

Melissa de Oliveira

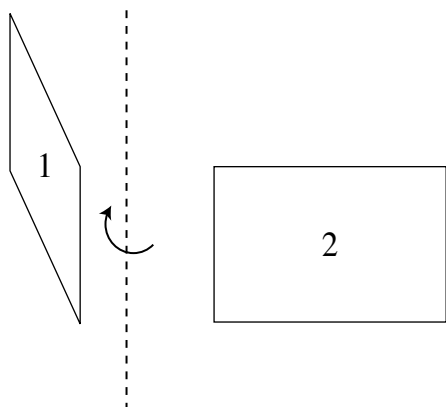
Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2000

1 ***Aquecimento***, 2024 * Artist's collection

2 ***Sucessagem***, 2024

color photography on
Hahnemühle Photo Rag Satin
310 gsm paper

* MAM São Paulo Collection.
Acquired by Núcleo Panorama
MAM São Paulo, 2024



Melissa de Oliveira's work is deeply rooted in photography but also extends to objects and installations, always keeping the image at its core. With a sharp eye and wholehearted involvement, her practice involves daily immersion and a profound connection with what and whom she portrays, transcending the boundaries between viewer and subject. Her main themes are the peripheral street cultures in their most effervescent manifestations, marked by inventiveness and bold intention, with energy at its peak, always incendiary and electrifying. Attuned to historical oppressions and the visibility regimes of contemporary society, the artist strives to build images that affirm life and creative power, confronting stigmatized and objectifying views that constrain narratives about these territories. Since 2019, she has been documenting everyday life in Morro do Dendê—located in the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro, where she was born and raised—shedding light on the aesthetics, leisure, and self-esteem of the local youth, in contrast to the recurring narratives that link these spaces to violence and poverty. Her photography, therefore, not only documents experiences but also serves as a tool of power and visibility, revealing a complex and diverse universe where popping wheelies and distinctive haircuts

become symbols of resistance and cultural expression. Her photos overflow with spirited moments, affectionate exchanges, and, above all, the strength of untamed fun.

For the 38th Panorama, Melissa de Oliveira presents two works related to her experiences in the world of *grau* [wheelie culture]. The images, produced with acquaintances and family members, depict the practice of popping wheelies on motorcycles in daring and flashy maneuvers. This expression has increasingly been celebrated as an aesthetic form and has mobilized significant cultural events. These happenings, which involve competitions and feature team shirts, flags, and stickers, are organized with seriousness and massive participation. Always intense, they transform streets into stages where acrobatic skills are displayed alongside music and side activities, strengthening community bonds and promoting local cultural identity. In the photographs, two common scenes from preparatory rehearsals capture the sharp edge of this culture that intertwines skill, risk, and excitement.