metrô; and Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. Subsequent to his death in 1988, many institutions have shown Volpi's work, including Museu de arte de São Paulo; Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Monaco; Paulo Kuczynski Escritório de Arte, São Paulo; Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo; Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, Belgium; Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro; Instituto de Arte Contemporânea, São Paulo; Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro; Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba, Brazil; Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Espaço Cultural Banco Central, São Paulo; Museu de Valores do Banco Central, Brasília, Brazil; Centro Cultural São Paulo; Museu Nacional de Belas-Artes, Rio de Janeiro; Centro Cultural Laurinda Santos Lobo, Rio de Janeiro; and Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo. In 1953, Volpi won the prestigious Grand Prix for Brazilian painting at the second São Paulo Art Biennial. Volpi was also included in the Venice Biennale in 1950, 1952, 1954, 1962 and 1964.

Fábio Miguez was born in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1962, where he lives and works. Solo exhibitions include Fragmentos do real (atalhos) – Fábio Miguez, at Instituto Figueiredo Ferraz (IFF) (2018), in Ribeirão Preto, Brazil,; Horizonte, deserto, tecido, cimento, at Galeria Nara Roesler (2015), in São Paulo, Brazil; Paisagem zero, at Centro Universitário Maria Antonia (CEUMA) (2012), in São Paulo, Brazil; and Temas e variações, at Instituto Tomie Ohtake (ITO) (2008), in São Paulo, Brazil. He has participated in several bienals, including Bienal de São Paulo (1985 and 1989), 2nd Havana Biennial, Cuba (1986), and 5th Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2005). Recent group shows include: Coleções no MuBE: Dulce e João Carlos de Figueiredo Ferraz – Construções e geometrias, at Museu de Ecologia e Escultura (MuBE) (2019), in São Paulo, Brazil; Oito décadas de abstração informal, at Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP) (2018), in São Paulo, Brazil; Auroras – Pequenas pinturas, Espaço Auroras, São Paulo, Brazil, 2016; Casa 7, at Pivô (2015), in São Paulo, Brazil; and Iberê Camargo: século XXI, at Fundação Iberê Camargo (FIC) (2014), in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

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We would also like to thank Galeria Nara Roesler for providing works by Fábio Miguez, as well as Luis Pérez-Oramas for curatorial guidance.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com