



OSGEMEOS, Portuguese for “the twins,” is the professional name of the Brazilian artists and twin brothers Otavio and Gustavo Pandolfo, who were born in São Paulo in 1974. Like many twins, as children they had a special way of playing and communicating with each other, which included constantly making drawings (they say this was like a religion to them, with drawing as a form of prayer). This synchronicity continued as they started creating graffiti together in São Paulo in 1986, inspired in part by the international explosion of graffiti and hip-hop culture that had reached Brazil by the mid-1980s.

As OSGEMEOS’s ideas and skills developed through the 1990s and 2000s, their imagery became increasingly complex, merging elements from Brazilian folk culture, seaside and urban scenes, festivals, and music into their compositions. Still working in harmony with each other, even to the point of having shared dreams that inspire their imagery, they create paintings, murals, sculptures, installations, and videos that portray a vivid world of colorful patterns and fantastic characters and settings. Rich with symbols and signs that tease the viewer into the temptation to interpret, at core these works are reflections of the artists’ desire for the “ludic,” a word used by psychologists to describe childhood experiences of spontaneous play. Antidotes to the ordinary, these whimsical inventions are meant to be both exotic and accessible to a wide audience; the artists intend to open “a window to the place that you can see yourself, you can see the pure imagination alive, you can see a colorful sky, a magical place . . .”

OSGEMEOS: In between features eight mixed-media paintings and two sculptures, all of which imply passages between



Fig. 1

memories, dreams, experience, and the wholly imagined. Prominent in each are large-headed, bony-limbed characters painted with thin outlines. Whether as protagonists or bemused observers, the figures often contain elements of the twins' own history. They were graffiti artists

and break-dancers in São Paulo in the 1980s, so pictures like *Back in the Days* (fig. 1), showing young men in a graffiti-covered subway car, one holding a boombox, may reflect a specific memory. The short fellow on the left wears a baseball cap with the logo NY, a nod to the twins' fascination with New York City's fertile hip-hop and graffiti scene. During the 1990s, they were in close contact with the American artist Barry McGee (known by his street name, Twist), who met the twins while traveling in Brazil and was so impressed with their work that he offered advice on painting techniques and shared photographs of New York graffiti with them. *Back in the Days* and the large-scale *Untitled* from 2008, which depict American rather than Brazilian subway cars, likely relate to this early exposure.

While OSGEMEOS's paintings are not necessarily autobiographical, their characters are often inspired by people they know and with whom they have a special connection. *Untitled* (2012; fig. 2) depicts a pair of brothers high-fiving in front of a radiating pattern of primary colors—an echo of the

twins' identification with the intensity of childhood perception. In other works, their comic figures seem to have sprung from someplace deeper than memory or self-projection. They often register as sprites emerging from the unconscious, tripping or floating, disembodied, through a woozy pattern of undulating hues and prismatic light rays. The sense of disequilibrium is pronounced in *Viagem Ao Centro De Terra* (*Travel to the Center of the Earth*; 2012), which shows a comic protagonist and his companion, a small black and white dog, riding a boat on a swirling whirlpool of light that has turned him completely upside down. He is about to be sucked into the vortex but, knowing it is a dream, he closes his eyes and simply enjoys the ride, wherever it may take him. With the psychedelic pattern doubling as the spectrum of the rainbow and the movement of water, this painting epitomizes the entire theme of the exhibition: the visualization of the liminal—a mysterious place of energy that exists between clearly defined states of being.

In *Viagem Ao Centro De Terra*, the vertiginous sea is a potent symbol of change and openness to uncertain possibilities. Considering art to be a search for one's truest and deepest self, the twins speak of their work as a journey across the water: "Even if you don't see the other side, the light from the lighthouse, you have to cross." For them, this is not an external voyage, but a passage toward inner awareness: "Once you know that the light has been always with you, since you were born, before you were



Fig. 2

Fig. 3



born, the sea will give you all the oxygen [you need] to create new ways of expression.” Other ocean-related scenes likewise denote a crossing from reality to fantasy.

O Canto da Sereia (Mermaid Singing; 2016; fig. 3) shows a fishmonger traversing a colorful beach, accompanied by a mysterious purple-haired mermaid. Whether she is his catch or his companion, they happily make their way in a lovers’ union that may be impossible in the physical plane but has a near-spiritual resonance within the twins’ magical world.

As suggested by the word *canto*, and the boombox-carrying figure in *Back in the Days*, music plays an important role in OSGEMEOS’s world. Rhythm and repetition dominate many of their paintings, with patterns rippling like beautiful notes across the surfaces of such works as *O Ferro Velho* (The Junkyard) and *Viagem Ao Centro De Terra*. OSGEMEOS uses actual music as well. In *Irie Voice*, a gridded construction of boxlike heads, round speakers double as the open mouths of singers. As music emanates from these speaker-mouths, visitors to the exhibition might respond with the movement of their bodies to the sound, just as they respond with the reverberation of their eyes to the optical delights of OSGEMEOS’s paintings. The invitation to a cross-sensory immersion can even extend to the motion of the

art itself, as with *O iluminado* (*The illuminated*; cover), which spins on its axis like a carousel.

While their reputation in the art world is well established, with works in major private and public collections, OSGEMEOS has never lost sight of their desire to be accessible to wide audiences. They have produced many public projects, creating their quirky narratives on the sides of silos, on water towers, in a series of digital animations in New York's Times Square, and—perhaps most surprisingly—on the sides of a Boeing 737. Wherever their works appear, they strive to communicate the value of feeling over reason, to help people “fly away” into a realm of pleasure and childhood delight, if just for a moment.

Mark Scala
Chief Curator

Fig. 1

Back in the Days, 2008. Acrylic, latex, spray paint and sequins on wood panel, 96 x 96 x 5 in. Private collection

Fig. 2

Untitled, 2012. Mixed media on wood, 63 x 68 3/4 in. Collection of Sophia, Lily, and Max Bratman

Fig. 3

O Canto da Sereia (*Mermaid Singing*), 2016. Mixed media with sequins on MDF board, 74 3/8 x 109 7/8 x 5 1/2 in. Private collection

Cover

O iluminado (*The illuminated*), 2015. Mixed media with sequins on plaster, 64 5/8 x 19 3/4 x 17 3/4 in. Collection of Kambiz & Nazgol Shahbazi, New York. Courtesy Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, and Seoul

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