www.
zippergaleria.
com.br

zipper@
zippergaleria.
com.br

+55 11 4306 4306

R. Estados Unidos 1494
01427 001
São Paulo SP Brasil

ZIPPERGALERIA

O Vaso de Ojuara
Claudia Marchetti

Text: Paula Alzugaray

Painting to Laboriously Unknot Nets

A long, long time ago, a few millennia perhaps, a messenger ran across the world spreading good news. Writing in ancient Greek, he said that before anything was created, what existed in the world was reason, thought, the Word. The word before things. But in the story we are about to tell, that is not quite how it happened. We will tell the story of how Claudia Marchetti's return to painting, twenty years after her last exhibition, comes about through Ojuara, a caiçara girl with magical powers who leads the resistance of the traditional communities along the Brazilian coast.

The experience of writing books about the harmful effects of the environmental crisis and real estate speculation on caiçara and riverside populations, and on the ecosystems of the Atlantic Forest, was the trigger for Claudia Marchetti's new and prolific body of work in painting. But before becoming word, Ojuara appeared to Claudia as an image. The character Ojuara and her stories emerged from images of a vase, three eggs, and three snakes.

It all happened on a day like any other, in the coastal community where Ojuara lives. The girl was running back and forth with the animals, walking through the forest, fishing, when she came across a clay vase with three eggs inside. The eggs cracked open and snakes came out of them. But they were not venomous or poisonous snakes. They were fierce and brave, yes, but they were also little magical snakes. Claudia looked into the meanings of the elements her character had found: for many cultures, the snake symbolizes healing, wisdom, eternity. The egg is linked to rebirth, vital force, fertility. And the vase, to the womb. With the snakes came stories of strength, resilience, and overcoming.

www.
zippergaleria.
com.br

zipper@
zippergaleria.
com.br

+55 11 4306 4306

R. Estados Unidos 1494
01427 001
São Paulo SP Brasil

By uncovering the vase, Ojuara set in motion a growing awareness of the adverse living conditions of her community, harmed by the "advance" of civilization, but she also began a cycle of empowerment, autonomy, and struggle for transformation.

The same can be said of the author. By lifting the lid off the vase, Claudia comes to understand herself as Ojuara. Fiction inspires the renewal of her artistic practice, and painting reemerges as the matrix of a purpose greater than the personal: that of connecting with the environment and with a social cause, alongside threatened traditional communities.

With Ojuara, Claudia experiences the reverse of what happens to an author writing autofiction, the literary category that turns life into text. An unusual chronology takes place here: it is the work that anticipates life. It is not simply that Ojuara has taken on the role of Claudia's heteronym; it is the character who nourishes the author's biography, transforming it.

This line of thought leads us to consider that the vase is to Ojuara-Claudia what the "carrier bag of fiction" is to Ursula K. Le Guin. In *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*[1], the American writer challenges the conventions that tie the novel to stories of action, heroes, men, and conquerors, reducing narrative to conflict. The text dethrones "the sticks and spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things," and puts in their place, as humanity's first cultural device, the container.

Containers for storing gathered things. And so Le Guin develops her carrier bag theory of fiction, according to which the container is the natural shape of the novel. "A book holds words. Words hold things. They bear meanings," writes the science fiction author, who describes her novels as large, heavy sacks carrying everything from objects to "tiny grains of things smaller than a mustard seed, and intricately woven nets which when laboriously unknotted are seen to contain one blue pebble, an imperturbably functioning chronometer telling the time on another world (...)"[2].

Like the bag, the vase is also a thing that holds another. A container, a matrix. But what things are contained in Claudia Marchetti's paintings? To begin with, many eggs, many snakes, and many fish.

www.
zippergaleria.
com.br

zipper@
zippergaleria.
com.br

+55 11 4306 4306

R. Estados Unidos 1494
01427 001
São Paulo SP Brasil

ZIPPERGALERIA

Fictions Soaked in Reality

In *Mar de Lama* [Sea of Mud] (2026), the mountains flow down. The painting is a symbolic representation of the landslides that struck the coast of São Paulo in the summer of 2023, during a storm that devastated the region. The heaviest rainfall ever recorded in a 24-hour period in the country's history[3] caused death and destruction, and gave rise to the second book in the series: *Ojuara – A Chuva na Mata Atlântica* [Ojuara – Rain in the Atlantic Forest] (Arteedições and seloceleste, 2026). The canvas condenses the anguish the character faces over many pages of the book. It is an apocalyptic scene, a critique of a model of society founded on economic growth at any cost, even at the cost of lives and the exhaustion of the planet's natural resources.

Rede de Peixe [Fishing Net] (2026) brings to the surface the main livelihood of Ojuara's caiçara community: fishing. In the composition, the fishing net is stylized into a graphic line that links islands, water, and fish in a zigzagging movement that recalls the many serpents populating other canvases. Above all, the image evokes the symbolic gesture of weaving networks that has sustained Claudia Marchetti's artistic work.

In the works of this new phase (and in this respect they connect with her style of twenty years ago), the pictorial language is woven through a form of figuration that is at once naïve and schematic. This is also evident in *Serpente Vermelha* [Red Serpent] (2026), in which a family tree of fish is framed by shrubs, set against a seascape where clouds blow and a snake winds across the sky.

Following the paths of the fire serpent, we arrive at the canvases of the series *Chorar sobre o Leite Derramado* [Crying over Spilled Milk] (2026), which suggests an intriguing relationship between text and image. Although they contain no words, the works are built in modules. The canvases, of various sizes and joined together, compose sentences made of images which, in turn, unfold into a narrative painting.

This is an aesthetic of montage, in which the canvases can be likened to jigsaw puzzle pieces, comic strip panels, or film frames. The compositions present the same elements (the snake, the fish, the eggs, the basin, the jug, the spilled milk and

blood), forming something akin to animation. The restricted palette of turquoise blue, red, and white gives unity to these painting-sentences which, sharing the same wall, together form one large narrative. A text.

The paintings and fictions of Ojuara-Claudia Marchetti seem to carry a double purpose: to stop the clock of a world model based on domination, and to sow the seeds of another temporality, another story, an untold story, a story of life. Like an Ouroboros, the story of this exhibition takes us back to where everything begins: to the jars, many of them and from different cultures, that appear in the works of the series *Memórias Arqueológicas* [Archaeological Memories] (2025). Clay pots, Indigenous ceramics, Chinese porcelain. Jars that are, symbolically, the bellies and wombs from which more and more seeds of forests and of fictions will keep pouring forth.

1

LE GUIN, Ursula K., *A Teoria da Bolsa de Ficção*. São Paulo: Cobogó, 2026, pp 20-21

2

Op cit, p 21.

3

https://g1.globo.com/sp/vale-do-paraiba-regiao/noticia/2023/02/26/temporal-devastador-no-litoral-norte-de-sp-completa-uma-semana-veja-resumo-da-tragedia.ghtml