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## Larissa de Souza's Tender Paintings Capture the Domestic Lives of Afro-Brazilian Women

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Installation view "Larissa de Souza: Paredes Que Contam Histórias", 2023 at Albertz Benda, New York. Photo by Thomas Muller. Courtesy of albertz benda.

There is a soft melancholy that unfolds across [Larissa de Souza's](#) loving pictorial paintings of Black domestic life in Brazil. Born and based in São Paulo, de Souza infuses plaster and rocks in her colorfully textured acrylic paintings that untangle communal care and heartache through narrative scenes inspired by allegory and personal memory.

The 27-year-old self-taught artist is making her U.S. debut at New York's [Albertz Benda](#) with her solo exhibition "[Paredes Que Contam Histórias](#)" ("Walls That Tell Histories"), on view through March 18th. The paintings feature various Afro-Brazilian women tending to one another and themselves. Among the tenderness, though, there are signs and imagery of sociopolitical harm, such as the infiltration of white Eurocentric beauty standards.

“What we experience inside a home will shape how we interact with the outer world and [vice versa],” de Souza told Artsy via a translator. In the 2022 painting *Não ser eu, para se aceita* (“Not being me, to be accepted”), a young Afro-Brazilian girl straightens her hair with an iron on an ironing board. The simple painting allows viewers to intimately see how Eurocentrism bleeds into the home and affects the self-esteem of young Black girls.

Using a pastel color palette, de Souza adds depth to the deep brown hues she uses to paint skin, an intentional decision as she seeks to populate her worlds with Afro-Brazilians with darker complexions. This stemmed from her desire to combat rampant colorism in Brazil, and expand global visual culture by depicting Black women beyond dominant fair-skinned representation.

To further challenge popular culture and memory that excludes Afro-Brazilian life, de Souza draws on the tradition of photo-paintings in Brazil. Historically, those who did not have access to photography would have a painting commissioned to remember a loved one. “Not having access to photography was a way for colonial systems to erasure a culture,” de Souza explained. “That [photo-painting] process was a way of fighting back against that system.” In her paintings at Albertz Benda, photo-paintings appear on the walls of de Souza’s interior spaces, a portal imbuing sentimentality.

“Overall, my work is about love and I am interested in love,” said de Souza, looking back to her personal recollections of love within the community of Black women in São Paulo. “I find love in food—whatever was shared when the family was cooking together—and through speech, oral tales that would transcend through time.” For de Souza, a shared genealogy of care resembles love.