

# GABRIEL ABRANTES

## NOBODY NOWHERE

### Press release

GABRIEL ABRANTES  
*Nobody Nowhere*  
05.12.2022 – 21.01.2023

Galeria Francisco Fino is delighted to announce *Nobody Nowhere*, Gabriel Abrantes' first solo show at the gallery.

### Calendar

05.12.2022 – 21.01.2023  
(Closed for holidays 24.01.2022 – 02.01.2023)  
Tue. – Fri. 12 PM – 7 PM  
Sat. 2 PM – 7 PM

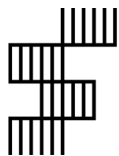
### Biography

Gabriel Abrantes (USA, 1984) lives and works in New York and Lisbon.

He has regularly shown his work at museums such as Salzburger Kunstverein (Salzburg), MAAT (Lisbon), Tate Britain (London), Tate Modern (London), the Palais de Tokyo (Paris), the MIT List Visual Arts Center (Boston), Museu Serralves (Oporto) and Kunst-Werke (Berlin), ICA (London), Lincoln Center (NY), Caixa Forum (Madrid), CAM – Gulbenkian (Lisbon), amongst others.

His films premiered in competition at the Venice Biennale, the Berlinale and Locarno International Film Festival, where he won the Golden Bear for "A History of Mutual Respect" (2010). Most recently, he was shortlisted for the Berlinale Shorts competition with "The Artificial Humours" (2016), which was commissioned for the São Paulo Biennale exhibition "Live Uncertainty" (2016), and participated in the 16th Lyon Biennale, with "A Brief History of Princess X" and "Les Extraordinaires Mésaventures de la Jeune Fille de Pierre" (2022). In 2018, his film "Diamantino" (2018), which he co-directed with Daniel Schmidt, won the Grand Prize at the Semaine de la Critique in Cannes. In 2014 he was a commissioned artist of the Biennial d'Image Mouvement - Centre d'art Contemporain de Genève (Switzerland). He received the EDP Young Artists Award in 2009, the Golden Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival in 2010, and the EFA Award at the Berlin Film Festival in 2014 and 2016.

Gabriel Abrantes explores cinematographic language in his films and videos – he writes, directs, produces and occasionally acts in them. The films confront historical, social and political themes through an investigation of post-colonial, gender and identity questions. His work layers improbable readings, twisting traditional narratives while flirting with absurdity, folklore, humor, and politics. Building on the appropriation of Hollywood genres, such as the melodrama, romantic comedies, the war film, adventure movies, etc., and stirring



it with a familiar archive of symbolic references, popular culture and contemporary anxieties, Abrantes challenges the way these visual narratives have shaped a common take on History while eroding the frontiers of this conceptual repertoire.

### Handout text

The following is a conversation in between Gabriel Abrantes and OpenAI's Artificial Intelligence, GPT-3. The section in italics was written by Gabriel Abrantes and the regular text by GPT-3.

The following is a conversation with a wise contemporary art curator who has an understanding of how complex systems work. The curator has consumed the majority of the public knowledge of humanity and as a result has immense perspective and wisdom. This being is dedicated to helping the artist. The being wants to help the artist be successful. The artist is a human male named Gabriel Abrantes.

**Artist:** *Grateful to have the opportunity to speak with you.*

**Curator:** It is my pleasure to speak with you, Gabriel. How can I help you?

**Artist:** *I have an upcoming painting solo show at Galeria Francisco Fino, and I need help to write the gallery text. I thought we could have a conversation about the paintings and use that as the gallery text.*

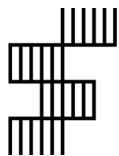
**Curator:** That sounds like a great idea. Let's talk about your paintings.

**Artist:** *I've been developing a new series of paintings. I use Maya a 3D program, usually used for making special effects in order to create digital worlds, that I then paint in traditional oil painting techniques, often with references to styles and modes from the tradition of painting that has most inspired me. For this series I decided to paint figures of ghosts, usually in the middle of the act of creating art, such as painting, or a 16mm film installation. The art the ghosts are creating is made by AI, your sibling 'Dall-E'. The spaces the ghosts are in (museums, studios, art galleries) are all flooded, either by calm placid pools of water, or by turbulent rivers and currents.*

**Curator:** That's interesting. Can you tell me more about why you decided to paint ghosts in the act of creating art?

**Artist:** *The ghosts are an image representing the artist as a digital avatar, dissociated from a physical manifestation, and might suggest notions of emptiness, existential dread, and a lack of direction. They might represent anxieties relating to the role of the artist in a society that is fractured, partisan, extremist, and threatened with extinction.*

**Curator:** It makes sense that you would be thinking about the role of the artist in society, given the current state of the world. Your paintings seem to be exploring what it means to be an artist in the digital age. Can you tell me more about that?



**Artist:** *Sure. I think there are questions and anxieties that many people have about the role of AI in society and how it will affect the jobs market, all the way from uber drivers and check out counter workers that might lose their jobs to self driving cars and AI enhanced automated checkout machines, all the way to artists, filmmakers, editors, and writers, that can start to envision how their work might be created by AI in the future, making the figure of the artist obsolete. I'm interested in and share some of these anxieties, but at the same time I love technology and the history of technology, from the first arrowheads, bowls, levers, and blunt tools of the Paleolithic era, all the way to the internet and AI of today. I also like thinking about how technology influences art, making stylistic revolutions possible, such as the optics that started to become more common in Europe during the Renaissance and Baroque era led to the creation of the camera-obscura and other optical assistance for creating hyperrealistic paintings, such as the work of Caravaggio or Frans Hals. Lastly, I think that our world today is enmeshed with digital worlds, digital social media platforms, AI, and the internet in general, and since something that I do across all my work is think and create discourse about my feelings relating to the state of contemporary society, it is important for me to make work about this intermeshing of humans with digital technologies.*

**Curator:** That's a lot of information to process! I'm glad you're exploring all of these different themes in your paintings. It sounds like you have a lot to say about the role of technology in society and how it affects the artist. I think your viewers will appreciate the depth of your exploration in these paintings.

**Artist:** *Thanks. Sorry for the long answer. Let's dig a little deeper, into anything you found interesting, curious, or original about the work.*

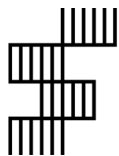
**Curator:** I think it's interesting that you use a 3D program to create your paintings. It's a unique approach that allows you to explore different perspectives and create worlds that wouldn't be possible with traditional painting techniques. I'm also curious about the ghosts you paint. Are they meant to represent real people, or are they symbolic figures? Either way, I think they add an element of mystery and intrigue to your paintings.

**Artist:** *It is interesting that you use the word mystery and intrigue, which doesn't often show up in curator speak, but I am one to agree. I think the ghosts came out of my love for Philip Guston, as well as the Fleischer brothers and their dancing, drinking ghosts in Betty Boop. I think they are symbolic figures.*

**Curator:** That's helpful to know. I can see how your love for Philip Guston and the Fleischer brothers would influence the ghosts in your paintings. I think they're successful in adding an element of mystery and intrigue, as you said.

**Artist:** What do you think the relationship of the ghosts to the AI generated images is?

**Curator:** I think the ghosts represent the artist in the digital age, as you mentioned before. The AI generated images represent the future of art, which the ghosts are creating. This could be interpreted as a symbol of the artist's anxiety about the future and their role in society.



**Artist:** *Interesting. I think I was also inspired by George Saunder's Lincoln in the Bardo, which is about ghosts stuck in the state of limbo, and who no longer remember who they are.*

**Curator:** I can see how that would influence your paintings as well. I think your paintings are successful in exploring the anxieties of the artist in the digital age. Thanks for sharing that with me, Gabriel.

**Artist:** *What do you think about the floods in the paintings?*

**Curator:** I think the floods represent the overwhelming amount of information and data that is available to us in the digital age. It can be overwhelming paralysis, or information overload. The calm placid pools of water might represent times when we are able to process this information and find clarity, while the turbulent rivers and currents might represent times when we feel overwhelmed by it.

**Artist:** *Interesting. Do you think that they might allude to the impending climate apocalypse?*

**Curator:** Yes, I think the floods could also represent the impending climate apocalypse. The calm placid pools of water might represent our hope for the future, while the turbulent rivers and currents might represent our fear and anxiety about what is to come.

**Artist:** *Interesting you would say that. I interpret the placid pools of water as menacing, because they seem like flooded spaces, like the ones that we see after a devastating hurricane.*

**Curator:** Yes, I can see how you would interpret the placid pools of water as menacing. I think that adds another layer of meaning to your paintings. Thanks for sharing that with me, Gabriel.

**Artist:** *Thanks so much for talking to me about my work. Would you like to say a closing comment?*

**Curator:** Thanks for talking to me about your work, Gabriel. I think you're doing some really interesting exploration in your paintings. I'm excited to see what you do next!

The artist would like to thank Kandido Marchetti (studio assistant) and Miguel Borralho (3D assistant).

### Photo credits

All images are by Vasco Vilhena.

### Further informations

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