

Statement

Ovatsug Figueiredo

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I do not understand painting as a surface of representation. I work with it as a physical field of simultaneous construction and failure, where matter, time, and gravity are not themes, but active agents. What I seek is not to stabilize image, but to sustain states of tension in which what is applied immediately begins to yield, to react, to deform, or to partially escape control. Painting, in this sense, is not a place of resolution, but of persistence of sensitivity under the pressure of raw matter.

I define my practice as edification. Not in the sense of erecting stable structures, but of continuously operating at the threshold where every construction carries its own condition of collapse. To build, for me, is to test the point at which matter still holds itself together. Each added layer compresses and displaces the previous one, making it reappear in a distorted form, as a vestige of something that insists on not disappearing. Form does not evolve; it accumulates weight, memory, and instability.

My practice arises from direct contact with high-density materials such as cement, mortars, alkyd resins, organic oils, silicates, industrial pigments, and mineral residues; treated not as language, but as physical forces with their own behavior. These are layers of sedimentation that create a real topography, an artificial geology that demands a pause from the viewer. They require that the gaze does not merely pass over the canvas, but traverses it, touching the relief and volume. In this way, form does not evolve in a predetermined manner: it emerges from accumulation and pressure. Each work develops as a system of unequal loads: weight is not an effect, but a structural condition.

The surface does not receive the paint; it supports it up to the limit of what the canvas can withstand, including the contingencies arising from its own deformation. At certain moments, these materials respond in ways I do not fully anticipate. At times, matter escapes control. Drying, contraction, accumulated weight, and gravity introduce decisions that do not pass through me. The work continues to form in the pauses and intervals between the various layers, even when the intentional gesture has already ended. There are works that continue adjusting during drying, others that undergo contractions or fissures that reorient the work. It is in this interval between intentional action and unexpected behavior of raw matter that sensibility truly occurs. Matter does not illustrate the idea; it participates in formal decision-making itself.

On the other hand, colors do not appear as a final choice nor as an autonomous layer. I reject, in principle, the inertia of color in its pure paint state. They emerge during deposition, compressed between opaque materials, through the contact of pigments with oils and solvents, filtered by mass, plaster, and cement, or interrupted by zones of extreme density. Often, they do not appear in full form, but as residues or leaks—signs that something beneath remains active. Color, in this context, is not applied; it survives under pressure as a residual luminosity that insists on remaining within a system of loads that tends toward erasure.

Through my research process, I have learned that every structure contains the real possibility of collapse. This perception is not merely symbolic; it guides the method. I work with tensioned supports subjected to large loads of material and high chromatic density applied onto surfaces historically associated with lightness. What interests me is the moment when painting ceases to be a plane and begins to behave as its own body, as sensitive matter—something that occupies space, has weight, and reacts to its own accumulation.

In some works, there is a moment when the behavior of matter exceeds any possibility of adjustment or correction. There has been an instance in which a tensioned surface partially and irreversibly collapsed during the drying process, creating a structural fracture that not only interrupted the continuity of the work but completely redefined its outcome. At other times, chromatic fields already resolved are completely destabilized by subsequent layers. In such situations, there is no possible reintegration into the initial system. The piece is not completed as intended, nor can it be “fixed” without losing its internal logic. What emerges from such events is not a variation of the work, but a change of nature—a displacement in which control ceases to be merely shared with matter and is definitively replaced by it.

I do not produce images about ruins. I produce archaeological situations in which matter behaves as if it were in a continuous process of reconstruction and ruin. I do not offer landscapes. I offer zones of pressure. I do not work with memory as metaphor, but as irreversible physical accumulation. To build, for me, is not to erect stable form. It is to sustain something while it begins to fail. Some works remain suspended for long periods, in intermediate states in which they have not yet decided whether to remain intact or to yield, always requiring thought, action, and decisions arising from the behavior of materials and colors, in the search for an aesthetic stability that engages with human sensitivity and vulnerability.

At the center of my practice lies a constant negotiation between control and loss of control. At times, this negotiation fails, and it is precisely at this point that the work finds its most precise form. Gravity, curing time, contraction, and viscosity introduce variables that escape initial intention. There is no return to the previous state of matter, only layers that accumulate decisions and accidents. Error, here, is not deviation: it is a structural part of the process. It reorganizes matter and redefines what the work may become. It is in this interval and dialogue with chance that painting becomes irreversible. There is always a point at which the work ceases to be planned and becomes inevitable. This moment is not theoretical but physical; it occurs when the accumulation of matter exceeds the gesture's capacity for correction. At this limit, painting no longer represents an idea—it imposes its own logic of existence. It is at this instant that the work separates from intention and comes to exist as an autonomous system of forces.

However, at the center of my work there is a dimension that cannot be reduced to the behavior of materials nor to the structural logic of construction. It arises from a state of prolonged attention, almost physical, toward that which does not stabilize. Working with painting, for me, also means dealing with a form of insistence—a attempt to emotionally sustain a sensitive expression that is always on the verge of giving way. This tension produces a silent emotional charge, which does not manifest as narrative but as presence. Each work carries the effort of keeping something together long enough for it to exist, even if precariously.

This process implies recognizing that the entire system is in a constant state of risk of failure. Not as exception, but as permanent condition. The work does not organize itself despite this risk, but through it. There are moments in which matter exceeds any initial intention and redefines the work itself; others in which small fissures completely displace the meaning of what was being constructed. It is in this continuous instability that the practice gains its urgency. Nothing in it is guaranteed, and it is precisely this lack of guarantee that keeps the work active, open, and inevitably exposed to what may collapse.

In a contemporary scenario governed by digital acceleration and the dematerialization of painting, my work claims weight, topography, and temporality as non-negotiable foundations. The studio functions more as a construction site than as a space for image production. There is stacking, waiting, drying, fracture, and continuous reactivation of surfaces that are never fully closed. Some works remain in intermediate states for long periods, oscillating between stability and failure, requiring decisions that arise both from gesture and from the behavior of material.

What sustains my practice is the necessity of remaining precisely at this point of instability without resolving it. The work does not seek final balance, because balance would mean closure. What interests me is the continuity of tension, the state in which form is still being decided by matter while already presenting itself as presence. This is why each work carries an internal urgency that does not depend on external gaze: it happens because it simply could not happen.

By building up these layers in the work, I invite the viewer to abandon haste and recognize that painting is, above all, a physical truth. In front of these canvases, the gaze must learn to wander through the topography of matter and the composition of colors, recognizing that, in a world that pushes us toward superficiality, the density of painting is a political act.

Rio de Janeiro, May 13, 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ovatsug Figueiredo', written in a cursive, fluid style.

Ovatsug Figueiredo

Visual Artist