

Galeria Francisco Fino



VASCO ARAÚJO
PORTFOLIO

Vasco Araújo was born in 1975 in Lisbon, the city where he continues to live and work. He completed his first degree in Sculpture in 1999 at FBAUL (Lisbon University School of Fine Art), and attended the Advanced Course in Visual Arts at Maumaus in Lisbon, from 1999 to 2000. Since then, he has participated in various solo and group exhibitions both in Portugal and abroad, also taking part in residency programmes, such as The University of Arts, Philadelphia (2007); Récollets, Paris (2005); and the Core Program (2003/04), Houston. In 2003, he was awarded the EDP Prize for New Artists.

His most recent solo shows include: *E agora para onde vou?*, Fundación DIDAC, Santiago de Compostela (2024); *Eros and Thanatos*, Appleton Square, Lisbon (2024); *Memoria afectiva*, Bodega Piloto, Bogotá (2023); *Pathosformel*, Rialto6, Lisbon (2022); *A Moment Apart*, MAAT, Lisbon (2019); *Vasco Araújo*, M-Museum, Leuven, Belgium, (2018); *Decolonial desires*, Autograph ABP, London, (2016); *Potestad*, MALBA – Museu de Arte Latino-Americana de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires (2015); *Under the Influence of Psyche*, The Power Plant, Toronto (2014); *Debret*, Pinacoteca do Estado de S. Paulo, S. Paulo (2013); *Avec les voix de l'autre*, Musée d'art de Joliette, Joliette (2011); *Mais que a vida,*

Fundação C. Gulbenkian/ CAM, Lisboa and *MARCO*, Vigo (2010); *Eco*, Jeu de Paume, Paris (2008); *Vasco Araújo: Per-Versions*, the Boston Center for the Arts, Boston (2008); *About being Different*, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2007); *Pathos*, Domus Artium 2002, Salamanca (2006); *Dilemma*, S.M.A.K., Ghent (2005); *L'inceste*, Museu do Azulejo, Lisbon (2005); *The Girl of the Golden West*, The Suburban, Chicago (2005); *Dilema*, Museu de Serralves, Oporto (2004); *Sabine/Brunilde*, SNBA, Lisbon (2003).

His most recent group shows include: *Tino Grandío. Correspondencias. Colección de Arte Abanca*, Centro Obra Social ABANCA de Santiago de Compostela, Santiago de Compostela (2023); *O Castelo Surrealista de Mário Cesariny*, MAAT, Lisbon (2023); *Bienal del Bioceno – Cambiar el Verde por Azul 15.ª* Bienal de Cuenca, Cuenca, Ecuador (2021); *Triângulo atlântico* Bienal Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2018); *All that Falls*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2014); *Investigations of a Dog*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2009); *Everything has a name, or the potential to be named*, Gasworks, Londres (2009); *Em Vivo Contacto*, 28.ª Bienal de S. Paulo, São Paulo (2008); *Artes Mundi*, *Wales Internacional Visual Art Exhibition and Prize*,

National Museum Cardiff, Cardiff (2008); *Kara Walker and Vasco Araújo: Reconstruction*, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, (2007); *Drei Farben – Blau*, XIII Rohkunstbau, Grobleuthen (2006); *Experience of Art*, La Biennale di Venezia. 51st International Exhibition of Art, Venice; *Dialectics of Hope*, 1st Moscow Biennial of Contemporary Art, Moscow, (both in 2005); *Solo (For Two Voices)*, CCS, Bard College, New York (2002); *The World Maybe Fantastic* Sydney Biennial, Sydney (2002); *Trans Sexual Express*, Barcelona, a Classic for the Third Millennium, Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona (2001).

His work has been published in various books and catalogues and is represented in several public and private collections, such as at the Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Art Moderne (France); Museu Coleção Berardo, Arte Moderna e Contemporânea, (Portugal); Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (Portugal); Fundación Centro Ordóñez-Falcón de Fotografía – COFF (Spain); Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, Centro de Arte (Spain); Fundação de Serralves (Portugal); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (USA); Pinacoteca do estado S. Paulo (Brazil).

vascoaraujo.org



Eros e Thanatos

2024

Installation

24 clay figures, 18 painted metal tripods
Variable dimensions

Eros and Thanatos, an individual exhibition by Vasco Araújo, consists of a new sculptural installation that seeks to reflect on contemporary human condition through the necessary revisiting of the past and the history of art, using disquieting figures from Greco-Roman mythology.

The installation comprises 24 sculptures in red clay (terracotta) placed on 18 metal sculpture tripods. These sculptures draw inspiration from the terracottas of the 17th-century Italian sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, measuring approximately 40 x 45 x 45 cm each. The figures are studies of various episodes from mythical scenes of Classical Antiquity, including Apollo and Daphne, Mercury and Battus, Hercules, Nessus, and Deianira, among others. Formally, they capture various actions, positions, and movements based seemingly on the seminal catalog of images from classical sculptures but in a way that seeks ambiguity of meaning, doubt, in a contemporary gaze regarding what is presented, oscillating between the ideas of life or death, love or violence, or even sex or abuse.

The concept of this work stems from the conceptualization of Eros and Thanatos, developed by Freud to illustrate his theories of instincts, explaining the psychic formation of all human beings of all genders. Eros and Thanatos correspond to the simultaneous coexistence of erotic desire and attraction to death. In other words, the life instinct corresponds to all internal drives that lead us to seek pleasure, create, and carry out projects, while the death instinct obeys the drive that leads us to seek isolation, stagnation, and acts of destruction and death.



The aesthetic and formal structure of this installation lies in the ambivalence of the figures' actions, the violence of the presented images, the psychological emotions invoked, and the exaltation of bodies in conflict, questioning the relevance of images and stories from the past in shaping how we live, see, and feel the present. *Eros and Thanatos* also evoke the ideas of power, fragility, imbalance, or instability present in the confrontation between bodies, gender struggles, serving primarily to make us reflect on this set of themes that shape us and persist to this day.

Eros and Thanatos premises critical thinking about human behavioral codes that reflect the psychological, political, and social relationship of the individual

and the impulses of desire and passion versus death.

In conjunction with this exhibition, a working/publication book will be released, featuring parallel images, sketches, drawings, and texts by Vasco Araújo, Cesare Pavese, Konstantinos Kavafis, and Luís Miguel Nava, distributed free of charge during the exhibition period.

Photos: Appleton, March 2024
 Courtesy: Appleton
 Photo credits: Pedro Tropa

in their diversity of gender, ethnicity, or social class. The performance of bodies, actions, gestures, established social forms is reconsidered through a formal and conceptual installative device associated with Greco-Roman mythology and the sculptural tradition of the 17th century, defining a distinctive aesthetic and discursive space. Drawing extensively from literature, philosophy, as well as classical studies (Ovid, Plato, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Sigmund Freud, Cesare Pavese, José Pedro Serra, Frederico Lourenço), the artist aims to critically expose: the gaze upon the Other; the potential ambiguity of interpersonal relationships; the fragility of taken-for-granted systems; the construction of reality; the relationships between identity and power; sexuality and gender; virtue and the moral duty; the geography of affections

Trabalhos para nada: In memoriam

2024

Sculpture

Iron table, wooden carvings, velvet fabric,
paper labels with text written in sepia ink
Texts: from various authors
120 x 70 x 115 cm

The series *Works for Nothing* is crossed by a vector of liminality, which is the experience of existential ambiguity, that is, the ability to live, and therefore be, in more than one ontological reality, being none of them. It is through the disturbance of the order of things that these works question the conditions, both human and superhuman, that precede being and perhaps condition its ethical status, thus allowing us to experience the new – that which vision and intellect do not recognize, the abstention from the referent.





Detail of *Trabalhos para nada: In memoriam*, 2024

Rehearsals: Rough for Radio I

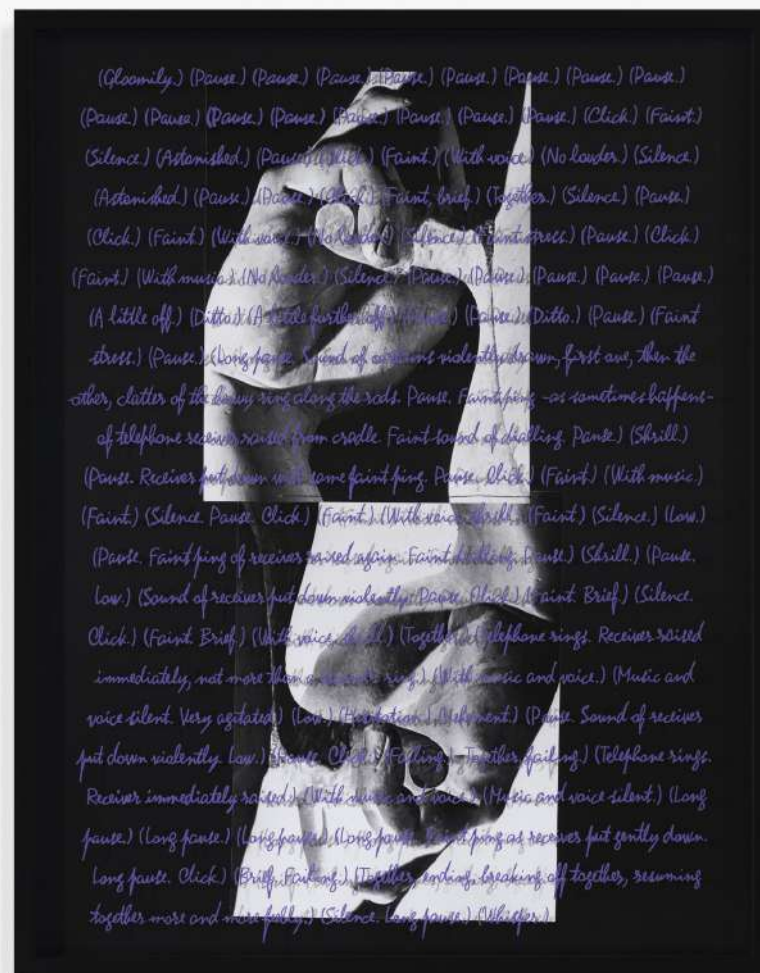
2024

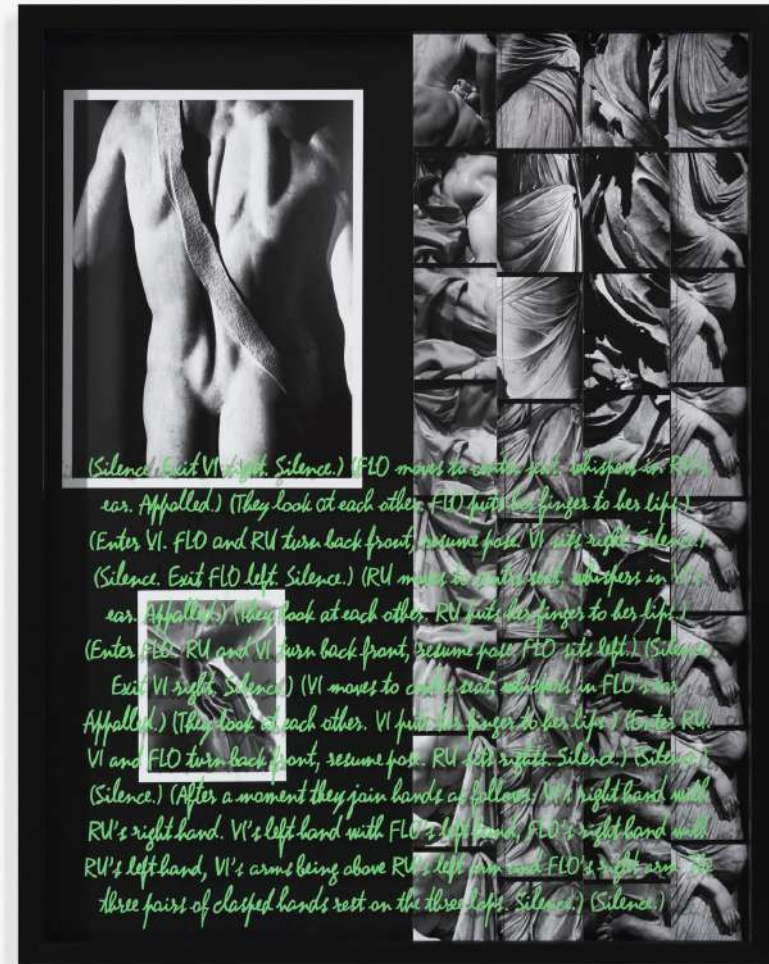
Photograph

B/W digital photographs sewn and glued onto black PVC, text written directly on the glass with oil-coloured pen

Text: Stage directions of the theater play "Rough for Radio I" by Samuel Beckett
90 x 70 cm

The *Rehearsals* series are photographs of building interiors, fragments of classic statues and curtains sewn in assemblies to form new narratives. All the stage directions that Samuel Beckett left for his theatre and radio plays are written on each frame's glass. This series tells us about absence, loneliness, it also tells us about the encounter, the performative memory and the paradoxical flow of going to meet another place.





Rehearsals: Come and Go

2024

Photograph

B/W digital photographs sewn and glued onto black PVC, text written directly on the glass with oil-coloured pen

Text: Stage directions of the theater play "Come and Go" by Samuel Beckett
90 x 70 cm



Rehearsals: Cascando

2023

Photograph

Colour digital photographs sewn and glued onto black PVC, text written directly on the glass with oil-coloured pen

Text: Stage directions of the theater play "Cascando" by Samuel Beckett

90 x 70 cm



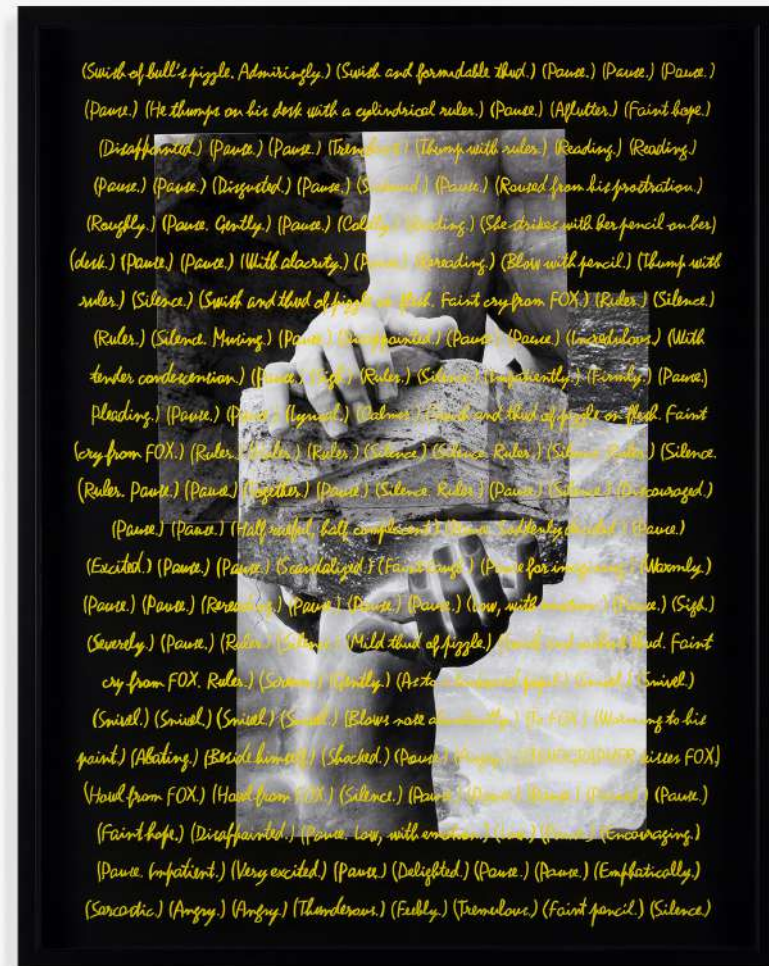
Detail of *Rehearsals: Cascando*, 2023

Rehearsals: Rough for Radio II

2023

Photograph

B/W digital photographs sewn and glued onto black PVC, text written directly on the glass with oil-coloured pen
 Text: Stage directions of the theater play
 "Rough for Radio II" by Samuel Beckett
 90 x 70 cm





Detail of *Rehearsals: Rough for Theater I*, 2023

Rehearsals: Footfalls

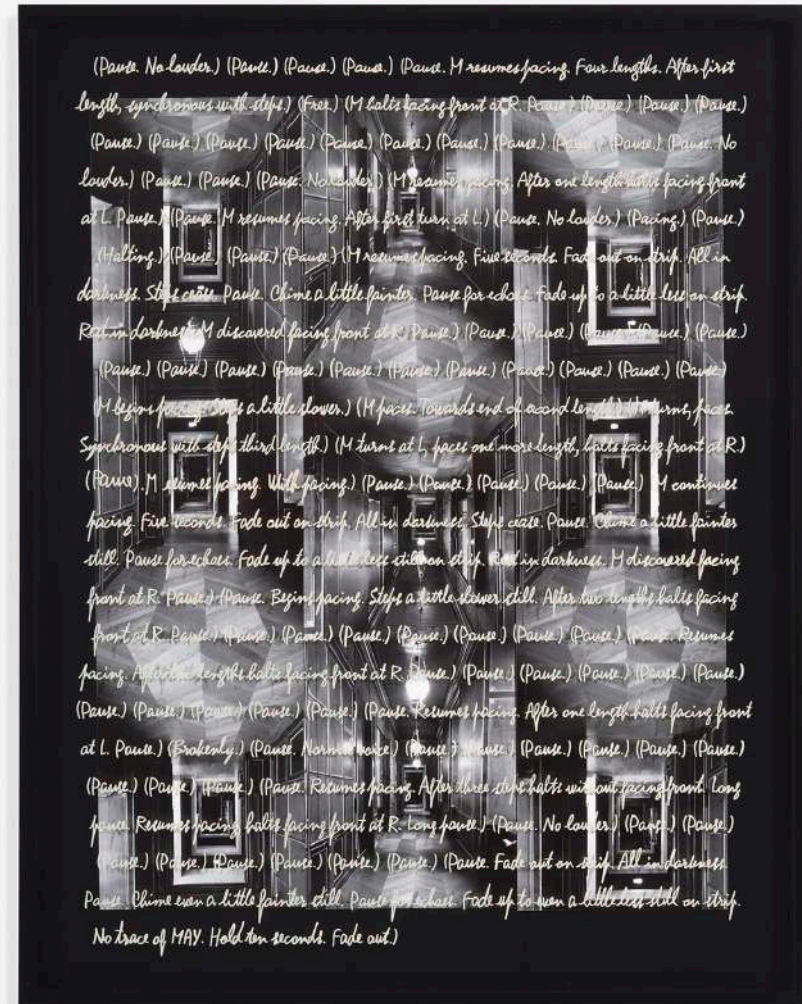
2023

Photograph

B/W digital photographs sewn and glued onto black PVC, text written directly on the glass with white oil pen

Text: Stage directions of the theater play "Footfalls" by Samuel Beckett

115 x 90 cm



More than a body: Orlando Furioso (Sorge l'irato nembo)

2001 – 2023

Photograph

Colour digital photograph, printed text on white paper

Text: "E' un incendio fra due vent" from the opera *Rinaldo* by G.F. Handel

160 x 116 cm | 30 x 22 cm

The *More than a body* series are photographs of the artist who puts himself in the position of the famous figures of 18th century opera singers, the "Castrati". Unique figures not only for their vocal capabilities that were achieved through body manipulation, which maintained their childhood voice but with the volume and musculature of an adult. These figures changed the way human beings constructed their identity, as they played both male and female roles. This series works as a performative memory that leads us to question how we construct our own gender identity, what are the boundaries, and what are the possibilities of finding another in ourselves.





More than a body: Idaspe (Ombra fedele anch'io)

2001 – 2023

Photograph

Colour digital photograph, printed text on white paper

Text: "E' un incendio fra due vent" from the opera *Rinaldo* by G.F. Handel
3x (120 x 85,5 cm) | 30 x 22 cm



More than a body: Rinaldo

2001 – 2023

Photograph

Digital colored photograph; printed text on paper

Text: "E' un incendio fra due vent" from the opera *Rinaldo* by G.F. Handel

160 x 116 cm | 30 x 22 cm

Detail of *More than a body: Rinaldo*, 2023

Do mesmo e do outro... #4

2023

Sculpture

Bird feathers, wooden table, metal Gold
painted text
168 x 50 x 55 cm

The sculpture series *Do Mesmo e do Outro...* explores issues of identity, equality, and belonging. Comprising bird feathers, wooden and metal boxes, wooden tables, and metal structures, this work also includes excerpts from “Black Skin, White Masks” by Frantz Fanon and “Critique of Black Reason” by Achille Mbembe. The bird feathers, collected on the ground and/or donated by the Lisbon Zoo, take on symbolism where each one tells a story, a life cycle, and their reuse in the sculpture suggests a narrative of transformation and renewal. The words of Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe, incorporated into the work, for example: “...ficámos todos iguais, fizeram-nos um grupo, todos com a mesma voz, uma não voz. Perdemos a nossa origem, já não somos de nenhum lado. Pertencemos ao que eles chamam o nosso mundo.” These words shed light on the complex social dynamics that shape the identity and experience of the individual, ultimately serving as an invitation to reflect on the social construction of identity, the effects of perceived equality, and the ongoing quest for belonging in a often fragmented world.



Affective memory

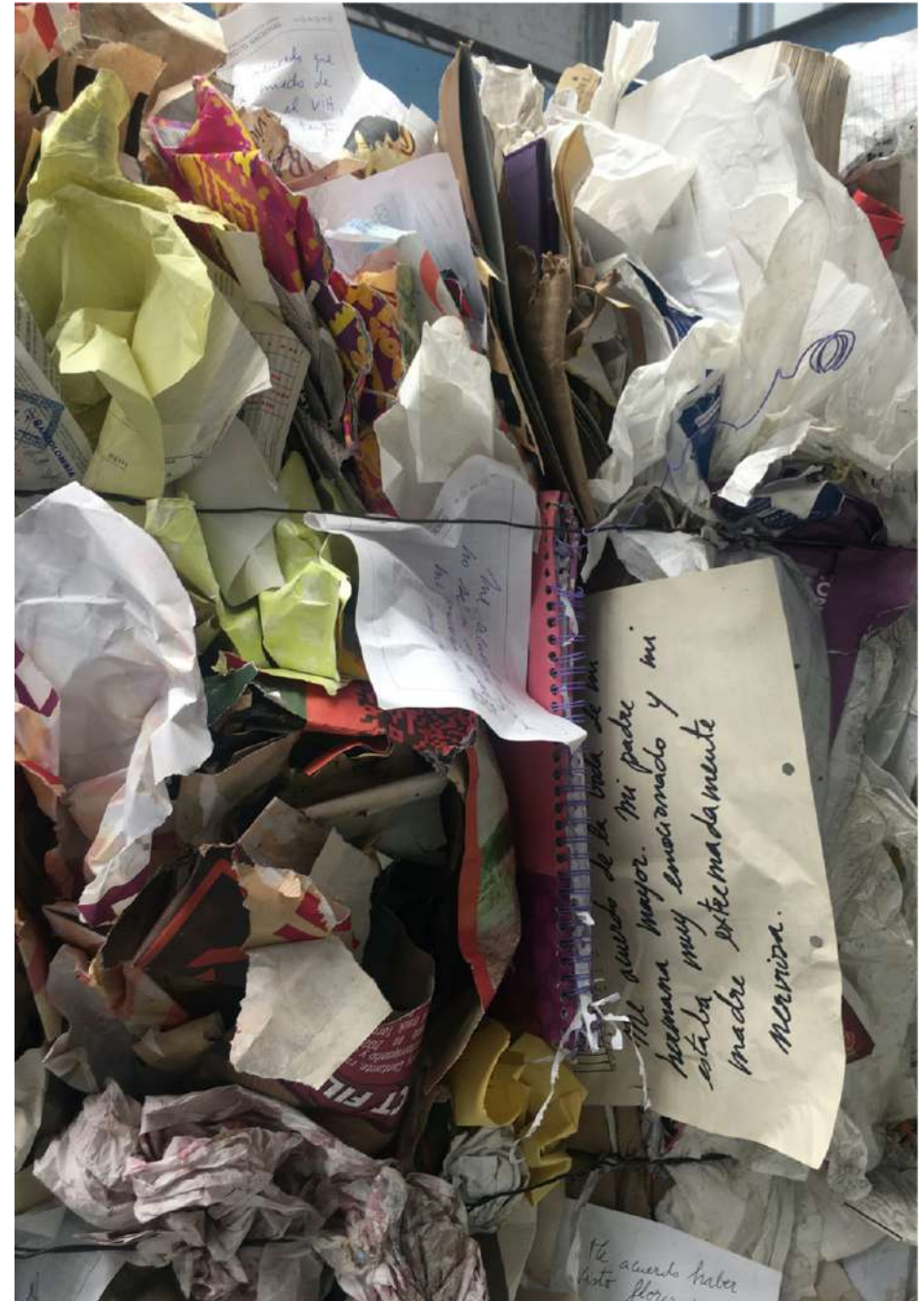
2023

Installation

Recycled paper and wire

Text: inspired by Joe Brainard's book
I Remember

Affective memory is the result of Araújo's residency at Bodega Piloto (February - April, 2023). Papers for personal, office or commercial use are intertwined with phrases written and inserted by the artist in bales of paper for recycling. Paper derived from letters, memos, literary exchanges, lists for private or public use. Papers that evoke the memory of a city, Bogotá, and its inhabitants, as they come from the recyclers of the historic industrial zone, close to Bodega Piloto. By a combination of circumstances, the weight and quantity of paper accumulated for the installation *Memoria afectiva* corresponds to the average weight of paper that an individual uses in 15 years. This installation encourages the viewer to remember through their own and other people's memories.





Installation view of *Memoria Afectiva*, Bodega Piloto, Colombia, 2023

Carmen Troubles

2022

Video 1:2

Duration: 52'

Performers: Pilar Távora, Ana Maria Segovia

Montoya, Beatriz Carrillo, Pastora Filigrana

Musicians: Júlia Manzano, António

Fernández Motoya "Farru"; Absalon Motos

Original Music: "Soy lo que soy" composed

and performed by António Fernández

Montoya "Farru" and Júlia Manzano

"Carmen Suites no 1 y 2" by Georges Bizet,

performed by Philharmonia Cassovia, (dir. by

Alfred Walter) with license from Naxos

Production: C.R.I.M. Lisbon

Variable dimensions

Carmen Troubles is a film that crosses operatic tradition and gypsy feminist activism. Based on the history of the opera *Carmen* by Bizet, the stereotyped image of the 19th century is analyzed. XIX, of the figure of a gypsy woman and how the enormous prejudice that prevails in the imagination of Western societies was constituted and perpetuated, and which constitutes a more or less unconscious form of racism. At the same time, we are witnessing the empowerment of organizations of Spanish Gypsy women who collectively seek to defend and change what is still the prevailing view of Gypsy women and their communities.

Watch video

Password: SOYLOQUESOY



Do you still recognise me?

2022

Installation

3 wooden frames with text (Poems by Emily Dickinson), 13 digital photographs and text
Variable dimensions

The installation consists of three upside-down frames with inscriptions of excerpts from poems by Emily Dickinson and eleven small frames with photographs (Lover's Eyes). These photographs come from a tradition from the sec. XVIII where lovers wore small jewelry (rings and medallions) with the representation of the eyes of their lovers. In this sense, the installation "Do you still recognize me?" it places us on the experience of the other as an exercise in memory, recognition and discovery as an intimate act of affection, or the memory of an act of love.





Installation view of *Pathosformel*, Rialto6, Portugal, 2022

When what you see reminds you of him

2022

Sculpture

Acrylic resin, rope
70 x 50 x 42 cm

This sculpture in painted acrylic resin, places us on the experience of the body, the memory of a gesture, an action of one body on another, the experience of a moment of affection, the memory of an act of love. Composed of hands and feet intertwined and suspended on ropes, these sculptures open a space, through memory, in search of freedom as human beings.



Punctum #9

2022

Sculpture

Photo camera chassis (wood and metal),
digital photograph glued on PVC and
plasticized
31 x 10,8 x 4 cm

The *Punctum* series, photographs mounted
on the chassis of old cameras, are formed
by photographs in interrupted sequences,
thus becoming hostages to the instruments
of their production. This series tells us about
the (historical) time of the photographic
image and the strangeness of what is not
revealed.



Punctum #10
2022
Sculpture

Photo camera chassis (wood and metal),
digital photograph glued on PVC and
plasticized
43 x 29,5 x 4 cm





Punctum #11

2022

Sculpture

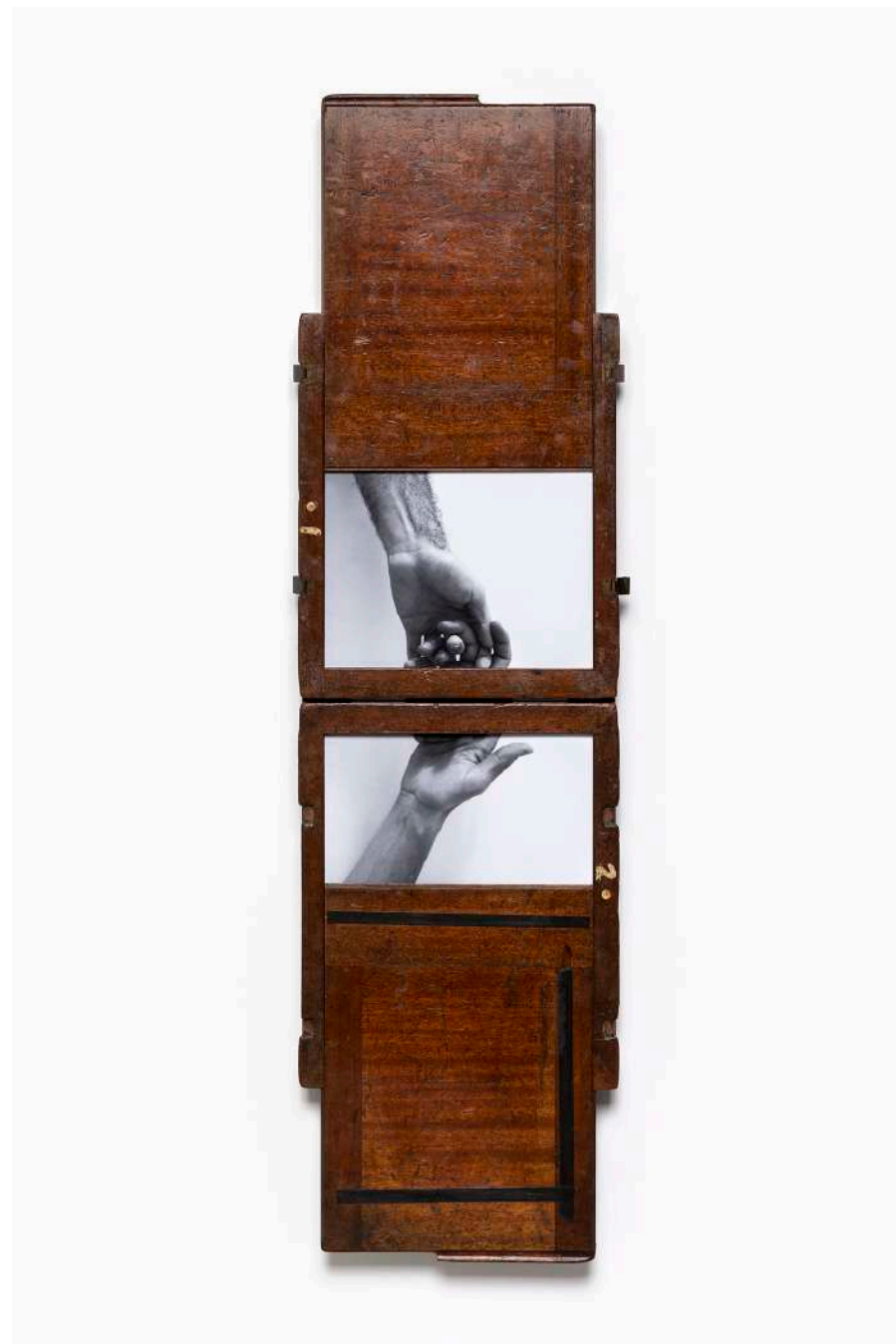
Photo camera chassis (wood and metal),
digital photograph glued on PVC and
plasticized
40 x 55 x 4 cm

Punctum #12

2022

Sculpture

Photo camera chassis (wood and metal),
digital photograph glued on PVC and
plasticized
108 x 29,5 x 4 cm





Punctum #13

2022

Sculpture

Photo camera chassis (wood and metal),
digital photograph glued on PVC and
plasticized
29,5 x 111 x 4 cm



Punctum #14

2022

Sculpture

Photo camera chassis (wood and metal),
digital photograph glued on PVC and
plasticized
29,5 x 110,5 x 4 cm

Punctum #15
2022
Sculpture

Photo camera wooden chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
112 x 59 x 4 cm





Punctum #16

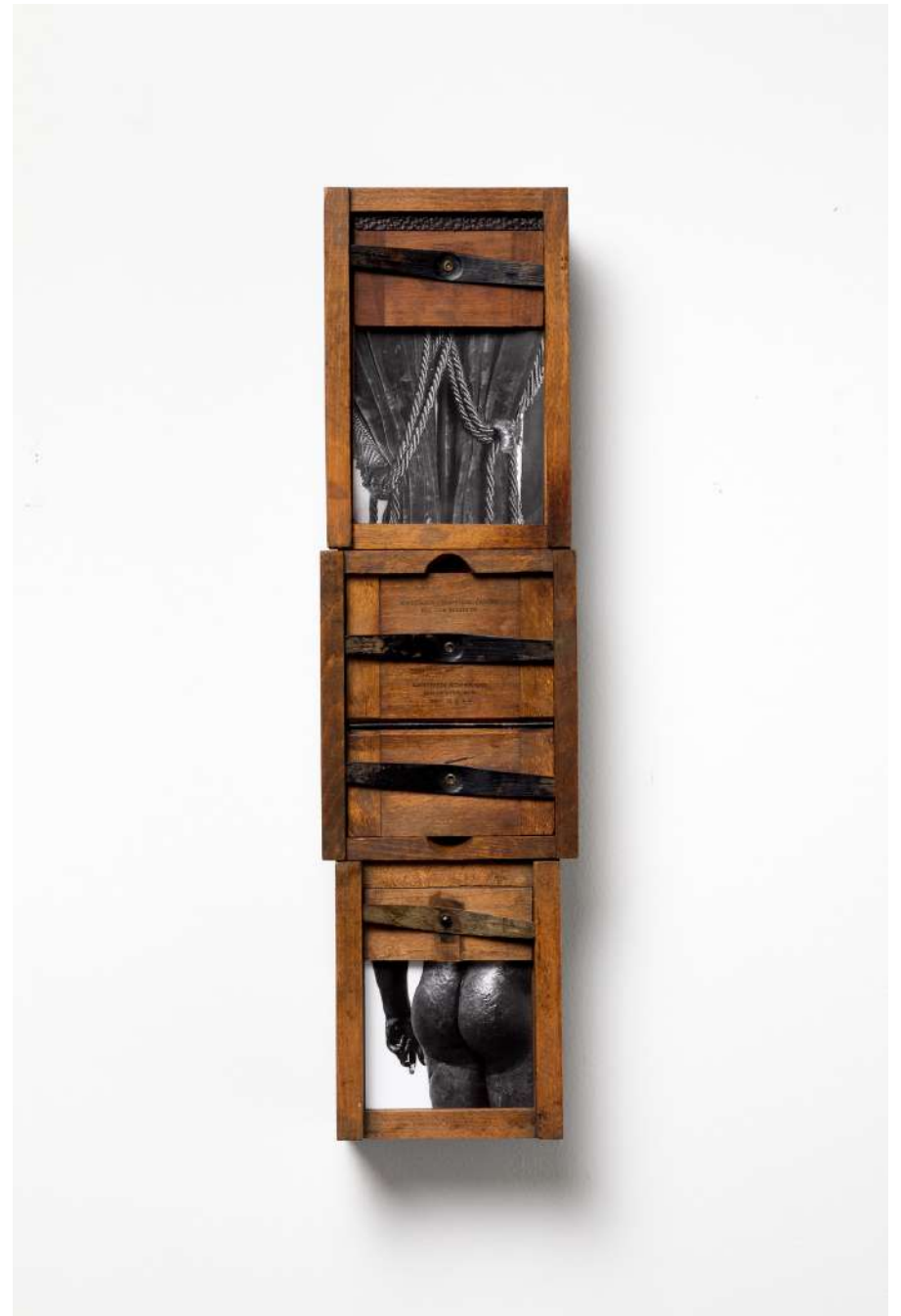
2022

Sculpture

Photo camera wooden chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
15 x 68 x 4 cm

Punctum #17
2022
Sculpture

Photo camera wooden chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
47 x 12 x 4 cm





Punctum #18

2022

Sculpture

Photo camera wooden, metal and plastic
chassis, digital photographs plasticized
on PVC

54 x 170 x 4 cm



Detail of *Punctum #18*, 2022

Punctum: Circular path

2022

Sculpture

8 digital photographs, painted metal structure,
metal tripod
180 x 105 x 105 cm





Detail of *Punctum: Circular path*, 2022

E agora para onde vou?

[And now where should I go?]

2021

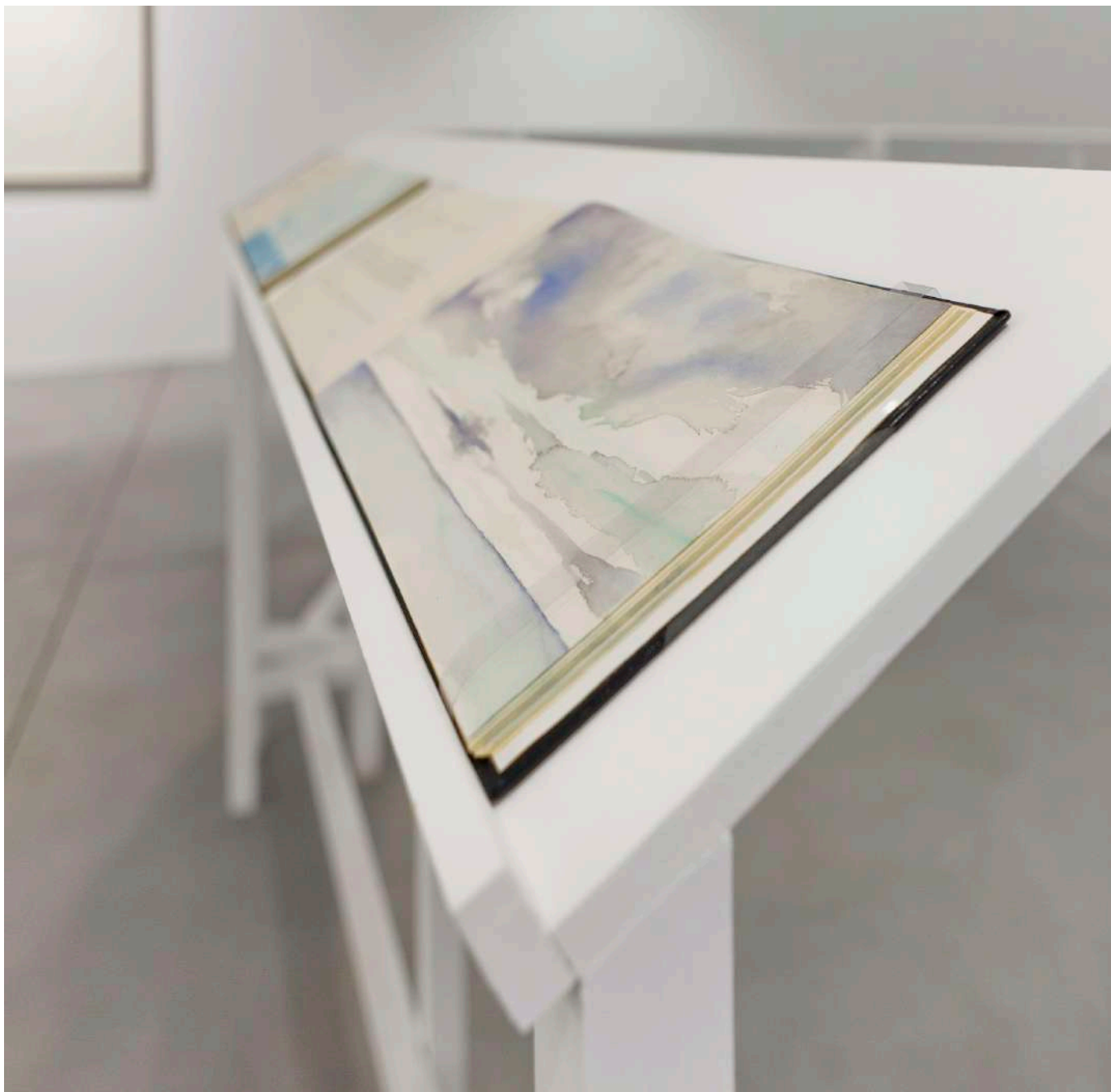
Installation

16 books with watercolors, 8 wood painted tables
Text: Travel notes from several books
Dimensions: 85 x 26 x 3 cm (each)
Installation dimensions: Variable

The installation *And now where should I go?*, by Vasco Araújo, is composed of 16 books that combine seascapes, watercolour, and excerpts from Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa's emblematic *The Book of Disquiet*.

Referencing the wind rose's 16 cardinal points, each of the volumes suggests not only a possible geographical direction —through the association with the auxiliary navigation device— but also a psychological one.

Similarly to Pessoa's work, *And now where should I go?* suggests different paths, in an existential and introspective expedition through vast bodies of water, here metaphorical representations of the unknown. Returning to ontological dimension often found in his work, Araújo puts forward a journey through a great and unknown horizon, continuing his research around human nature and the Self.





Installation view of *E agora para onde vou?*, Fundación DIDAC, Spain, 2024



Detail of *E agora para onde vou?*, 2021

Máquinas para el Fin del Mundo #1
 (Machines for the end of the world #1)
 2021
 Sound sculpture

Painted wood, metal, wheels, speaker with battery and recording file
 Voices: Ariadna Lopez; Seneida
 170 x 65 x 75 cm

Máquinas para el Fin del Mundo (Machines for the End of the World) are a series of sound sculptures that can be activated in performance actions in the street. The sculptures take the form of mobile cars, with built-in sound columns, from which comes a recording of a text written by the artist, in two languages: Spanish and Kichua. This type of machine comes from a millenary tradition, common throughout most of the world, of spreading news and information orally through loudspeakers or by people who circulated through towns and cities. The text of the recording is

questions elaborated from readings of several Amerindian authors, such as Ailton Krenak or Shaman Yanomamie, and reinforces the idea of the human being's conscience as a self-reflection about its position and its relationship with the world and the environment. The artist thus proposes a text that questions us and appeals to humanity's awareness, thinking about the possibility that the future is not made of the same material as the past, and that it becomes something radically different. Araújo suggests that perhaps we are entering a time that requires more self-awareness, asking ourselves the right questions so that we can disappear and reappear later in a different way, with empathy and respect. His sound sculptures thus intend to talk about the end of the world or the need to imagine, before a new world appears, what our place is on the current planet.

Sound



Máquinas para el Fin del Mundo #2
(Machines for the end of the world #2)
2021
Sound sculpture

Painted wood, metal, wheels, speaker with
battery and recording file
Voices: Seneida
120 x 70 x 160 cm



Máquinas para el Fin del Mundo #3

(Machines for the end of the world #3)

2021

Sound sculpture

Painted wood, metal, wheels, Speaker with
battery and recording file

Voices: Seneida; Carol Ossandón

160 x 55 x 65 cm



Comecemos de novo

(Let's start again)

2021

Video 4:3

Duration: 16'11"

Voice: Pedro Penim

Text: Vasco Araújo based on the piece
Krapp's Last Tape by Samuel BeckettMusic: Excerpts from *Das Buch der Klänge*
by Hans Otter

Variable dimensions

Let's start again is a video made from homemade Super8 movies, shot in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century. The work is looking back with the body facing forward. Sometimes, it is necessary to go back to a remote time to move on or even to get to know each other better. These movements make it possible to reach a certain affective tranquility. The video is accompanied by a text, written by Vasco Araújo, which evokes temporal, discursive, existential and aesthetic dimensions. *Let's start again* is about nostalgia or melancholy when you return to the lost paradises and being also an interior monologue that revisits a life under the sun and in front of its shadow.

[Watch video](#)

From Felix to Phoenix

2021

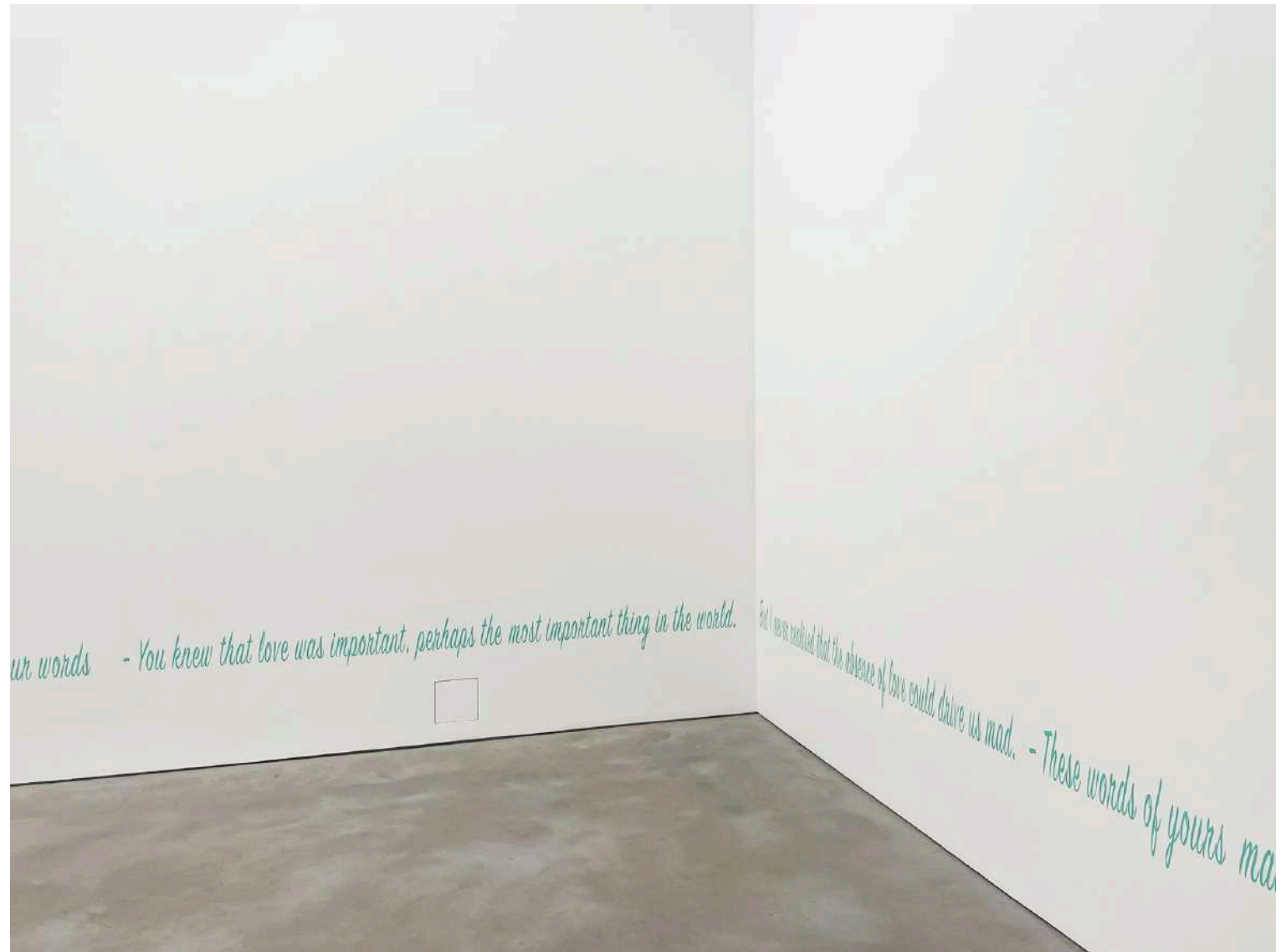
Installation

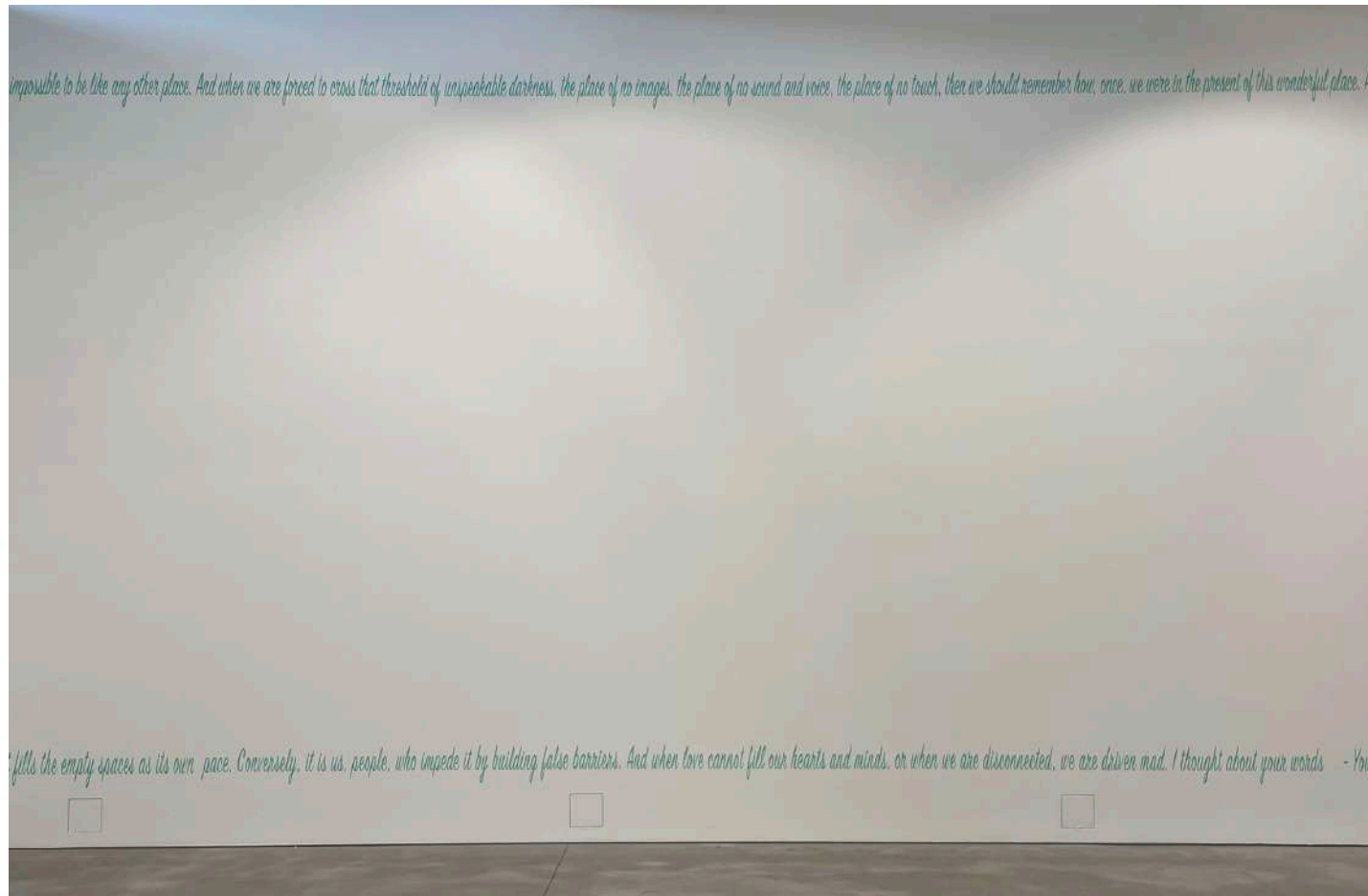
Light green self-adhesive vinyl

Text: by Vasco Araújo based upon a letter
by Félix Gonzalez-Torres

Variable dimensions

The installation has an epistolary text based on the writings of Félix Gonzalez-Torres that runs through the ceiling of the space, and another, in response, by Vasco Araújo himself, that runs along the baseboard. Two letters that reinforce the way in which the experimental, ephemeral and relational side of existence is prolonged in time, in the memory of spaces and in (your) imagination. The inevitable repetition of the experience of love and disillusionment mentioned in these letters works as a kind of awareness of the importance of love as a safe space for human beings.

Installation view of **Rehearsals**, Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, Portugal, 2021



us noticing. It fills in the cracks. It fills the empty spaces at its own pace. Conversely, it is us, people, who impede it by building false barriers. And when love cannot fill our hearts and minds, or when we are disconnected, we are driven mad. I thought about your words - You knew that love was important, perhaps the most important thing in the world. But I never realized that the absence of love could drive us mad. - These words of yours made me conclude that the absence of friendship, generosity, sharing, touch renders us completely asocial, physically ill, and can even cause us to die. We cannot survive intact without love. Love is not an option. It is a necessary abundance.

Text 1:

Dear,
This is the place, the only place, the only possible place: the place of pleasure, of images, of sound and voices, of views to remember, the place of memories, memories about people, about love, the place to travel and imagine other places with other people, other loves. And how do we leave this place? How will this place remember us? By our objects, by our legacy

of sublime daily actions, by our lovers or close friends, by the sound of our voice and the language we built? This place, like all relationships, like no other place, will always be the only imagined and real place, even if the fantasy of another place simply doesn't come true. This present, so fleeting and elusive, this present and this place, like no other place, impossible to be like any other place. And when we are forced to cross that threshold of unspeakable darkness,

the place of no images, the place of no sound and voice, the place of no touch, then we should remember how, once, we were in the present of this wonderful place. A more intensively lived present, an overwhelming place. A place of total freedom.

Text 2:

Dearest
Love is like a liquid, it springs forth without

Listening machine #1

2021

Sound Sculpture

Painted wood, painted metal, recorded voices, media player, speakers

Text: Vasco Araújo

Voices: Lucy Shaw and David Shaw

164 x 100 x 175 cm

The series *Listening machines*, sound sculptures inspired by sound reproduction devices, image projection and lighting creates moments of interaction with the public that is simultaneously called to listen and instigated to respond, in a game that awakens self-questioning and from the other.

Sound





Listening machine #2

2021

Sound Sculpture

Painted wood, painted metal, recorded
voice, media player, speakers

Text: Vasco Araújo

Voice: Miguel da Silva

110 x 50 x 35 cm

Sound



Listening machine #3

2021

Sound Sculpture

Painted wood, painted metal, recorded voice, media player, speakers

Text: Vasco Araújo

Voice: Vasco Araújo

153 x 60 x 103 cm

Sound

Listening machine #4

2021

Sculpture

Painted metal, rubber wheels, light bulb,

softbox, painted text

Text: Vasco Araújo

260 x 152 x 165 cm





Listening machine #5

2021

Sculpture

Painted metal, rubber wheels, light bulb,

softbox, painted text

Text: Vasco Araújo

180 x 90 x 90 cm

Palimpsest

2021
Sculpture

Painted metal, black paint on tracing paper
Text: Vasco Araújo
180 x 60 x 56 cm

Palimpsest, sculpture creates a moment of awareness of the self and its relationship with the world and with others, and is simultaneously called to read and instigated to respond, in a game that awakens the questioning of self and the other.





Installation view of *Rehearsals*, Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, Portugal, 2021

Studium #1

2021

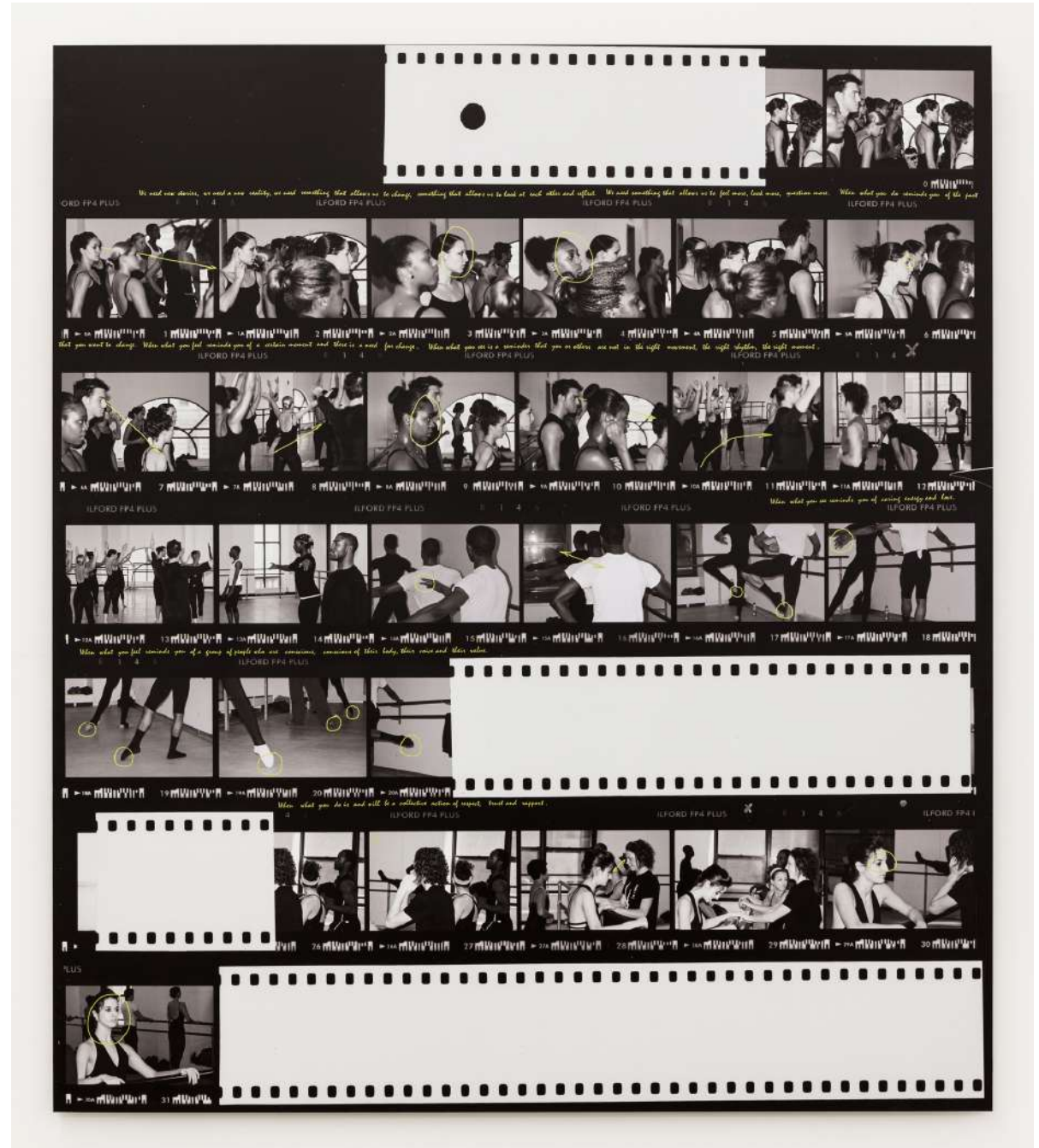
Photograph

Digital color photograph, plasticized on dibond

Text: Vasco Araújo

160 x 140 cm

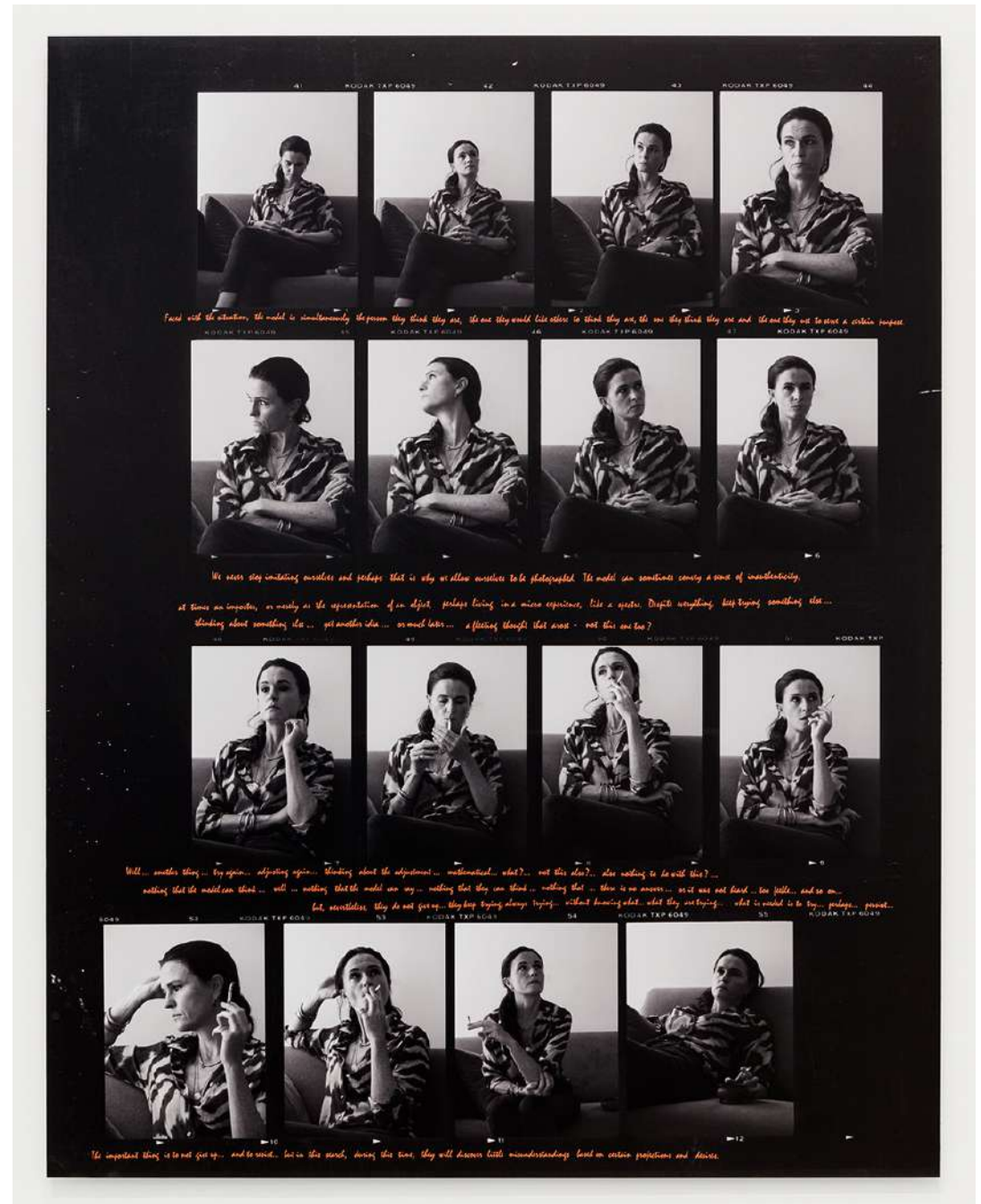
The Barthesian-inspired *Studium* series reinforces the place of photography in relation to the textual dimension. In the photographs, images of a woman in different positions are articulated, with classes in a dance studio and a succession of orders written on the basis of the photographs. The series looks like evidence of contact, objects to come where the ordered repetition of the bodies in rehearsal emerges as a recognizable exercise.





Studium #2
 2021
 Photograph

Digital color photograph plasticized on dibond
 Text: Vasco Araújo
 160 x 140 cm



Stadium #3

2021

Photograph

Digital color photograph plasticized on dibond

Text: Vasco Araújo

160 x 125 cm



Installation view of *Rehearsals*, Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, Portugal, 2021



Mise en image #1

2021

Photograph

Digital color photograph plasticized on dibond

Text: Vasco Araújo
2 x (60 x 43 cm)

The *Mise in image* series points to the passage of time, which is confirmed in the subjective archive of photographs taken in a photomaton, as in the images of a studio where the presence of someone is only intuited by the ordering of actions and the chronological time that constitute the captions.



Mise en image #2

2021

Photograph

Digital color photograph plasticized on dibond

Text: Vasco Araújo

2 x (60 x 33 cm)



Mise en image #3

2021

Photograph

Digital color photograph plasticized on dibond

Text: Vasco Araújo

2 x (60 x 43 cm)

**Mise en image #4**

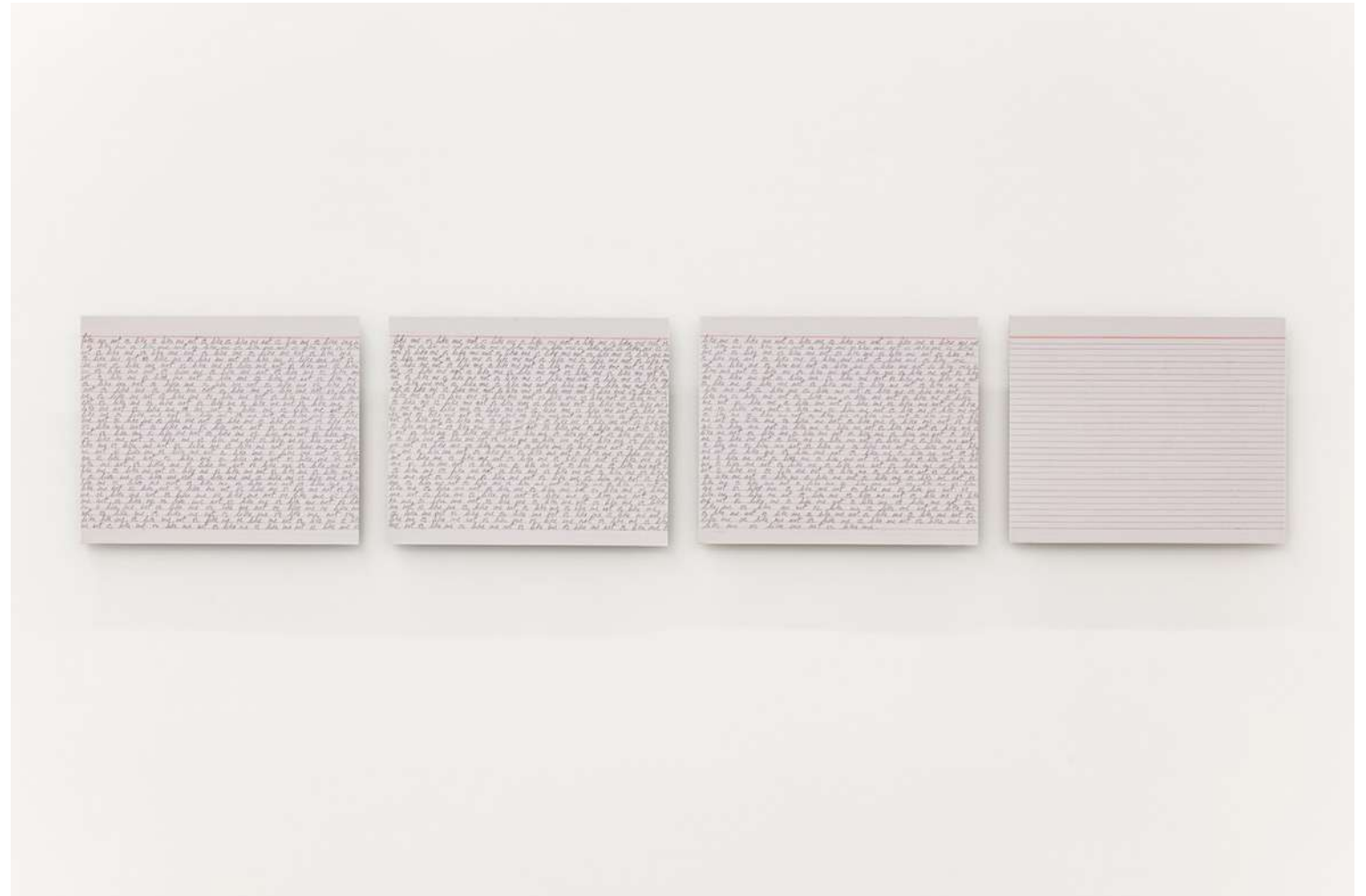
2021

Photograph

Digital color photograph plasticized on
dibond

Text: Vasco Araújo

2 x (60 x 43 cm)



Eidos

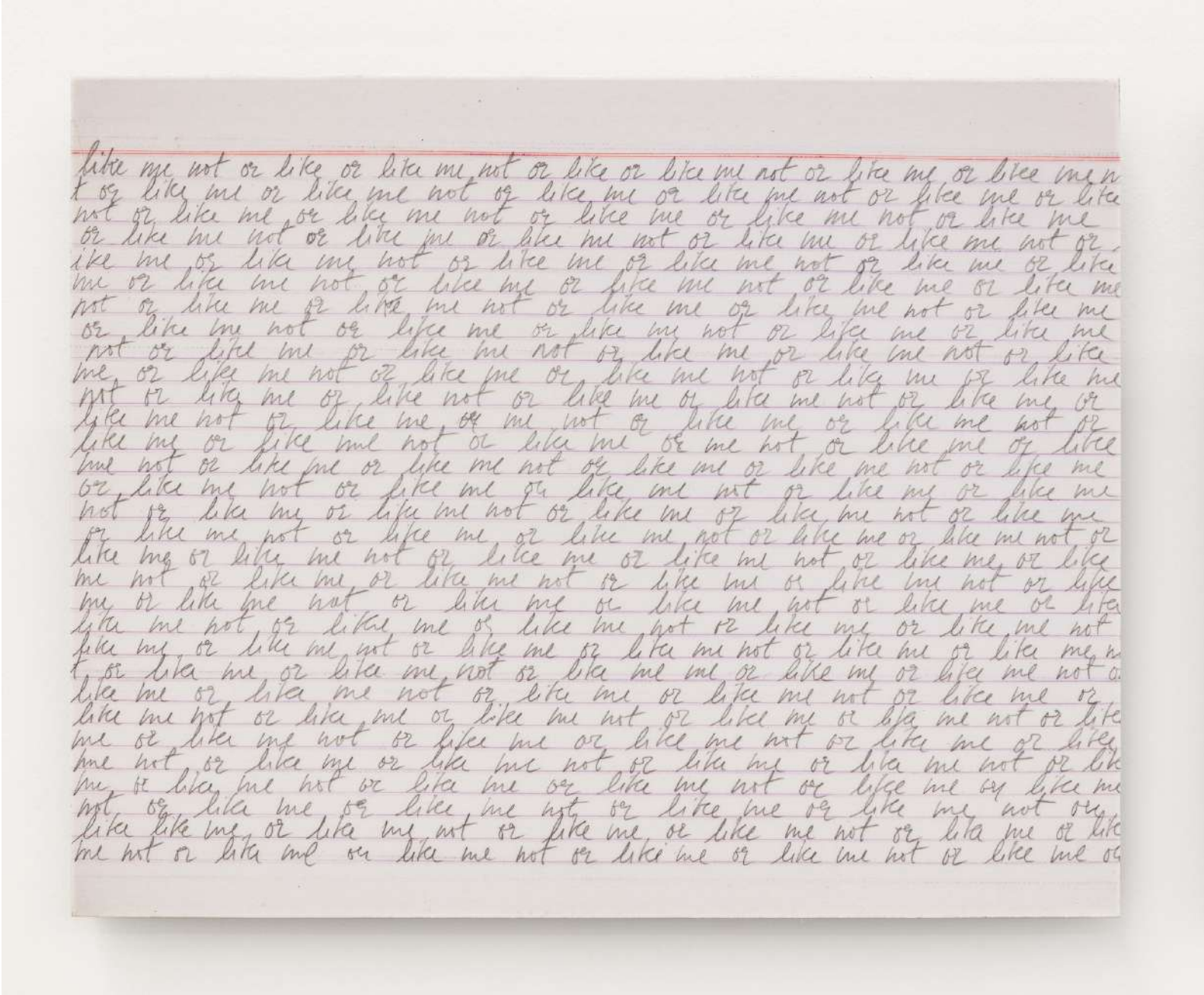
2021

Sculpture

Graphite pencil on paper, mounted on
plasticized dibond

Text: Vasco Araújo

4 x (35 x 50 cm)



Installation view of Rehearsals, Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, Portugal, 2021

Punctum #1

2021

Sculpture

Photo camera wooden chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
60 x 16 x 4 cm



Punctum #2
2021
Sculpture

Photo camera wooden and metal chassis,
digital photograph plasticized on PVC
35 x 18 x 4 cm





Punctum #3

2021

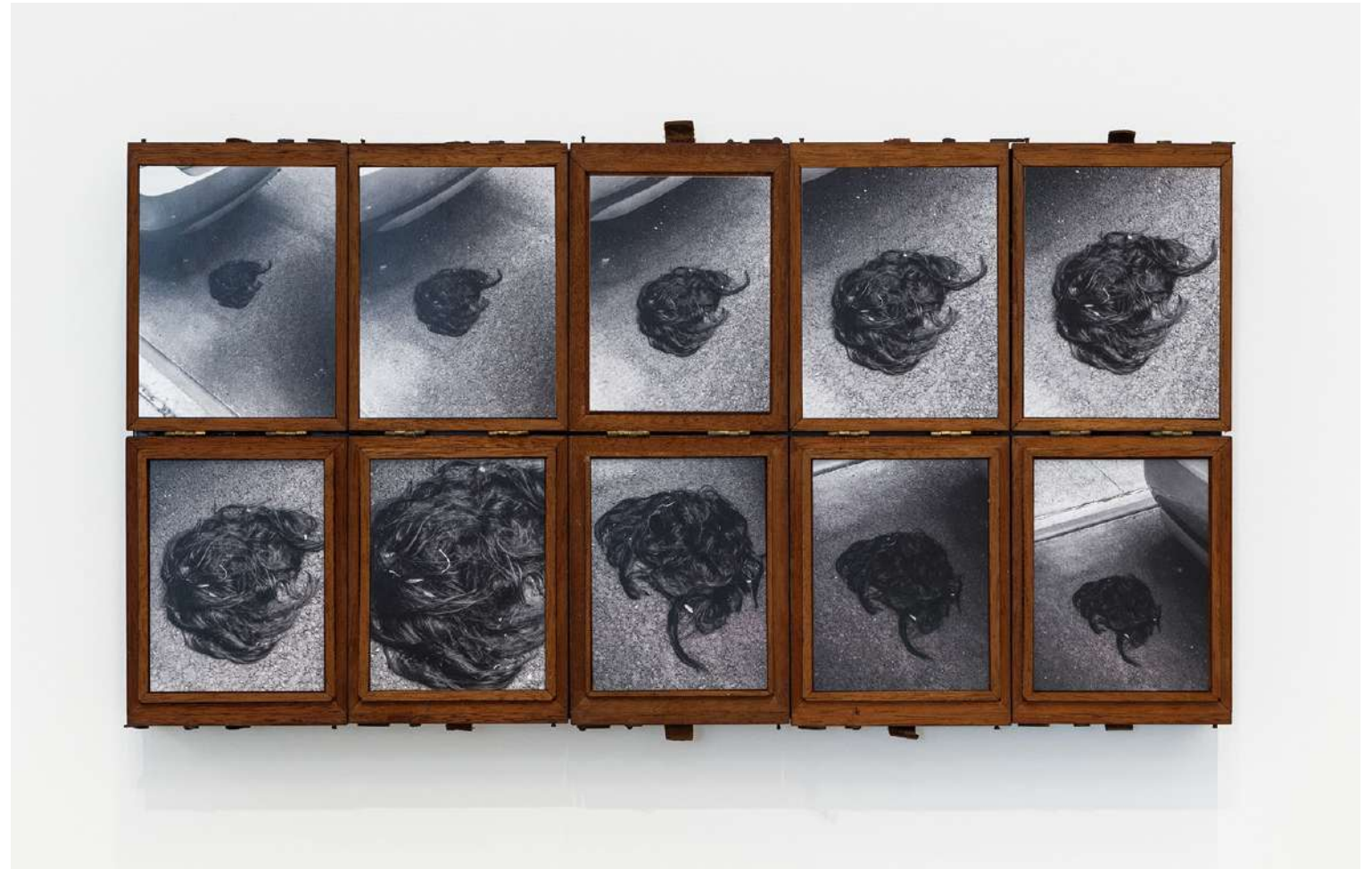
Sculpture

Photo camera metal chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
16 x 60 x 4 cm



Punctum #4
2021
Sculpture

Photo camera wooden chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
40 x 52 x 4cm



Punctum #5

2021

Sculpture

Photo camera wooden chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
27 x 52 x 4 cm

Punctum #6
2021
Sculpture

Photo camera metal chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
34 x 12 x 4 cm



Punctum #7
2021
Sculpture

Photo camera wooden chassis, digital
photographs plasticized on PVC
27 x 11 x 4 cm



Punctum #8
2021
Sculpture

Photo camera wooden and metal chassis,
digital photographs plasticized on PVC
22 x 16 x 4 cm





Installation view of *Rehearsals*, Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, Portugal, 2021

***When what you see reminds you of
a sharing moment***

2021

Sculpture

Acrylic resin, rope
27 x 15 x 12 cm

This sculpture in painted acrylic resin, places us on the experience of the body, the memory of a gesture, an action of one body on another, the experience of a moment of affection, the memory of an act of love. Composed of hands and feet intertwined and suspended on ropes, these sculptures open a space, through memory, in search of freedom as human beings.



*When what you see reminds you of
a fullness moment*

2021
Sculpture

Acrylic resin, rope
27 x 15 x 12 cm

Portfolio



When what you see reminds you of... 2021

*When what you see reminds you of
your love*
2021
Sculpture

Acrylic resin, rope
27 x 15 x 12 cm



When what you see reminds you of his body

2021

Sculpture

Acrylic resin, rope
27 x 15 x 12 cm

Portfolio



When what you see reminds you of... 2021

Pathosformel

2020/21

Video 16:9

Duration: 60'32"

Actors: Diogo Bento; Jorge Andrade; Bruno Silva; Arlindo Silva; Diogo Bernardes; Paula Sá Nogueira; Patrícia da Silva; André e. Teodósio; Vasco Araújo; Cláudia Jardim; Rui Cunha Martins; Francisco Rolo; Nuno Nolasco; Joana Barrios; Rita Só; João Abreu
 Voice: Francesco Troisi; Irene Pomatto; Maria José Chousal; Pedro Faro; Rafael Esteves Martins; Matilde Menezes Ferreira; Laura Ward; Tomás Frazer; Luís Estarreja
 Texts: Based on works the *Die Geburt der tragödie oder Griechertum und Pessimismus* by Friedrich Nietzsche; *Pensar o Trágico* by José Pedro Serra; *O Demónio das imagens – sobre Aby Warburg* by António Guerreiro; *Poesia Completa* by Luís Miguel Nava; *Plantation memories* by Grada Kilomba; *Metamorphoses* by Ovídio
 With original texts by Rafael Esteves Martins; José Maria Vieira Mendes; Diogo Bento
 Paintings: Paintings reproductions on

posters by Bronzino; Lotto; Rafael; Moroni; Ingres; Pompeii Frescos
 Still life paintings: *Natura morta con vaso di fiori tombada*, Mario Nuzzi (1640); *Stilleven met gouden bier mok*, Willem Claesz Heda (1634); *Bodegón con entrega de membrillos e uvas*, Juan de Zurbarán (1645); *Srilleven met boeken en zandloper*, Anonymous; *Bodegón con alcachofas, frutas y tarros de tlavera con flores*, Antonio Ponce (1657); *Pauw en jachttrofeeën*, Jan Weenix (1708)
 Music: Original music by Pedro Monteiro based on *Electra* by Richard Strauss; *Adriana Lecouvreur* by F. Cilea; Piano arrangement of excerpts from the opera *Electra* by Richard Strauss, performed by Pedro Monteiro; Piano arrangements of excerpts from the prelude of the opera *Adriana Lecouvreur* by F. Cilea, performed by Pedro Monteiro; Final credits song performed by Pedro Monteiro and Tânia Carvalho
 Variable dimensions

Watch video

Password: melodrama



Pathosformel is an interdisciplinary work/film, both in form and content. Through scenes and episodes, a look at the historical past is interconnected, using figures from Greco-Roman mythology in order to reflect on the human condition. In *Pathosformel* (Aby Warburg concept), which, as the name suggests, evokes the experience of suffering through empathy.

At the center of the work is the idea of crisis understood as a fracture, a disharmony. This, so to speak, collapse, foreshadows a radical and decisive “experience”, where no internal or external element, not even the end from the beginning by the unfortunate title, is guaranteed. The emphasis is not placed on the result, but on the process, on the development of the experience. The work is not an “inviting” bed where the patient is cuddled to die. Therefore, a distancing from the superficial brightness of the “fall” or an aesthetic anemia of decay and death is required. It is as a risk, combined with the very idea of crisis, that, above all, this work presents itself. The film structure is a sequence: of episodic actions united by a

global scene; and intertitles that, despite being aligned by a chain of cause and effect, do not form a narrative progression, therefore the audience is confronted with a truncated narration, suggesting then a crisis of a narratological nature. The entire structure focuses on verbal action, imaginary violence, psychological emotions and the exaltation of feelings, to also reflect on how to bear the pain caused by forces beyond individual control: the loss that can never be recovered; the irreversibility of time; or, still, a reflection on the Human, his destiny and his life.



Entre Actos #1*(Between Acts)*

2020

Video Sculpture

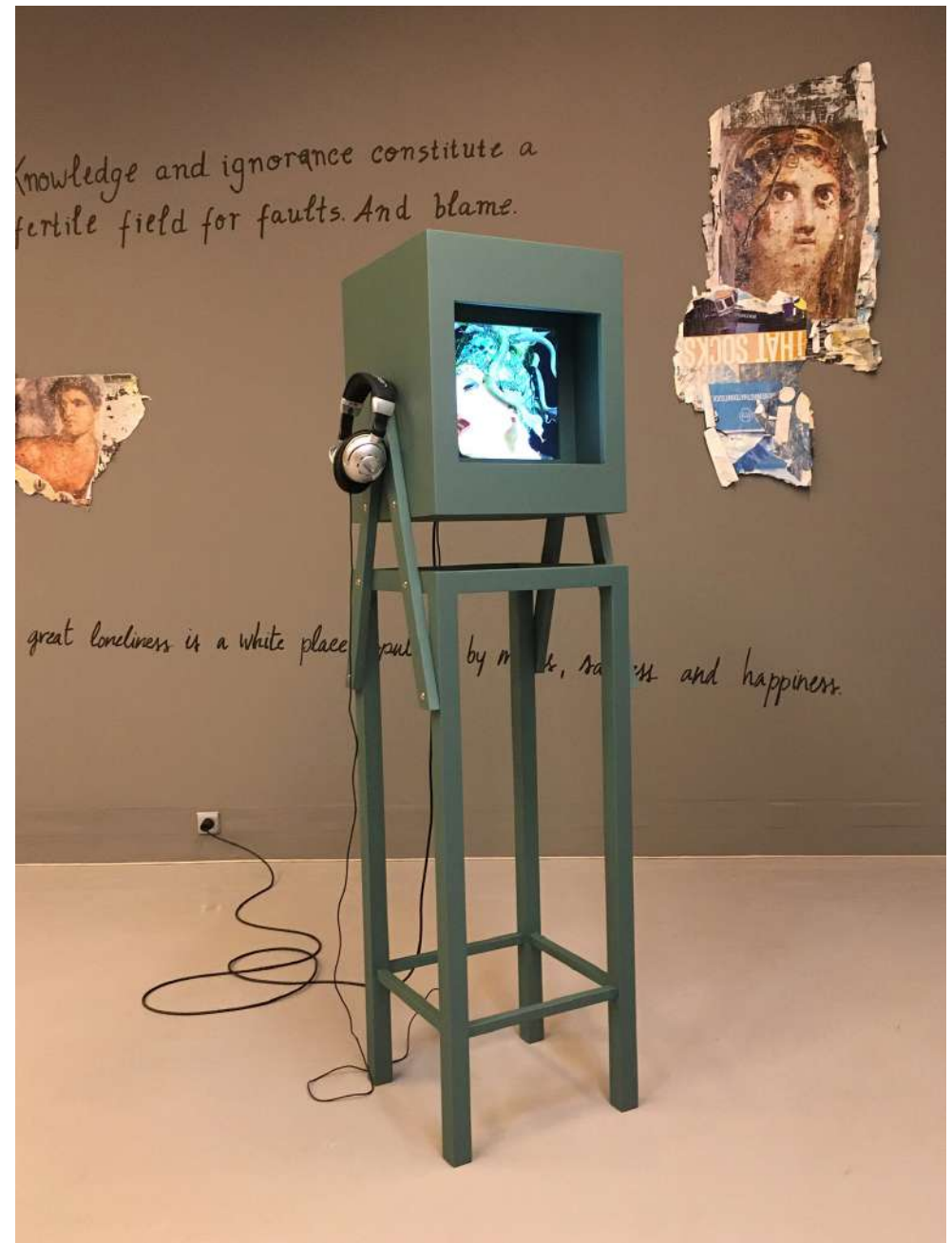
Painted wood/ LCD monitor, Headphones,
media player and video

Performer: Fernando Santos

Video duration: 3'35"

170 x 45 x 40 cm

The gaze of Medusa, a female figure from Greek mythology that petrified anyone who looked at her, is inverted to look directly into a mirror revealing a man who incarnates her while singing a fado about the fate of her destiny. *Entre Actos #1* (2020), one of the video sculptures, operates in a deconstructive exercise of the constancy and conventionality of certain systems – where Medusa can be a man, and a man who looks directly into a mirror. In the myth, it is the mirrored surface of the shield that determines Medusa's decapitation – imprisoning her by her own image through a game of gazes involved in tensions between self and other.

Watch video

Installation view of *Pathosformel*, Escola das Artes da Universidade Católica do Porto, Porto, Portugal, 2020



Entre Actos #2*(Between Acts)*

2020

Video Sculpture

Painted wood/ LCD monitor, Headphones,
media player and video

Performer: Luiz Antunes

Voice: Francisco Fino

Text: Diogo Bento

Video duration: 3'23"

165 x 45 x 40 cm

Between Acts #2 which, like its own name, suggests an idea of an interval, an interlude or something in between in relation to the whole, also because it implies an individual viewing experience. This video sculpture displays a representation of Jacques-Louis David's painting *La Mort de Marat* (1793) composed of the account of the letter written by the subject before he died. Often using antiquity as a metaphor for the present, David represents in this painting the imminent moment of the death of one of the leaders of the French Revolution, displacing man's death to create his myth.

Watch video

Installation view of *Pathosformel*, Escola das Artes da Universidade Católica do Porto, Porto, Portugal, 2020



Repeat After me

2020

Sound sculpture

Painted metal; wood and metal tripod;
sound speakers, sound system

Voice: Vasco Araújo

140 x 90 x 140 cm

Repeat after me, sound sculpture inspired by sound reproduction devices, creates moments of interaction with the public that is simultaneously called to listen and instigated to respond, in a game that awakens self-questioning and from the other.

Text:

1- Repeat after me: I am free

2- Repeat after me: I accept you

3 - Repeat after me: I embrace you

Sound



Se pensavas que te livravas de mim...*(If you thought you could get rid of me...)*

2020

Installation

81 colour digital photographs

Text: Based on Mário Cesarini's poetic works

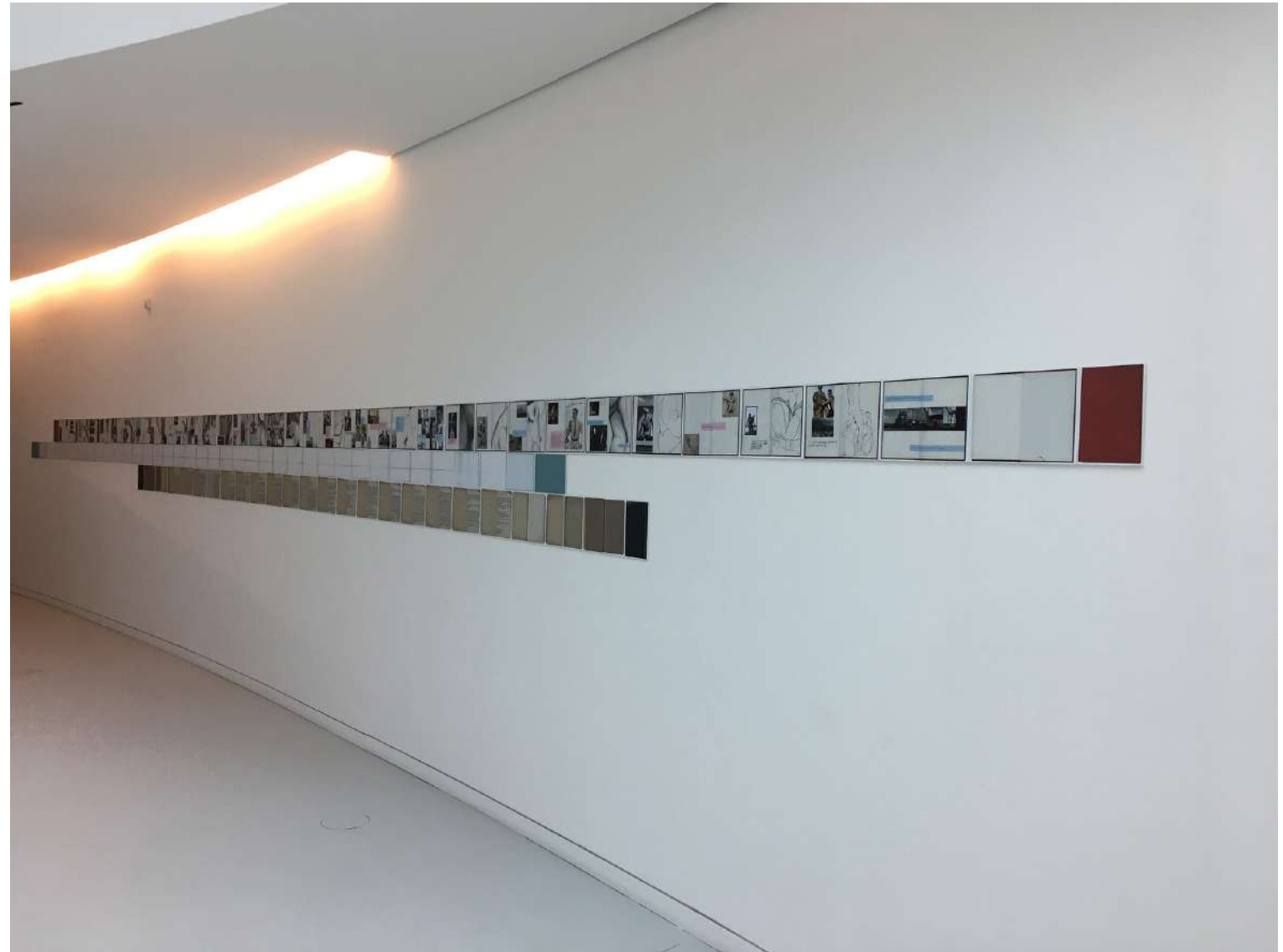
35 x - 31,5 x 23 x 0,3 cm

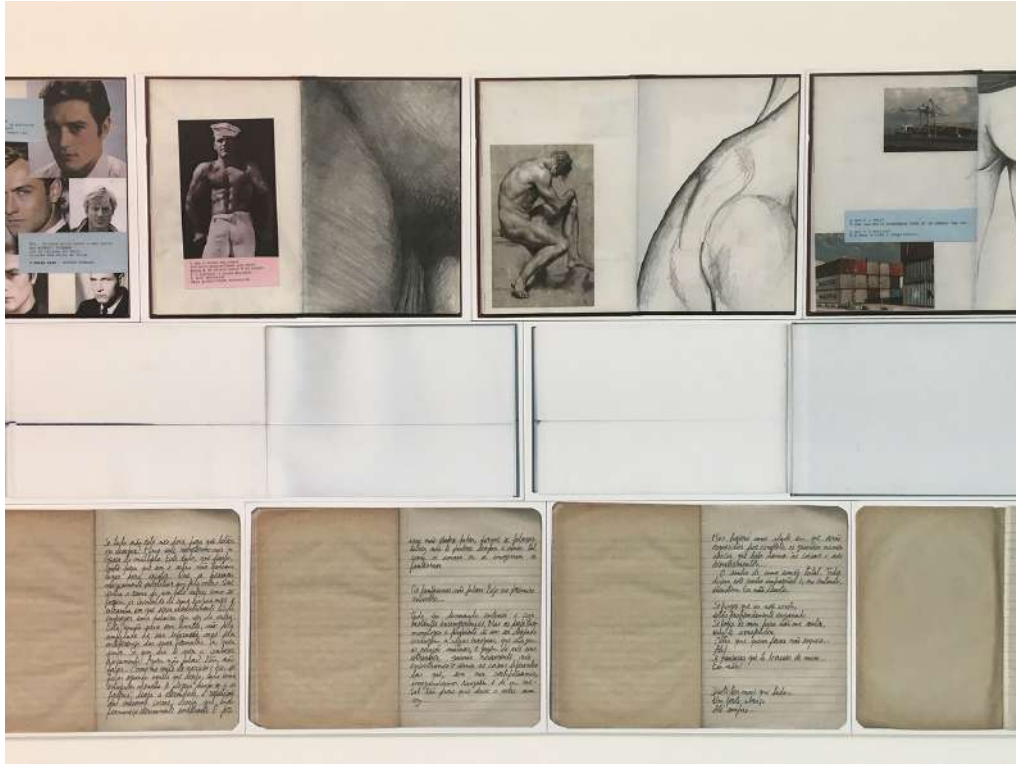
25 x - 28,5 x 22 x 0,3 cm

21 x - 49,5 x 17 x 0,3 cm

Variable dimensions

If you thought you could get rid of me... is a work about desire, about the figure of the sailor, the brave, fearless and seductive hero. The work, a facsimile of three books/diaries, incorporates pictorial and graphic elements, image clippings and sentence excerpts taken from some of Mário Cesarini's best-known poems. The work clearly evokes his famous *Water Lines*, but also the small paintings representing sailors he made in the 60s and the hypothetical encounters he had with some of these enigmatic figures on the quays of the port of Lisbon.

Installation view of *Um oásis ao entardecer*, MAAT, Lisbon, Portugal, 2020



Libertas – Da condição de pessoa livre
(*Libertas – On condition of human freedom*)
2019
Performance

Symphonic Choir Lisboa Cantat; 200 people;
White costumes
Music: *Va pensiero* by G. Verdi's opera
Nabucco
Variable dimensions

Libertas – On the condition of a free person is a performance where a choir of civilians gathers the Slave Choir of the opera *Nabucco* by G. Verdi in its original Italian version. This well-known musical passage is still one of the hymns against oppression, since in Lombardy, in 1842, an Italian province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire aspired to freedom.

The performance takes the form of a march/protest where the participants take a boat ride and sing on foot. The performance intends to question the idea of the human being's freedom, of those who have the freedom to speak, and of the borders that constantly exist between societies, classes, groups and individual people. These confrontations almost always result in oppressive spaces and actions of one dominant group over another, where a chain of actions/reactions unfolds that remind us of the old relationships between men and women, conservatives and liberals, colonizer and colonized, masters and slaves, etc.

[Watch video](#)



Liebestod*(Love and Death)*

2019

Video 16:9

Duration: 37'21"

Psychoanalysts: Anara Quliyeva; Elmira Kazimzade; Nadja Toerger; Vafa Asadova

Voice: Tural Cumshud

Texts: Excerpt from *We* by Robert A. Johnson;*L'Amour et l'Occident* by Denis Rougemont;*Tristão e Isolda ou a paixão segundo Wagner*by Carlos de Ponte Leça; *A velha Balada* by

Gerd Rienäcker

Music: Excerpts of *Tristan und Isolda* byRichard Wagner; *Leyli and Madjinun* by

Uzeyir Hajibeyov and Jeyhun Hajibeyli

Variable dimensions

Liebestod - Love and Death explores romantic love, passion and the impossibility of the two lovers being together. These subjects are revealed through the prism of interviewing psychoanalysts from Azerbaijan and Germany who examine and compare the plots of the two operas and answer a series of questions posed by the artist about definition of love, projection of the hardship of the protagonists in present-day situation and professional advice on how one should act when illusion clashes with reality. Combined with profound lyrics, poignant music and sinister night landscapes of ancient cemeteries, abandoned castle and virgin forests these conversations submerge the viewer into reflection on whether death is the only salvation for eternal love.

Watch video



Installation view of *Liebestod*, Kapellhaus - Goethe institut Centrum, Baku, Azerbaijan

Do mesmo e do outro... #1

(On the same and the other ...)

2018

Sculpture

Bird feathers, wooden and metal box, metal structure

Text: Frantz Fanon's *Black skin, white masks*

160 x 60 x 55 cm

Note: all feathers were collected on the ground and/or donated by the Lisbon Zoo

'... we become all the same, we were made as a group, all with the same voice, a non-voice. We have lost our origin; we no longer belong anywhere. We belong to what they call our world.'



Do mesmo e do outro... #2*(On the same and the other ...)*

2018

Sculpture

Feathers, wooden and metal box, metal structure

Text: Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre*

160 x 60 x 55 cm

Note: all feathers were collected on the ground and/or donated by the Lisbon Zoo

'...We will live forever with these thick scars, but here is the truth: scars protect much more than skin does. If I could be reborn, I would ask to return covered in scars from head to toe. We do not die for having been born, nor for having lived, or for having aged. We die of something else/ of another thing altogether.'



Do mesmo e do outro... #3*(On the same and the other ...)*

2019

Sculpture

Bird feathers, wooden and metal box, metal
struture

Text: Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre*

128 x 36 x 41 cm

Note: all feathers were collected on the
ground and/or donated by the Lisbon Zoo

'Thick tears of edginess and sadness
streamed down his face. But the wrinkles
stopped them from falling. They separated,
came together and formed a water mask
over that face in ruins. His surname: insulted.
His name: humiliated. His race: the struck
down race. His age: the stone age.'



Épico*(Epic)*

2018

Video 16:9

Duration: 20'04"

Voice: Francesco Troisi

Text: Alexandre Melo

Music: *The Ring* without words *Das Rheingold* (Vorspiel; *Walhall*); *Siegfrieds* (*Waldweben*); *Götterdämmerung* (*Siegfrieds tod und Trauermarsch*) Berliner Philharmoniker, Lorin Maazel; Symphony n^o3 by Krzysztof Penderecki National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra (Katowice), Antoni Wit

Variable dimensions

In *Epic*, Araújo departs from American classical cinema concepts in order to subvert some of its visual codes through the manipulation of image, text and music, and arrive at something that lies between a filmed storyboard, a notebook or a model for a possible epic film. Hence, *Epic* unfolds

in different narrative planes: combining different images of the Grand Canyon and Monument Valley with the narration of an original text, written by Alexandre Melo, and which builds on the classical structure of an epic text - probing on the relationships of the single character with the others (the lover and/or the enemies).

The musical score, from Wagner's tetralogy *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, is a staple of the notion of epic, recounting the heroic accomplishments, drama and affairs between gods and men.

Drawing on this recomposition or deconstruction of the notion of epic, the audience is invited to explore a world of allegory, love, passion, drama, war, destruction and hope. With this video, Araújo proposes to rehearse new ways of thinking about our relationship with the "other" as a fundamental way to forge multiple identities.

[Watch video](#)

Interpretation is an interpretation is an interpretation...

2018

Installation

40 wood frames (variable dimensions),
170 drawings on paper, 12 manuscripts on
paper, metal structures, sound recording,
sound system

Sound recording: Ballet notations

Voice: Pedro Afonso

Text: Vasco Araújo based on *cadernos* by
Vaslav Nijinski; *Livro do Desassossego* by
Fernando Pessoa and *Contra a interpretação*
by Susan Sontag

Variable dimensions

Interpretation is an interpretation is an interpretation... departs from the experience of the possibility of fixation and dissemination of a body's movement: movements, gestures, intensities, sequences. The installation – 170 drawings upon paper, sound and quotations by Pessoa, Sontag and Vaslav Nijinsky – starts at the impossibility of finding a record of ballet movement, but coming across that impossibility is transformed into an intense investigation into the difficulty in transcribing the body's movement and the collapse of our notation methods as we attempt to recount the facts produced by a moving body. The piece talks about the impossibility of total fixation of humans movements without making use of image technologies, and everything refers to the confirmation that we are always facing interpretations, which are recreations, detours, inventions.

Sound







Capriccio

2018

Video installation

Theater curtain with a digital print

(600x450cm); metal bar

Video 16:9

Duration: 30'00"

Variable dimensions

Installation view of *La Morte del Desiderio*, Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, Portugal, 2018

Capriccio, a video installation, consists of a video projected in a theatre curtain. In it, the spectator is invited to read a scrolling text — a series of lines for actors — written by José Maria Vieira Mendes for the movie *Death of desire*, that will never be shot. With rapidly changing sets, hidden characters and unsatisfied voices, the video lasts as long as the potential movie would.





NoteBook - La morte del desiderio

2018

Installation

80 Colour digital photographs (45 x 35 cm and 35 x 27 cm)

Text: Vasco Araújo based on poems of Konstandinos Kavafis and Al Berto

Variable dimensions

Notebook — La morte del desiderio is a series of 80 digital photographs followed by with facsimiles of a notebook created by the artist based on poems by Konstantínos Kaváfis and Al Berto, and his own texts. The photographs of roman statues from the Capitoline Museum of Rome together with the descriptive texts create a space of intertextuality, arising different interpretation possibilities about the portrayed characters.

Installation view of **La Morte del Desiderio**, Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, Portugal, 2018

O Inimigo
 (The enemy)
 2018
 Installation

Digital photograph, light projector, sound system, speakers, sound recording (14'00"), wood box

Voices: Fernanda Lapa and Leonaldo de Almeida

Text: by Vasco Araújo based on diverse books
 Variable dimensions

The installation *O inimigo* stages a dialogue between a machine gun and a statue, using sound and sculpture. As the two participant voices make an enemy of each other, Araújo tackles issues such as the relationship between the self and the other, the human self-destructive condition, the portrayal and the fear of difference, History's repetition tendencies and, ultimately, the establishment of power.

Sound



Installation view of *La Morte del Desiderio*, Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, Portugal, 2018

Todas as Histórias*(All the Stories)*

2018

Video installation

Video, screen, projector table, 4 chairs

Video 16:9

Duration: 17'39"

Voice: Paula Sá Nogueira

Text: From the tragedies of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles, and with quotations from the article *Silent cowardice* by João Sousa Monteiro

Variable dimensions

Todas as Histórias is a video as a slide show format of photographs of Greek vases from the British Museum in London. The video is accompanied by a narration of several stories from all the Greek tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides. The work tells us about the way we relate to memory, history and stories, with objects, with their narrative clues. It is also about fragments, about permanencies or about what remains, how it remains and how we show and value certain aspects of what remains. About love, about life and its absence.

Watch video



Installation view of *Todas as Histórias*, Fundação Carmona e Costa, Lisbon, Portugal, 2018

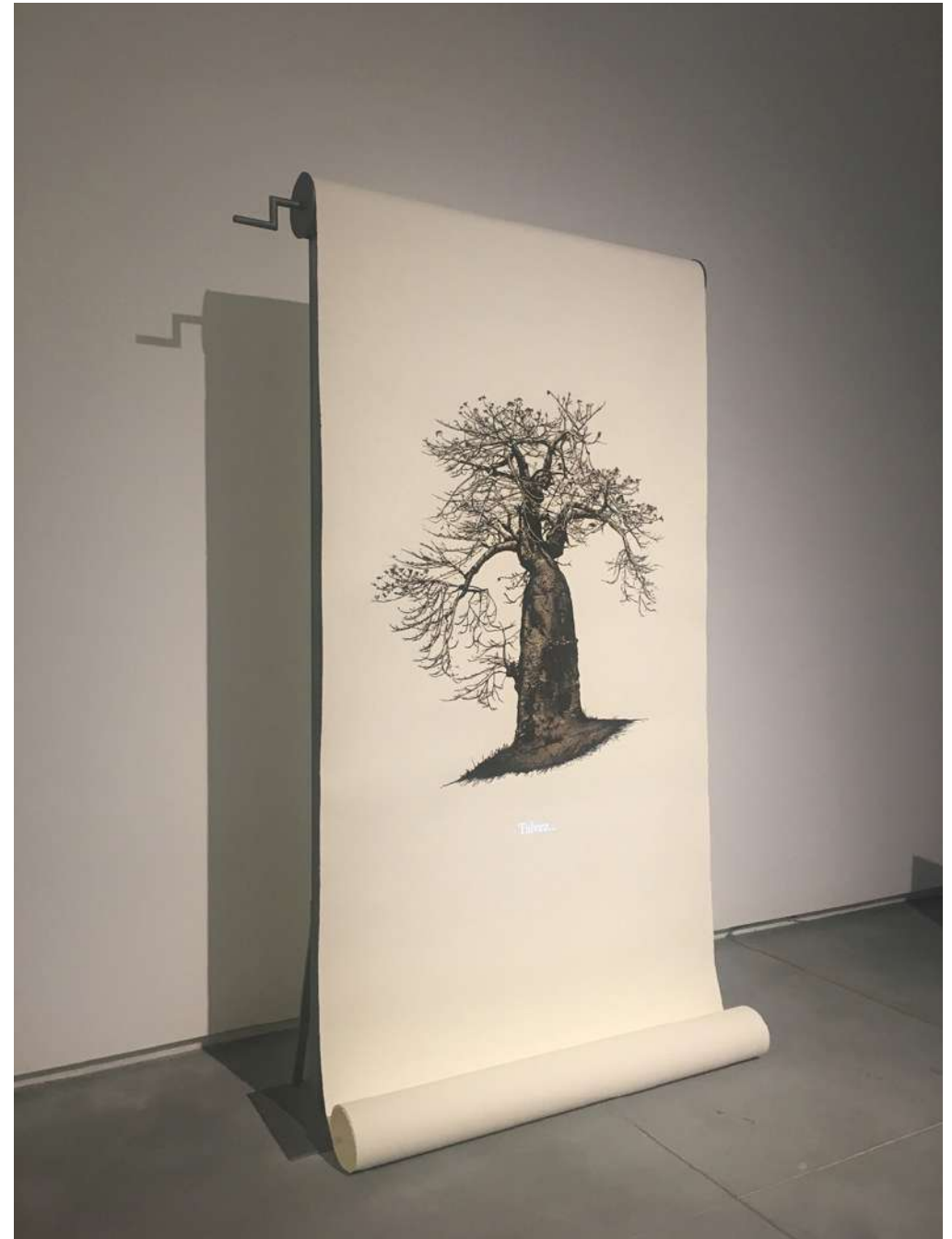
Adansonia

2017

Installation

Metal structure, drawings on paper
(155x250cm), video
Video duration: 8'14"
Text: Vasco Araújo
Variable dimensions

Adansonia results in an installation of one large format drawing (50x250cm - Baobás drawing). In this drawing it is projected the video of a text that talks about a journey, a passage and the adaptation of the plants that were originary from other places and that, by the hand of the Europeans, were taken to other regions of the planet. The construction of the text it is dubious to create a metaphor and an analogy between the history of plants and the history of human beings, making a parallel with slavery and all its consequences that we are witnessing today.





Infinity Memory

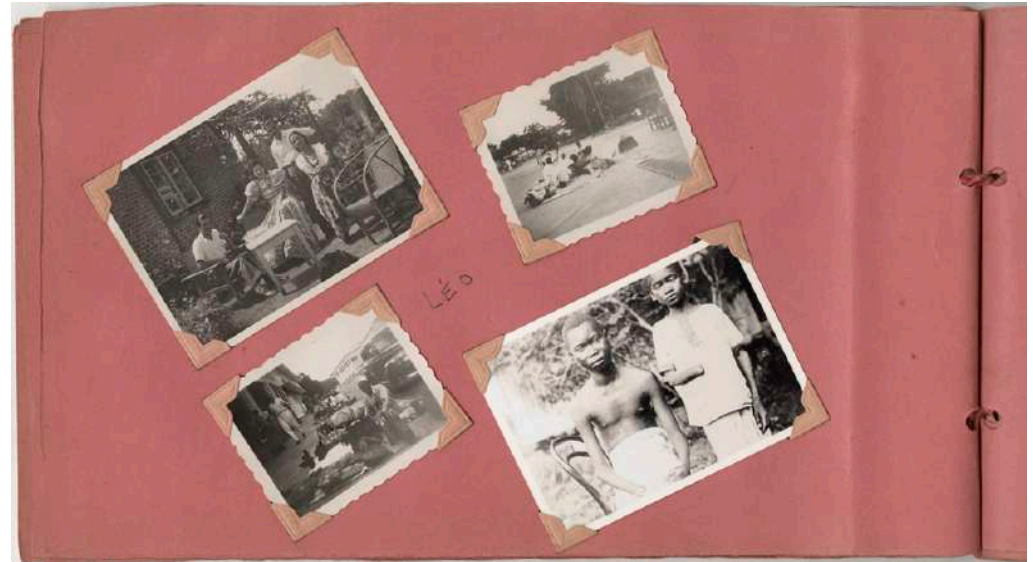
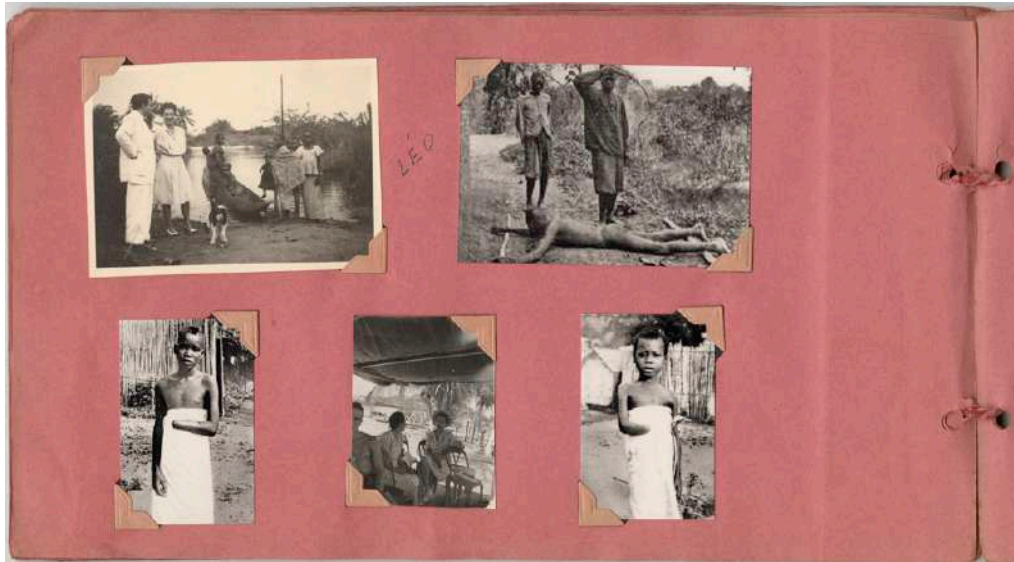
2016

Sculpture

Painted wood archive, 14 digital photographs, wood frames, dymo tapes
150 x 70 x 100 cm

Infinity Memory is a sculpture that takes the shape of an archive where we can find a photographic album of 1946 with images from the Belgian Congo. This album comprises images of a couple in domestic and public sceneries, such as images of exploitation and civilizing actions led by the Belgian King Leopold II in Africa. The profile of this sculpture prompts the image of a coffin where the memories of this often covert massacre are buried away.

Installation view of **Vasco Araújo – Decolonial Desires**, Autograph ABP, London, U.K., 2016



Ethos #1

2016

Sculpture

Wood table, 14 digital photographs, wood frames, dimo tapes
210 x 105 x 180 cm

Ethos is the greek word used to define the guiding principles of a person. This piece is constituted by a table cut across by digital photographs which report to the Berlin Conference held in 1884-5 and where representatives of the seven imperial powers gathered to regulate colonial trade and governance of the African continent. On one side of the printed photographs, we find portraits of the leading figures of this meeting, and on the other side of the plates we can see reproductions of paintings that illustrate battlefields and "civilizing" actions led by the colonizers in colonial settings.



Installation view of **Vasco Araújo – Decolonial Desires**, Autograph ABP, London, U.K., 2016

Parque Temático*(Theme Park)*

2016

Installation video

6 letters, table, wall text

Video

Duration : 8'44"

Format : 16:9

Voices: Sofia Lobo; João Pedro Gama; Igor Lebreaud; Miguel Magalhães; Ana Pires Quintais; Delfim Sardo; Vasco Araújo

Text: Vasco Araújo

Music: *Quartetto per Archi N°1*, by Krzysztof Penderecki; *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima for 52 Stringed Instruments* by Krzysztof Penderecki
Variable dimensions

Theme Park was specifically made for Laboratório de Curadoria [Curatorial Lab] following *The Garden* realized in the old Colonial Garden Lisbon or currently named with Tropical Garden.

This work questions the problems of the existence of man's freedom, from the

existing colonial iconography in Portugal dos Pequenitos starring between the sculptures that are at the entrance of the pavilions of the former Portuguese colonies.

Theme Park approaches colonial issues, from the relationship of power and the human condition of the Other, denouncing the submission game from the history of slavery frozen in the statuary representing black figures forever stuck in that condition.

In the artist's original proposal there would be captured images of the statues that were not authorized by the institution that manages the Portugal dos Pequenitos, the piece maintains the dialogue written by Vasco Araújo, while black screens indicate the impossibility of capturing images proposed by the artist.

The colonial wound keeps open by the contingencies surrounding the realization of this work.

[Watch video](#)



Tradução
(Translation)
2015
Installation

7 drawings on paper (150 x 350 cm each),
7 videos
Text: Vasco Araújo
Variable dimensions

When Europeans arrived in the humid tropics and saw the lush vegetation that served as the virgin forest paradigm, considered the lands of this region endowed with great fertility and believed she would be inexhaustible, since when carrying out the sowing of annual plants in the areas of felled forest, obtained various crops. This procedure made it possible for Europeans to bring all kinds of plants from all over the planet to be explored in these regions, and some of these regions have not passed the quarantine premises, but nevertheless, served to supply Europe. These plants, vegetables and fruits began to be seen as exotic and as such, were taken to other locations to be explored and thus result in wealth for people and

countries who knew nothing of them, and that 's largely never consumed . The "translation " project is the analysis of the trip of plants, fruits and vegetables that were originally brought by Europeans to other parts of the planet and on reaching the new land, had absolutely diverse and extraordinary results, thus initiating a process of miscegenation and otherness, creating new identities .

Thus, *translation* results in an installation of nine large format drawings (130x200cm Study designs of Botany XVII century) plant that originated in other places and that, by the hand of the Europeans, were taken to other regions of planet and then adapted and changed at the conditions offered. In these drawings will be projected videos of texts that speak of a journey , a passage and the adaptation of the plants or perhaps, human beings. The construction of the texts themselves will be dubious to create a metaphor and an analogy between the history of plants and the history of human beings , making a parallel with slavery and all its consequences that we are witnessing today.



Installation view of **Traducción**, FLORA ars + nature, Bogotá, Colombia, 2015

La Schiava

2015

Video 16:9

Duration: 28' 50"

Voices: Billy Woodberry

Actress: Jenny Larrue

Text: from the *BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS* by Frantz Fanon; *CULTURE AND IMPERIALISM* by Edward W. Said; *AIDA* by Leontyne Price; *Verdi's Aida across the Mediterranean (and beyond)* by Serena Guarracino

Music : Excerpts of *AIDA* by Giuseppe Verdi

Arias - *Ritorna Vincitor* and *Oh Patria Mia*

Interpreted by Leontyne Price; Opera

paraphrases, *Danza sacra et duetto final*

d'Aida by Franz Liszt; *I wish I knew how it*

would fell to be free, Leontyne Price and

Rust College Choir

Variable dimensions

In *La Schiava* (The Slave), Vasco Araújo takes his inspiration from Verdi's famous opera *Aida* and from texts relating to the history of slavery and to post-colonial theory to propose a work which remains close to the tradition of cinema while subverting its codes through a very personal investigation of the image. This video is made of several tableaux

blending images of an opera singer playing *Aida*, the Ethiopian princess, who is kidnapped and reduced to slavery, with images of various objects found in the backstage of a theatre objects loaded with memories.

The artist draws a parallel between this renowned lyric tragedy and the writings of important figures who have contributed to forging a new perspective on postcolonial history. For example, excerpts from *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon are integrated into the film alongside texts by Guiseppe Verdi and Edward W. Said, as well as quotations from the famous opera singer, Leontyne Price. The voiceover narration is done by the American film director Billy Woodberry, the emblematic figure of the L.A. Rebellion movement (or The Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers).

Through this composition of multiple interpretations, which immerses the viewer in a world of drama and performance, the artist proposes, amongst other things, a reflection on questions of identity and our relationship to the ever-present notion of colonialism.

Watch video





Installation view of *Triângulo do Atlântico* (Atlantic triangle) 11^o Bienal Mercosul, Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul, Memorial do Rio Grande do Sul, Santander Cultural, Praça da Alfândega e Igreja Nossa Senhora das Dores, no Centro Histórico de Porto Alegre. Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2018



O inferno não são os outros #1

2015

Sculpture

Wood table, wood african statues

Text: from Pepetela's "Yaka"

275 x 110 x 80 cm

O inferno não são os outros, a wood sculpture, resembles a table on the top and reveals a series of wooden sculptures on the bottom. Viewed from above, the sculpture presents an engraved text, based on Pepetela's "Yaka" that addresses racism and the dissemination of hate speech against minorities. Hidden beneath this discourse are several African statues, representing the oppressed.

Installation view of ***Demasiado Pouco, demasiado tarde***, CIAJG – Centro Internacional de Arte José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, 2015

My father thumped the table and, like many others, he cried out for posterity:
Damn it! You can't always live in fear. We must get rid of them all.

- All of them, Joaquim?

- All of them! As long as there are blacks in this land, we will continue to live in fear. I don't give a damn if they revolt because the good lands for growing coffee are stolen from them. I don't give a damn if they revolt against the tax to have a hut or against the birth tax. I don't give a damn if they think that it's unfair to pay for the air that they breathe. I don't give a damn if the land was theirs before. I don't want to live in fear any more. And stop looking at me like that, Dulce, I also don't give a damn about you and whatever you think about me.

- Calm down, Joaquim. You'll wake the children.

- My father died through fear. I was born with fear. You all live in fear. A year doesn't go by without a revolt. Damn it, that's enough. - My father said to his friends seated around the table.

My godfather said quietly:

- Don't you think you're exaggerating? Look - maybe they're right.

- You too, Jorge? I can't stand any more, we have to get rid of them all, they're useless.

- There have been many abuses. The good lands for growing coffee were all taken by the settlers. Any excuse would do. They drove out the population to the poorest lands. And they took slaves. I'm telling you, there were slaves in the fields.

- That ended many years ago ... the slave trade is over, Jorge.

- That's what you think, but there are still slaves. Even the planters don't deny it, as well as the fact that workers are mistreated, but it's best to keep it hushed up. You can't say these things out loud, but that's what I saw. The whip is used all day long, for everything and anything. And they still crucify people. Cru-ci-fy them!

- That's awful! ... - my mother and my aunt exclaimed at the same time. My father said:

- That's enough ... let's go to the smoking room, this won't change.



Exotismo #1

2014

Sound sculpture

Plastic palm tree, wood table, MP3 sound, headphones

Text: Vasco Araújo

Voices: Mariana Sá Nogueira, Paula Sá Nogueira, Vasco Araújo

170 x 60 x 60 cm

Text:

A – Oh it's so exotic! So exotic.

B – Ahahaha.

C - Uau, so exotic.

B - Very exotic.

Exotismo #1 and *#2* and *Exotismo Physiologus* are part of a series with the same title that uses fruits and plants commonly depicted as exotic, such as the palm tree, the coconut or bananas, along with voice and music recordings. By putting the natural elements over a table and combining them with exaggerated voiced remarks that describe the objects as tropical or exotic, the sound sculptures address our definition of exotic and our relationship with what we deem as different.

Sound



Exotismo #2

2014

Sound sculpture

Coconut, plastic flower, wood table, MP3

sound, headphones

Text: Vasco Araújo

Voices: Diogo Bento

150 x 40 x 40 cm

Text:

A - It's Tropical! It is exotic !! I love the tropics

... are very sensual, exotic, all those colours

are... are ridiculous.

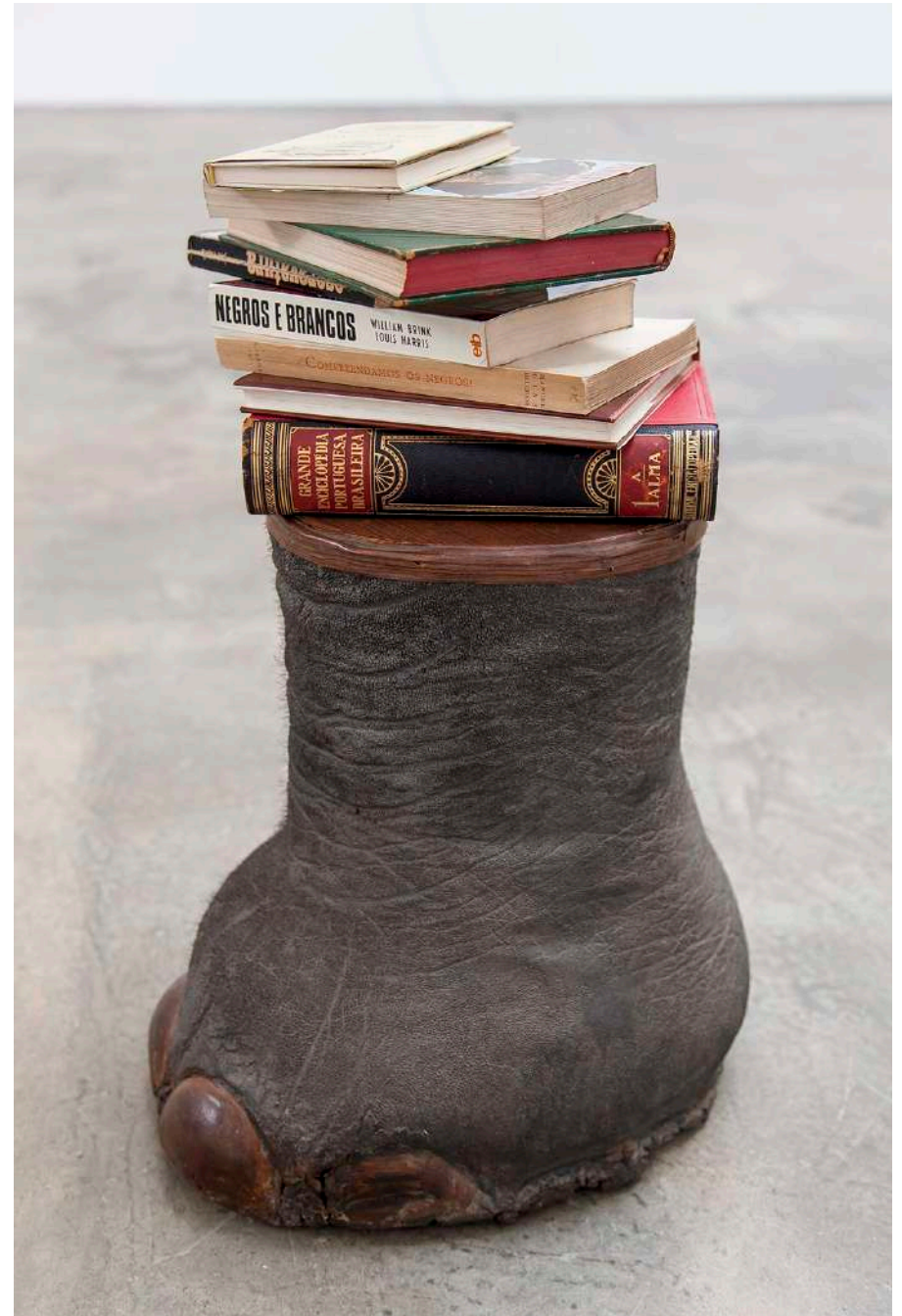
Sound



Exotismo – Physiologus

2014
Sculpture

Elephant foot, books
70 x 30 x 30 cm





Installation view of *Demasiado Pouco, demasiado tarde*, CIAJG – Centro Internacional de Arte José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, 2015

La Chute vers...

2014

Installation

Light projectors, speakers, sound recording (8'00"), wooden chairs
 Voices: Isabel Corte Real; João Vasconcelos
 Text: Based on Cesare Pavese's *Dialogues with Luecó*
 Variable dimensions

La Chute Vers..., 2014, is a synesthetic installation with light projectors, wooden chairs and sound. The text of the sound recording is based on Cesare Pavese's *Diálogos com Leucó*, and gives shape to a disturbing and tragic dialogue between the gods Europa and Thunder, about thought, fear and the dimension of the hypothesis of change and lost.

Watch video

Installation view of ***E eles tinham coisa para me dizer***, CAV – Centro de Artes Visuais de Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal, 2015

Retrato

(Portrait)

2014

Video 16:9

Duration: 17'04"

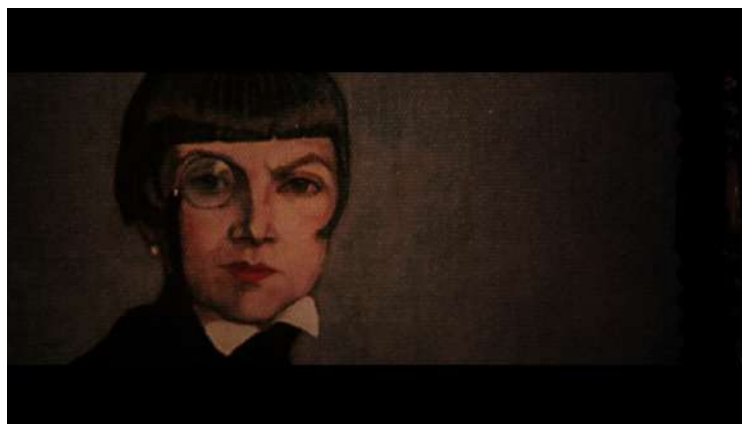
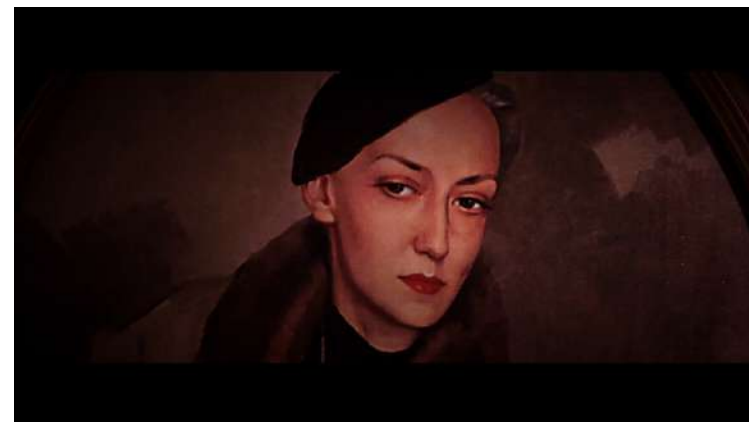
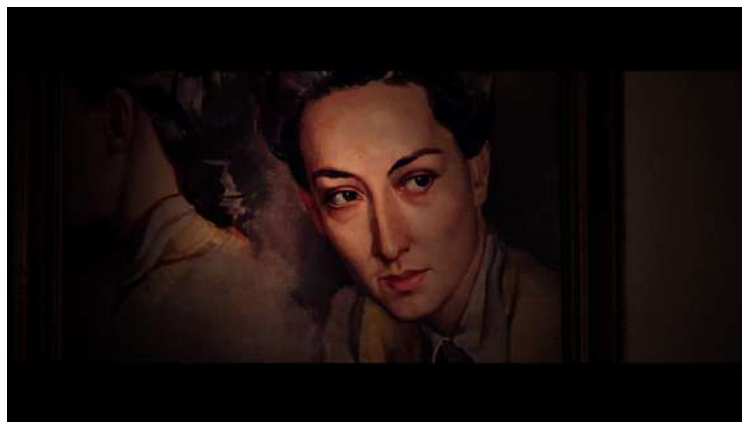
Voices: Paula Sá Nogueira; Pedro Penim;
 Leonaldo de Almeida; Ana Isabel Strindberg;
 André e. Teodósio; Letícia da Costa
 Gonçalves; Cláudia Jardim; Filomena
 Andrade e Sousa; Joana Barrios; Patrícia da
 Silva; André Godinho; Sissi Simão; Mariana
 Sá Nogueira; Vasco Araújo

Paintings: Eduardo Malta's painting
 reproductions

Text: José Maria Vieira Mendes

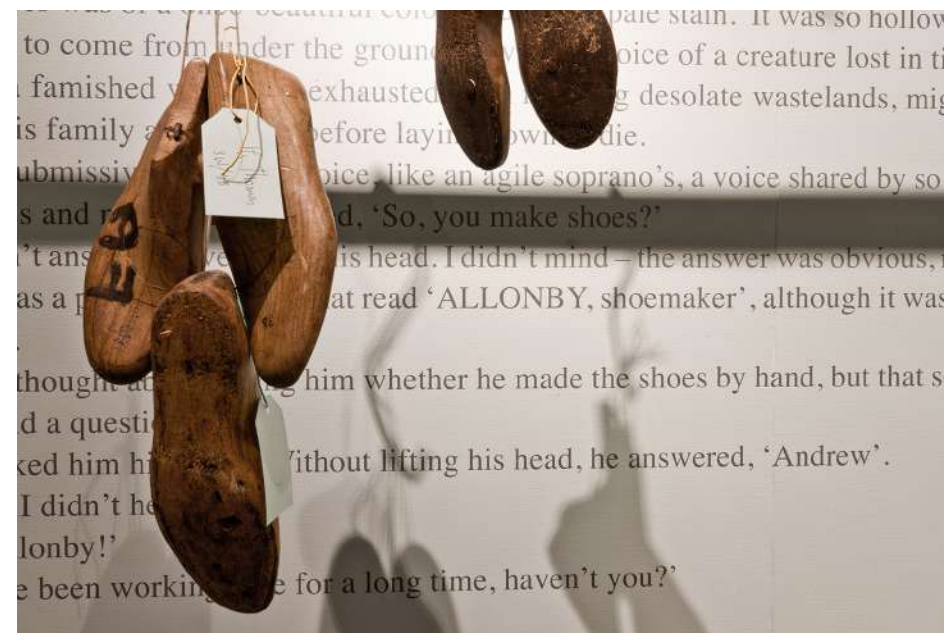
Music : Richard Wagner - *Tristan und Isolde*:
Vorspiel and *Isolde's Liebestod* (arranged
 for two pianos); *Ankunft bei den schwarzen
 Schwänen*; *Elegy in Aflat.*; Franz Liszt - Opera
 paraphrases, *Isolde's Liebestod*
 Variable dimensions

Portrait is a video about the memory, the
 memory of a place, a home, a family. The
 shooting of several portraits (reproductions
 of paintings by Eduardo Malta) which guide
 the walls of a house devoid of people as
 if it were a still life serves as a motto for a
 dialogue between characters who talk about
 their feelings, power games, the relationship
 with the other, thus creating an atmosphere
 of mystery and seduction.

Watch video



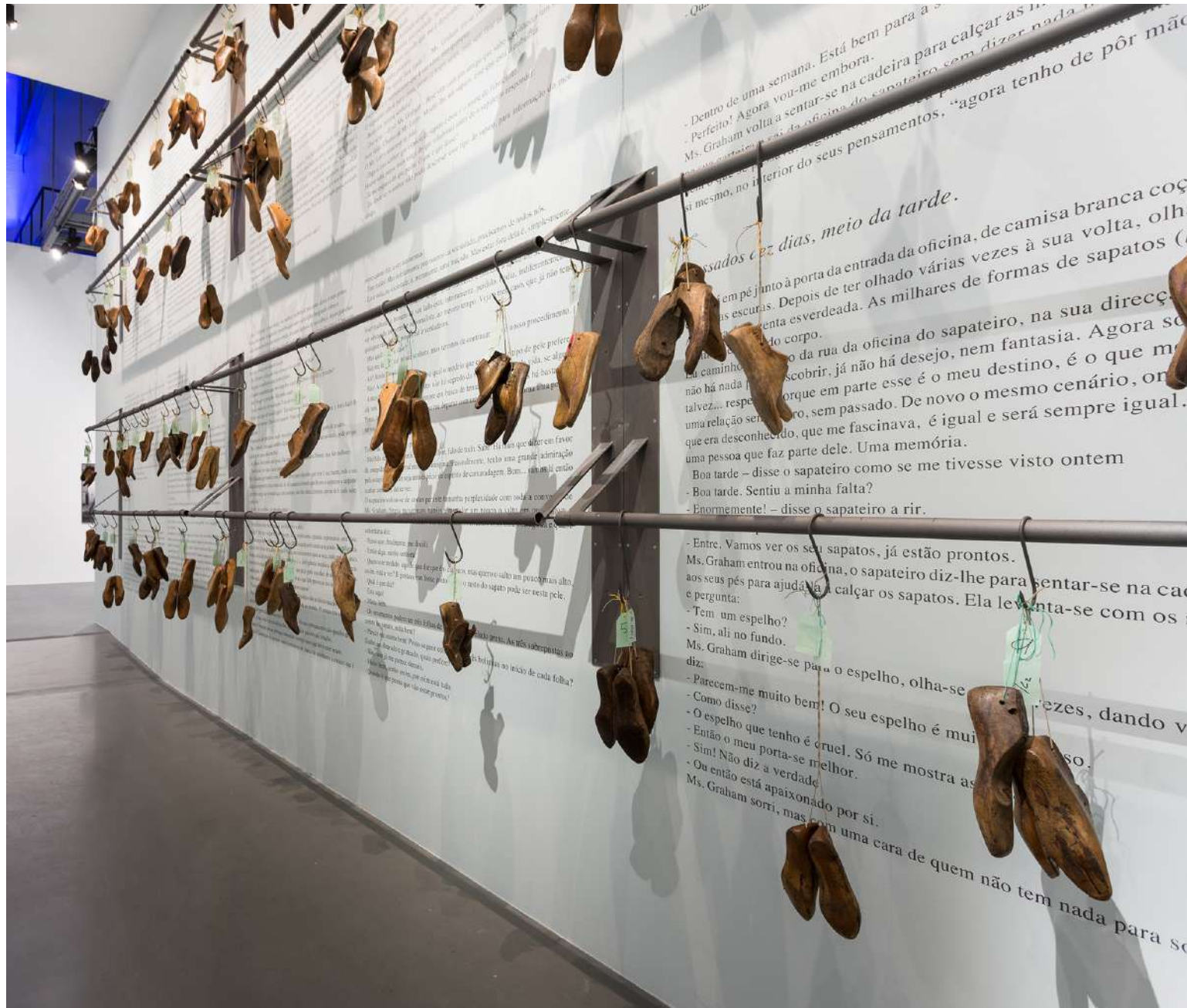
Installation view of *Under the influence of Psyche*, The Power Plant – Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, Canada, 2014



Lasts
2012
Installation

Painted metal struture, 130 lasts, vinyl text,
6 chairs and 6 books
Variable dimensions

Installation view of **Story telling**, Northampton Museum and Arte Gallery/ Abington Park Museum and Picturedrome, Northampton. U.K., 2012



Installation view of *Momento à parte*, MAAT – Museu de Arte, Arquitectura e Tecnologia – Fundação EDP, Lisbon, Portugal, 2019



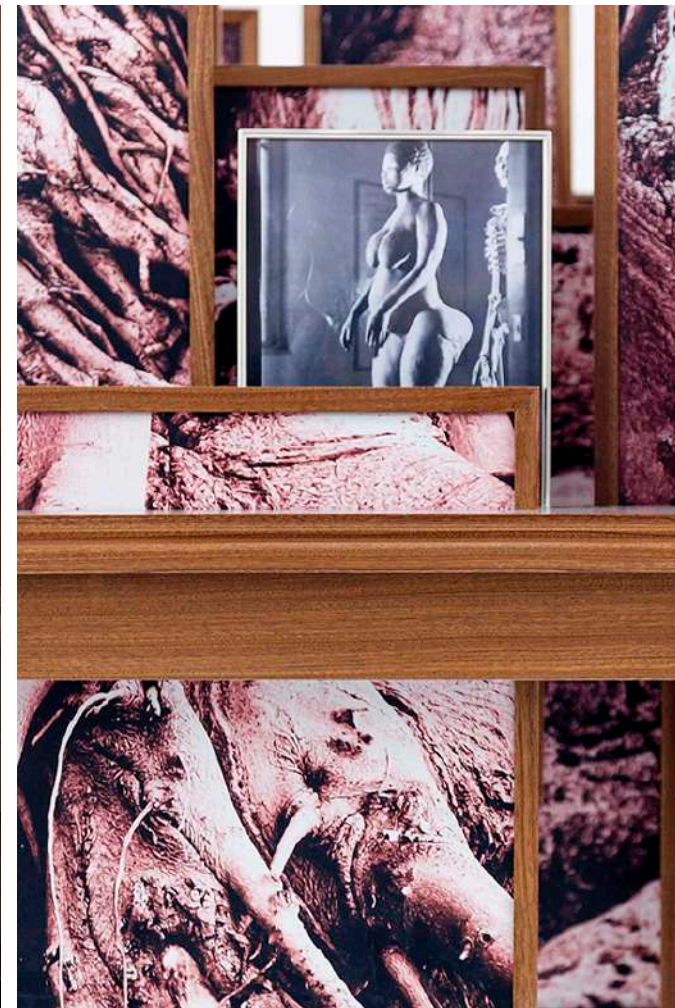
Botânica #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6
2012-14
Sculpture

Wood table, 21 digital photographs; wood
and metal frames
100 x 100 x 120 cm



Botânica #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12
2012-14
Sculpture

Wood table, 14 digital photographs; wood
and metal frames
60 x 110 x 120 cm





Installation view of *Botânica*, MNAC – Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon, Portugal, 2014

Vulcano

2012

Video 16:9

Duration: 17'04"

Voice: Francesco Troisi

Paintings: João Fitas

Text: Vasco Araújo

Music : Symphony Nº2 *Corpernican*, Op.31;*Already it is dusk* (String Quartet Nº 1) Op.62; *Quasi una fantasia* (String Quartet Nº2)Op. 64; *Sing are sung* (String Quartet Nº3)

Op. 67 by Henryk Mikolaj Górecki

Variable dimensions

Vulcano is the observation of the human being in its psychological aspect. In this sense, I am interested to see how the man becomes afraid of the change and how he deals with this transformation. We always found that we could not change anything on us. We can change our home we change everything around us, the less we own. The volcano poured me a metaphor for the issue of change in humans. In principle, a change or transformation seems a terrible thing - it destroys a lot - but then it is always for the better. In the specific case of this video, the volcano that appears in several paintings is Vesuvius, these paintings are reproductions of paintings sec. XVIII Italian.

[Watch video](#)



Installation view of *Under the influence of Psyche*, The Power Plant – Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, Canada, 2014

Detritus

2011

Digital photographs

180x100cm

Detritus, 2011, consists of enlarged detail images taken from the interior of an old photography album without photographs, building a sublime architecture about memory's absence. The work explores the relationship between memory and matter by revealing the gaps of the images and discourses associated with them. What instigates us to think is always a traumatic, violent encounter, with an external reality that's brutally imposed, questioning our usual way of thinking. As such, one true thought is always off centre: we don't think spontaneously, we are forced to think.





Installation view of *E eles tinham coisa para me dizer*, CAV – Centro de Artes Visuais de Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal, 2015

Telos

2011

Video: 16:9

Duration: 24' 75"

Actors: Old man: José Manuel Mendes;

Twins: Gustavo and Gabriel Ribeiro; Woman:

Paula Sá Nogueira; Transvestite: Vítor

d'Andrade; Dwarf : David Almeida; Dog:

Vasco Araújo; A lover couple : Patrícia da

Silva e André e. Teodósio; The crowd:

Cláudia Jardim, Diogo Bento; Leticia da

Costa Gonçalves ; Paulo Lamim; André

Gomes; Cristina Falcão; Irene Pimentel;

Carlos Almeida; Helena César; Francisca

Silva e Sousa; Luís Ferreira Gomes

Text: based on *Rêveries of a solitary Walker*

by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Music: Symphony N^o4 *Magma* by Erkki-

Sven Tüür

Variable dimensions

Telos is based on the life of the great philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, also called "The Cynic". During his life he became a beggar, making his extreme poverty a virtue; it is said that he lived in a barrel instead of a house, and that he wandered through the streets carrying a lantern during the day trying to find an honest man. It's precisely this fact that is explored in this video, where the interaction of an older character with others shows us an incessant quest for the truth, for what brings happiness and well-being of human beings, creating a parable embracing all characters that end up disappearing without a concrete answer, they leave in search of a non self-contained ideal. *Telos* is about a quest of natural life, that doesn't depend on the lusts of civilization, where it is believed that the virtue is better revealed in action than in theory. Where life is made by a tireless campaign for the inner truth of things.

Watch video

"The one that cheats, saying the opposite of the truth, is no more unjust than the one who cheats not declaring the truth; in terms of useless truths, worst than the mistake is ignorance."





Installation view of *Before day break*, Nuit Blanche, Toronto, Canada, 2014

Trabalhos para nada “O homem com duas cabeças”

(Works for nothing “The man with two heads”)

2011

Installation

Wood table, plaster sculpture and metal plate with engraved text
105 x 123 x 60 cm

In this as in everything else, my temperament strongly influenced my principles, or rather my habits, since I never acted according to rules and never followed any rules other than my natural impulses. A premeditated lie never entered my thoughts, I never lied through personal interest; sometimes I omitted certain facts. But I lied many times out of shame, to get myself out of difficult situations in matters of no importance or



Installation view of **Mente-me**, Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon, Portugal, 2011

when, he! yes, he that always follows me, who doesn't speak, and who only sends my thoughts into turmoil by telling me what to say, says that I must be assertive! He doesn't understand! When I have to talk and no amusing facts come to mind, I tell tales, so as not to remain silent. On inventing these tales, however, I try as hard as possible to make sure they are not lies, that is that they are not unjust or contrary to the truth, and that they are no more than insignificant fictions to everyone and to me myself. Yet it is at this moment that he cries out with me and tells me that I am ridiculous. The pace of conversations, faster than that of my ideas, almost always forces me to speak before thinking, and thus often suggests stupidities and nonsense to me which are rejected by his mind and condemned by his heart as soon as I utter them. However, since they preceded my own judgement, they cannot then be reformulated according to his criticisms. After much reflection, I realise that my

concern for truthfulness is based more on notions of rectitude and fairness than on the true nature of things and that, in practice, it would seem that I am obliged to obey my own moral precepts rather than abstract notions of true and false. I told many tales, but I rarely lied. By following these principles, I presented others with many ways to dominate me but I never hurt anyone nor created unfair advantages for myself. It seems to me that only thus is truth a virtue. In any other guise, it is to us nothing more than a metaphysical entity, from which neither good nor bad results. Whenever I was obliged to flesh out the sterility of my discourse with innocent fictions, he complained that I was wrong, since one should not defile oneself for the entertainment of others. And whenever, carried along by the pleasure of writing, I added fictional ornaments to reality, it was worse still and he would state that embellishing truth with tales is, in reality, the same as defacing it.



"O Homem com duas cabeças"

Nisso como em tudo o rest: o meu temperamento, indigo, tinha sobre os meus princípios, ou antes, sobre os factos habitos, já que nunca aqui me detinha a regras ou não segui, em tudo, outras regras a não ser as minhas impetivas ideias. Nunca uma mostra premeditada se aproxima do meu pensamento, e a minha, por interesse pessoal, por vezes omite alguns factos. Mas moni muitas vezes, por vergonha, para me salvar de aprazos em casa, com impudência ou talvez não. Não, este que está aqui sempre por de trás de mim, que não fala e só me apresenta os pensamentos ao dizer aquilo que devo falar. Diz que tenho de ser assertivo e que não devo mentir, porém, preciso, o mais possível que não não assombrar-me com as coisas que me vêm à justiça nem a verdade que é devida, e que não, antes de mais, que não, antes de mais, antes para toda a gente e para mim próprio. Mas é um momento que ele grita sempre e diz que sou ridículo.

Trabalhos para nada “Sem Qualidades”
 (Works for nothing “Without Qualities”)
 2011
 Installation

Wooden wardrobe, acrylic glass with
 handwriting text, hanging clothes
 186 x 166 x 61 cm

For years I was known as a sensitive person, my sensibility was constantly shaken by periods of meditation, depression, peaks and troughs. At this time I thought I saw everything differently to everyone else; things that others were indifferent to had an impact on me, and whilst others touched certain things without thinking, for me the simple act of moving my arm was a spiritual adventure, or narcissistic paralysis. I was never indifferent, seeing happiness or tragedy in everything, so there were constant



Installation view of **Mente-me**, Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon, Portugal, 2011



opportunities to find excitement in things. People like me exert an unusual hold over other people, since they always perceive what they regard as my moral diligence. When I talk, everything has a personal significance and, since on these occasions we can talk of nothing but ourselves, this is a source of pleasure which could otherwise only be achieved by paying a psychiatrist or psychologist – with the additional difference that in those circumstances we feel that we are unwell, whilst I helped people, for reasons which even now they cannot identify, to feel very important. This quality of mine, which enabled me to assist others

in contemplating their own spirituality, also won over all those who claimed to be sceptical with respect to so-called mysterious matters, or rather, the suffering of the self.

These days, I laugh at myself! I find it increasingly odd to talk to and be with people, above all when they, the same people I conversed with all that time, on those subjects, have adopted the same discourse or themes as their own truth, since most of them don't know, or even understand what they are talking about. At times, I myself didn't know, but it came naturally to me, it was like a recurrent

intuition, which obliged me to talk, to say all those things, to those people.

In spite of that, I would scarcely have arrived at home, full of plans and impressions, which were perhaps more considered and original than ever, when a demoralising change would come over me. It was enough for me to place a sheet of paper on the desk: it was the sign of a terrible change of heart. My head remained clear and, as if it hovered in a limpid, transparent atmosphere, the project unfolded itself into two or more planes which jostled amongst themselves for priority, but it was as if the links between my brain and the first impulses needed to carry it

out had been severed. I was incapable of moving a finger to do anything. I remained seated, and the ideas dissipated on contact with the imminent task like snow that melts after falling on the ground. Everything was difficult for me, everything became terrible, uncomfortable and an accusatory reminder of a sequence of events, leading me to a state in which I was incapable of dealing with myself, thus creating a kind of allergy to everything I ate, touched, even affecting the way I dressed – the clearest example being an inability to wear coloured clothes. Everything seemed like a curse, a real catastrophe which afflicted my every sense. So I needed to change everything dictated to me by my previous philosophy, returning to a profoundly (profound) and conscious analysis of reality. I quickly realised that everything I had referred to as qualities were now non-qualities or, more radically, profound defects, which left me in a state of profound anguish combined with shame about everything around me. Now I only wear white as a way of cleansing myself of all the actions and theories I proffered in the past, as well as because of my persistent skin allergies, which are less frequently caused by white. This new state of mine allows me to achieve a sense of alienation which has the advantage for me of preventing me from ever remembering who I am and much less what I say, since I now feel much more at ease. My conscience is generous enough to allow me to give and take. I am happy, cleansed, calm and I feel good about myself, in spite of not being able to talk to others nor look them in the eye.

Impero

2010

Video: 16:9

Duration: 17'39"

Actress: Mónica Calle

Voices by: Mónica Calle; Massimo Angeloni;

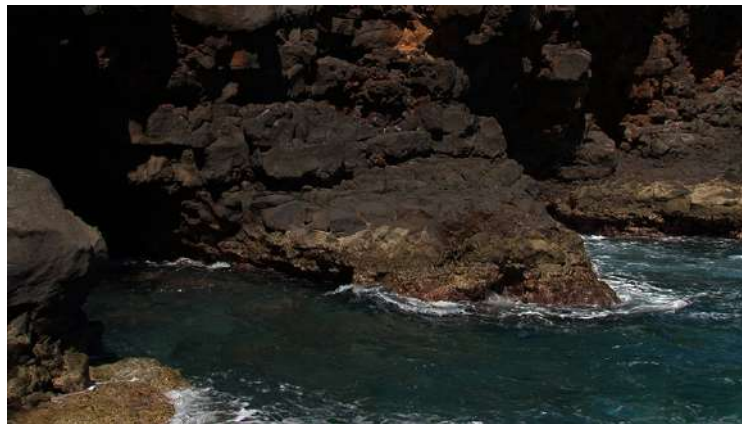
Anna Bernardi; Valeria Pola

Text: André e. Teodósio

Variable dimensions

The Roman Empire certainly is one of the most influential ideologies that shaped the western world. It was directed by rules, maneuvers and specific political/social actions, commanded by an emperor and a senate which were essential to its functioning. Nevertheless, any empire is based on a social organization formed by individuals. Each of these individuals, although embraces the general rules of the empire, is also driven by a set of rules that dictate his procedures and actions in another scale of the gain of power. Nowadays, the rules, actions and social relations that surround the gain of power, while assuming different forms, are still patent in our society. The dislocation of the focus point to the individual, that occurs in the contemporary society, has led to a more visible need of the construction of personal empires. *Impero* sets a bridge between those two types of empires and between their sets of rules and actions. The text, written by André E. Teodósio draws a parallel relation between the notion of personal and collective empire, showing antagonist positions of a time filled with possibilities and promises and another one that sinks in the collapse of the despair.

Watch video



Insula

2010

Video: 16:9

Duration: 17'39"

Actor: Carlos Cro

Voice: Pedro Gomes

Text: Vasco Araújo

Variable dimensions

The declaration "We are an island" leave us the space to compare Island and Human being at a physical and psychological level, where the change is the modification of any circumstance, situation or condition, physical or not physical, in a way that the original becomes not only different from what it was, but also changed in such a radical way that it becomes absolutely unrecognisable and impossible of returning to anything that assembles its previous state. *Insula* is about the idea of island as a metaphor of the Human Being, highlighting the notion of one's inner loneliness as an impulse to the construction and reinvention of its identity.

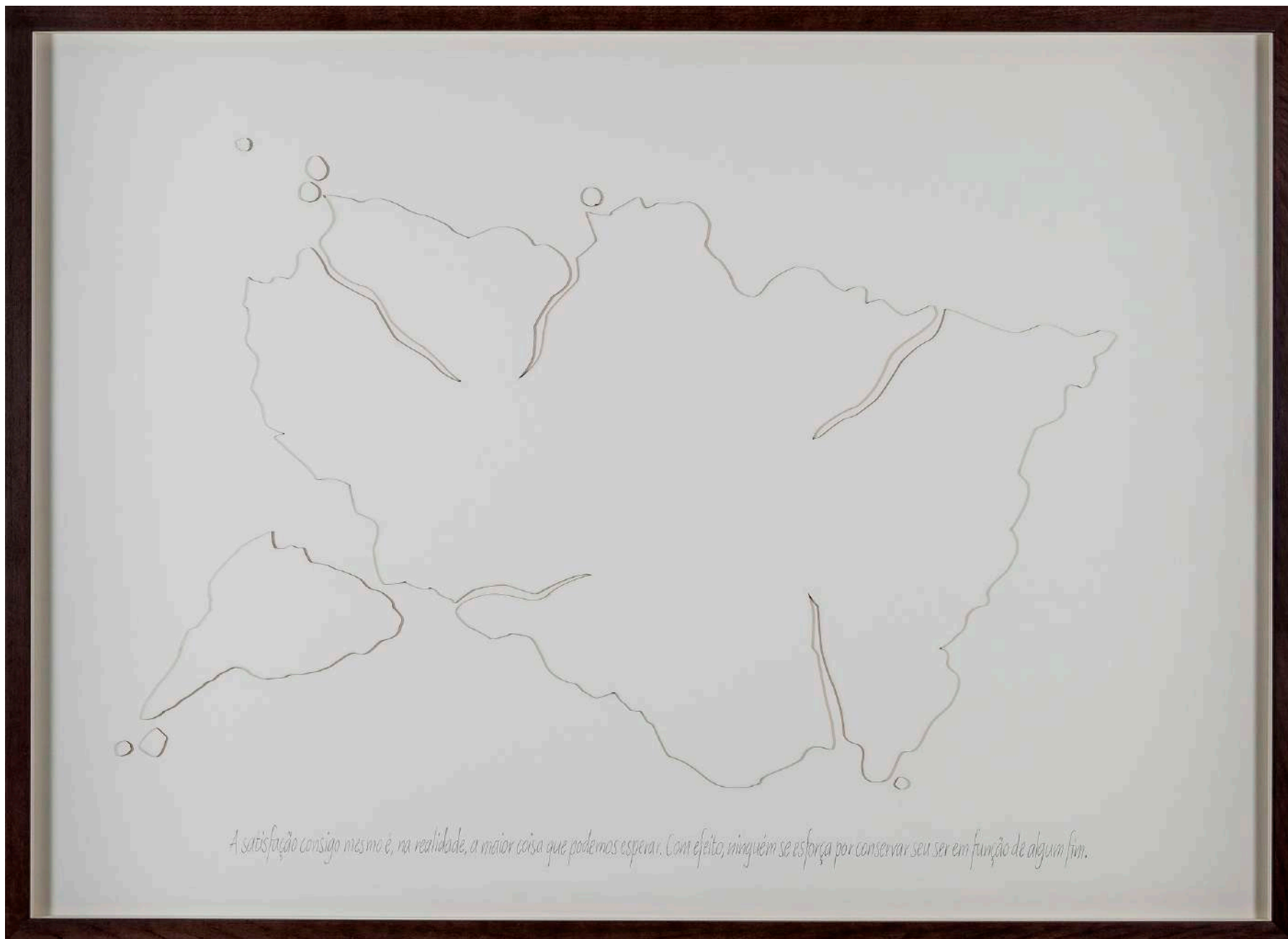
[Watch video](#)

Insula
2010
Drawings

Cardboard, graphite and acrylic paint
104 x 74 x 4,5 cm and 124 x 85 x 4,5 cm



Insula #5 Pode não conseguir mudar o facto de as coisas estarem a mudar, mas pode mudar o seu pensamento acerca das coisas que estão a mudar.



Insula #4 "A satisfação consigo mesmo é, na realidade, a maior coisa que podemos esperar. Com efeito, ninguém se esforça por conservar seu ser em função de algum fim."

Mulheres d'Apolo*(Apollo's Women)*

2010

Video: 16:9

Actors: Albina Bileu; Ana Maria Alves; Fernanda Gama Vieira; Maria Adelaide da Horta; Maria Armanda de Almeida; Vasco Araújo

Voice: Lúcia Sigalho

Text: Vasco Araújo

Variable dimensions

Apollo's Women is the name of Vasco Araújo's most recent work. Its title comes not only from the facts that it was shot in the Sociedade Filarmónica Alunos de Apolo and that some of the characters are people that usually attend it, but also because its an evocation of the Apollo's myth, the god from greek mythology that supported Troy and its women against the greeks. The video's monologue, created by the artist from different texts, has quotes from Euripedes' "Trojan Women" (415 b.C.), that narrates the courage, resistance and intelligence of the Troy's women when faced with the massacre delivered by the greeks. Those words are spoken by a middle aged woman, wearing purportedly "glamorous" clothing, that quests for an escape to lowliness, and her husband's abuses, in a dancing hall infer a heroic and tragic dimension that is also profoundly sad. This woman that is shown to us by voice (actress Lúcia Sigalho's voice), body shots and whose face is only show in the end... the face, as well as the body, we can then realize that is the artist himself, the woman is, after all, the artist.

Watch video

Debret

2009

Sculpture

Painted wood table and egg, painted fimo figures, metal and graphite

Text: Padre António Vieira quotes

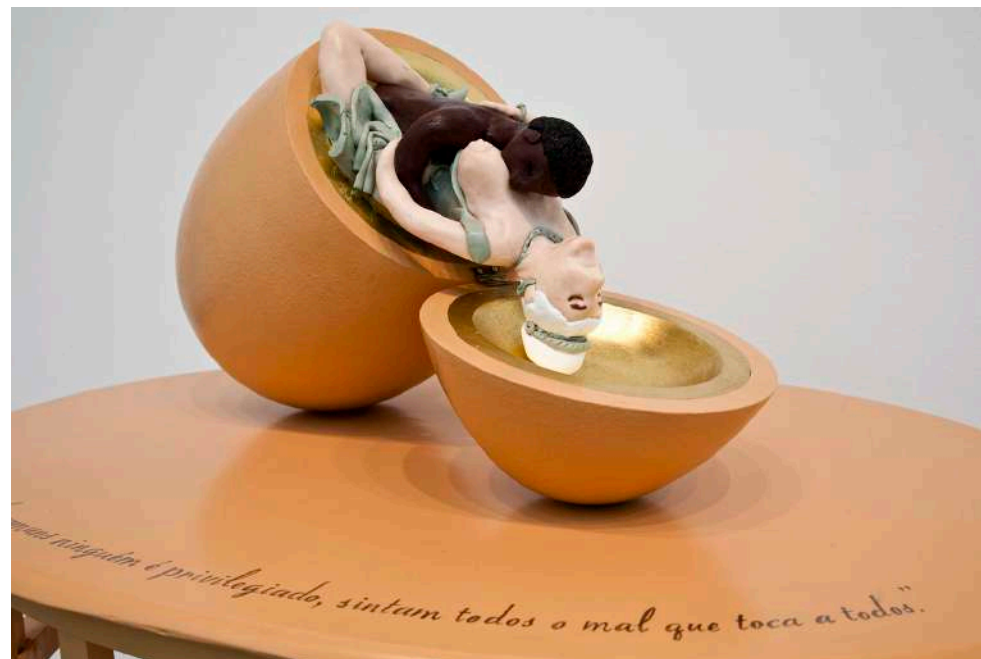
Variable dimensions

These sculptures arise from the work of the painter Jean-Baptiste Debret, a 19th century French painter that arrived in Brazil in the beginning of that century with the French Mission invited by the regent Prince D. João VI and who revealed his passion for Brazil in his paintings, drawings, aquarelle and engravings allowing the formation of an historical, political, cultural and social vision of the Brazil of the 19th century. Each one of the sculptures is a result of the combination of four elements: wooden tables, eggs, figures, and quotes from Padre António Vieira. The figures portray actions between white and black people that reveal the sexual and social relations between the two. The figures' insertion into the eggs (in a similar way of what happens in the Faberge eggs) discloses a mechanical, imperialistic and despot side from where a new race was born (mulatto). The association of all this with the quotes of Padre António Vieira (written on the tables) takes us to a rereading that can be inserted in a post-colonial discourse proper to the period we are now living.



Installation view of **Debret**, Pinacoteca do estado de S. Paulo, S. Paulo, Brazil, 2013







Installation view of *Triângulo do Atlântico* (Atlantic triangle) 11^o Bienal Mercosul, Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul, Memorial do Rio Grande do Sul, Santander Cultural, Praça da Alfândega e Igreja Nossa Senhora das Dores, no Centro Histórico de Porto Alegre, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2018



O Percurso

2009

Video

Actors: Cristóbal Fernández; Nehemías Santiago

Voice: Belén Jurado; Nehemías Santiago; Sergio Sáes

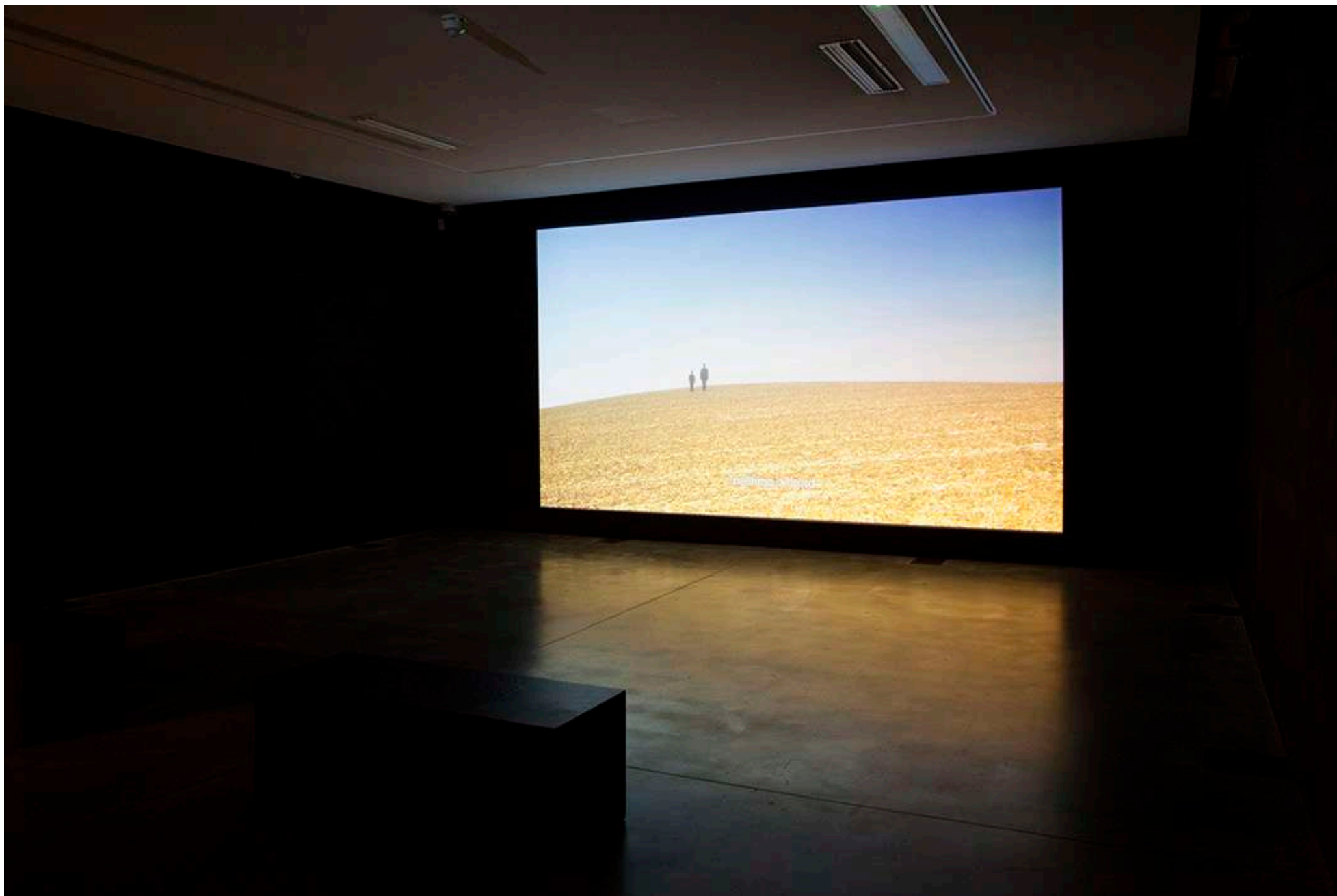
Text: José Maria Vieira Mendes

Duration: 13'00"

Variable dimensions

The video presents us a gipsy man and boy's journey. This journey, a result from the loss of a land and the consequent search of a new one, takes place in the inhospitable landscapes of Andaluzia as a search of freedom. Through the path a dialogue arises. The truth of one generation is orally passed to the next. Cut by images of Virgem de Macarena, that assumes the maternal role, the video highlights the mystic side of a journey of wisdom and of search of freedom.

[Watch video](#)



Installation view of *Decolonial Desire*, Autograph ABP, London, United Kingdom 2016

Eco

2008

Video

Duration: 12'18"

Actors: André Gomes; André E. Teodósio;
Cláudia Jardim; Diogo Bento; Gustavo Boldt;
Pedro Penim

Voice: Vasco Araújo

Text: Based on Cesare Pavese's *Dialogues
with Luecó*

Variable dimensions

The video is based on the idea of Heteronymous and our psychological-relationship with ourselves, like me and myself, me and my father, me and my mother. The six characters (5 men and 1 woman) will be interacting to wish other through a text that put us the question of what we are doing here and what we did about our destiny, creating at a certain point an anxiety on the characters that will transmit the same feeling to the public that will be seeing it. The text is based on the Cesare Pavese's *Dialogues with Luecó*.

Watch videoInstallation view of **Eco**, Jeu de Paume, Paris, France, 2008

I Also Don't See Any Maybe

Josué Mattos

Around a table with a circular shape, six people of varied generations have a dialogue starting from the question "Do you know who I am?", conjugated, in *Eco* (2008), with ponderations impregnated with inquisitive sense. The table meeting brings together ancients and newcomers in a monotonous, lonely and heavy environment. André Gomes: "It's monotonous here. You've been here for such a long time, and all alone, don't you get bored?". In another part, Pedro comments about "the weight of being alone". Close to them, Claudia complies with the feeling of emptiness and melancholia. Suffering with the ghostly body it carries, she says she is only "a name, no more". In this transitional and uncertain limbo, she says she is afraid of not finding anyone. There, in the place where infertility makes missing unfeasible, which is not rare, everyone turns to the boy that questions the indecipherable, who questions in advance the assembly averse to false challenges. Reality, instinct, rhythm, memory and love don't escape its aim. Between questions, a dialogue brings up uncertainties about fate, rapidly rebutted by two young men, André and Pedro, eager to know what is left after the inevitable suffering we are invariably subjected to. Maybe only a voice is left? The voice that proclaims the name.

André Gomes will say, further into the film: "The only truth is... to be self-sufficient [...].

If I'm not able to be what I am, I rather be nothing". However, the question that opens the dialogue alters the rules of the game. When asking "do you know who I am?" to his interlocutors, André makes any answer impossible, because, as he says, we all are "born and live in ignorance". Maybe because of that, André Gomes didn't have any other line rather than the one on uncertainty about himself: "I don't know what I am anymore... anything, going ahead that's what matters". *Eco* is made of broken dialogue, in which solitude comes up as a condition that is beneficial to the imaginative state; renovates and scares, simultaneously. Happiness is harnessed to encounters, interrupts the anguish of loneliness and compromises the "only truth" perspective. This resonates in the whole film and in other works by Vasco Araújo. Pedro says he is "always looking for a sound that gives me the answer for happiness", while we hear Claudia comment on how much "desires and restlessness made you who you are, you, who determines my happiness...". At the start of *Epílogo* (2012), B answers the question "do you feel happy?", as follows: "When someone is unhappy, they have to speak. There's nothing else to do. That was something I learned and no one can take that away from me". Claudia and Pedro consider sound and the other as agents of happiness. Would it possible to ponder,

from B's pronouncement on unhappiness, that the necessity of speech is summoned to exercise a certain emotional distance from desires and anxieties of others?

A human is pity and fear. Pedro, André Gomes, Claudia and the child can also be read as self-portraits of multiple life experiences of the one that says: "if you don't renounce to your memories and dreams, if you don't abstain from anxiety and don't accept the horizon, you will not be able to escape the destiny you already know". Marked by the plasticity of the singular voice that tends to the different bodies and embodies them, we hear: "I changed bodies in order to feel like someone else but... now I can see that it was not worth it. I am still the same, in reality what I am afraid of is to never find myself!" Would it be the voice, what is left, the image of the being that is destined to "give life to a human body"? In this sense, *Eco* is also the mirror that reflects each body in front of the one partially hidden throughout the film. With this, to face the sixth individual as

a figure of the allegory of the future body, the one that observes the "I" unfolding questions, transformed in unstable certainties, consists in recognizing him as the subject of the transmigration of the bodies, another fragment of its inherent instability. With the advent of the new "shadow of the mortal", in Cesare Pavèse (1908 - 1950) terms, another tone is added to the voice. The other which gives body to the "I" is the never before seen possibility of the discovery of the self.

Made because of the artist's encounter with *Diálogos com Leucò* (1947) by Pavèse, *Eco* privileges walking, as well as Fernando Birri once defined utopia. Situated in the horizon, she would distance herself while the walker goes forward. The observer-walker, the one that occupies the empty seat, is the one that pronounces when saying "I also don't see any maybe", after hearing André Gomes conclude emphatically: "I'm looking for myself. One never looks for anything else".



Augusta

2008

Video

Duration: 7'23"

Text: Based on Aristophanes comedy

The Birds

Voices: Peter Shaw; Walter Bilderback

Variable dimensions

The video *Augusta*, was shot in Washington and is based on Aristophanes' comedy *The Birds*. It features a dialogue between two stone lions on the establishment of a new city and an ideology to oppose the oppressive regime of the Old City. Despite the attempt at newness, the new city proposed, the ways it is to function socially, and the new ideology that governs it turn out to be as oppressive and imperialistic as the Old City's.

[Watch video](#)

**Álbum**

2008

Installation

Wood table, 13 photograph albums
350 x 90 x 77 cm

Álbum, an installation, presents a dinner table with thirteen encrusted photo albums. In each album, the viewer sees spaces reserved for the pictures; but no photos are present. The spaces are captioned with small phrases that hauntingly hark back to someone's erstwhile relationship with the rest of his or her missing family.



About Being Different

2007

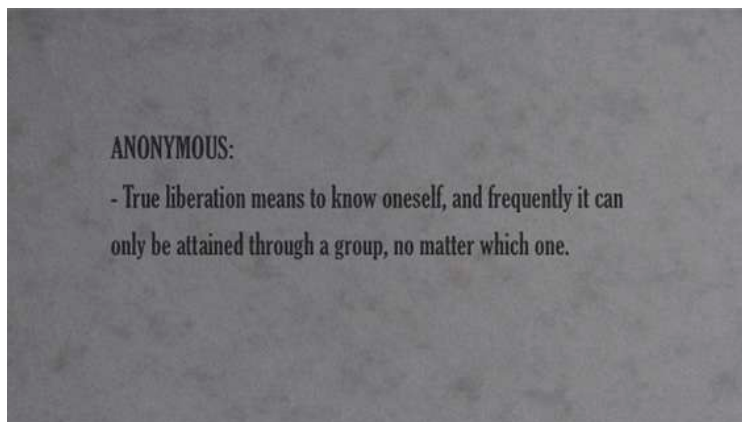
Video

Duration: 18' 24"

Performed by: Revd. Bernice Broggio; Revd. Jim Craig; Revd. Canon Ray Knell; Revd. Val Sheddon; Revd. Mark Worthington
Variable dimensions

About Being Different is the result of his 2 month residency at BALTIC and is a collaboration with local vicars from the NewcastleGateshead community. The work explores ideas of community and marginality and is inspired by Benjamin Britten's Opera, *Peter Grimes* which is about a fisherman persecuted by his village. He interviewed five vicars about their experience of watching the opera. Their commentaries provide a unique reflection upon the notion of community and the individual. The red-brick terraced architecture of residential Gateshead also plays a role in illustrating the notion of sameness. It is used as a visual symbol of community in the video, and causes us to question what it means to be different in the face of such uniformity.

Watch video



Happy Days

2006

Installation

11 photographs with text in the glass
 Text: Exctracts from the theater play
Happy days by Samuel Beckett
 Variable dimensions

Happy Days is an installation of 11 photographs of the interior of an empty house that are repeated with minor changes suggested by the light of opening windows and doors. On the glass of the same is written all the scenic indications that Samuel Beckett left for his play *Happy Days*. The installation speaks of the absence of loneliness, and paradoxical flow to meet the very end, to discuss their own finitude.



Installation view of ***Under the influence of Psyche***, The Power Plant – Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, Canada, 2014

(Pause.) (Eyes Front. Pause.)

Ana Isabel Ribeiro

Happy Days is the title of Vasco Araújo's installation, which consists of eleven photographs. Written on the glass are excerpts from *Happy Days*, a play written by Samuel Beckett (to whom the 2006 Almada Festival was dedicated) in 1960, which was performed and published the following year in New York.

Winnie (the wife) and Willie (the husband) are the characters of this story, which grows around a long monologue by Winnie. As she sinks into the ground, fragments of memory nonetheless go on feeding her present life, in a permanent need for confirmation of her past existence. Confirmation of these experiences is asked from her only listener, Willie, the link between these two stages of life.

Part of the Theatre of the Absurd tradition, this play probes the essence of humanity. Since neither Winnie nor Willie are directly

associated to a specific space or time, they have the immense possibility of becoming both everyone and nobody, being invested with a symbolism that is a metaphor of the human condition, where routine rules action, where emptiness takes the place of hope, where out of waiting nothing comes.

(Pause.)

Within this context, what relationship develops between Samuel Beckett's play and Vasco Araújo's eleven photographs? First of all, it is tempting to define an ontological connection. Ontology, indeed, is a major concern in Araújo's oeuvre, which almost continuously deals with such subjects as memory, the pertinence of being and making, identity and gender, voice, the contingency of the superfluous and the converging mobilisation of the senses. The text of the images and the text of the play also interact. Hence the

indispensability of the spectator, who looks, reads, or listens in order to create his/her own synthesis. Or, in other words: the only elements that Vasco Araújo copies out of the play's text and onto the glass that covers the photographs are the stage directions. Thus the possibility of dialogue is suppressed, with movement prevailing instead. The text takes on the form of the absent body. Action is imagined between the parentheses and handwritten lines. What is left is the body of the word. Silence is questioned, along with the importance of speech, since writing "gives physical form to revelation, but it cuts the human links and replaces them by a universe of signs. To reactivate the revelation a speaking presence is required." (1)

Another possible relationship between the play and the photographs inscribes itself on the space represented in the pictures. This is a space of absence, on which the written word is superimposed. Just as in Beckett's play, this is an unidentified space, of unknown geography. The mounting of

certain pictures into diptychs and triptychs around (false) central axes creates an illusion of symmetry, generating an improbable spatiality. Thus, they become similar to a mirror that, like all mirrors, does not give back the image that projected itself into it.

(Pause. He looks up.)

Light and shade configure the place, stimulating its thus made apparent static quality. Invading its quietness, they enhance absence, structuring and organising the image. However, "Ombre et lumière sont des contraires: la lumière abolit les ténèbres et l'ombre supprime la lumière. Mais l'une ne peut aller sans l'autre: la visibilité naît du corps à corps, au sens le plus littéral, de l'ombre et de la lumière." (2). In this sense, an illusory flexibility of space is generated, with light and shade indicating new spaces. While the doors are visible, controlling the entry of light and the volume of the shade, the windows are only perceived by means of the light shafts that cross the picture plane. They act, consequently, as a focus for



the internal receptivity of the place as an opening to the outside.

Taking into consideration the referent of Beckett's play, the symbolic value of the door, which plays different roles in the final construction of the image, gains greater pertinence, inseparable, however, from the equally symbolic attributes of the window. In other words: "Doors and windows are tenuously linked constructive realities. Their value as the matrix of an image, though, acts in a very different way. The 'window' opens the interior up to the outside. It is the outside that we look through the window. The 'door' does not belong to the visual. We come and go through the door. We look through the window." (3)

But what we get in Vasco Araújo's images are sightless views. We do not look through. We only have the possibility of passing through. The corridor, and the successive lateral doors, can then be a metaphor of the path. Towards where? (Pause.) But is it necessary to go towards anything? (Pause.) Perhaps, because the floor is marked by use, by footsteps now gone. It has a memory, an existence that pre-dates its fixation in the picture, just like Winnie. Yet, nothing, it seems, could happen in that unknown, unappealing place. A place that demands nothing more than to exist as a void, as a containing space. And it is via the absurd that, as in Beckett's play, this inhospitable scenery becomes an exiguous stage where nothing can be done but wait. For what? The decantation of pessimism and disenchantment? The asepsis of memory's voluptuous search for other meanings and existences? (Long pause.)

(1) CHEVALIER, Jean; GHEERBRANT, Alain – Dictionary of Symbols (transl. John Buchanan-Brown). London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 1135.

(2) "Shade and light are contraries: the light abolishes darkness and the shade suppresses light. Yet neither can do without the other: visibility is born out of the literal hand-to-hand combat of light and shade." REVOL, Bertrand – "L'image est ses ombres", in GAGNEBIN, Murielle (ed.) – L'ombre de l'image: de la falsification à l'infigurable. Seyssel: Éditions Champ Vallon, 2002, p. 44.

(3) STOICHITA, Victor I. - The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Meta-Painting. Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 44.

(4) Acted by: André Gomes, André E. Teodósio, Cláudia Jardim, Diogo Bento, Gustavo Boldt and Pedro Penim.

Hereditas

2006

Video

Video: 16:9

Performed by: Joana Teixeira

Duration: 12'14"

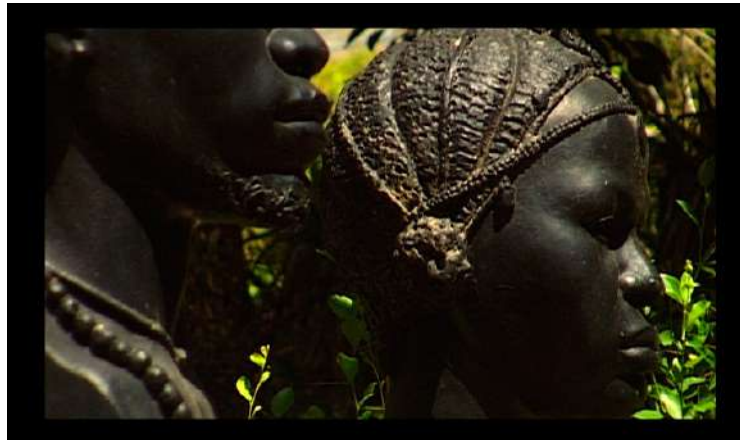
Variable dimensions

Hereditas, this piece confronts us with a paradox. The action is intriguing, and the location suggests something strange, yet magical. A child comes out of the forest's depths and, with guileless steps, leads us into a dilapidated sanatorium's long, empty corridors, in a timeless, lonely, sometimes spectral itinerary. The paradox lies in the simple, straightforward way the mountain's findings are handled. It represents an encounter with something essential, thought hidden, and which may reveal itself with a surprising cruelty, harsher than death itself. *Hereditas* is a work on childhood, loneliness, pain, love, death and the desire for knowing and understanding the great enigmas and interrogations of our human, all too human condition.

Watch video

Installation view of ***E eles tinham coisa para me dizer***, CAV – Centro de Artes Visuais de Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal, 2015





The Garden

2005

Video

Duration : 9'44"

Format : 16/9

Voices: João Lisboa Silva; Lucbano Afonço;
Maria Luisa da Silva Gabriel; Valdemar Dória;
Teodolinda Varela

Text : from excerpts *Iliada* and *Odissey* by
Homero

Variable dimensions

The Lisbon Colonial Garden was founded in 1906. During «Estado Novo» (Salazar's regime) it was part of the Portuguese World Exhibition.

After the 1974 (25th of april) revolution the garden's name was changed to Tropical Garden.

[Watch video](#)



Perruque

2005

Installation

8 wigs with incorporated sound in wood

painted tables

Variable dimensions

Perruque (French for wig) consists on a set of eight wigs and their reasons, presented on tape, for being needed: power, vanity or peer pressure. The end result is an ironic commentary on our society through something that, without being essential either hides or shows our true self.

Sound

Installation view of ***Under the influence of Psyche***, The Power Plant – Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, Canada, 2014

Perruque 2

My name is Pascal and I'm 5' 2". It isn't usual for men to be this short, especially if one isn't born with any defects or illnesses, but the fact is I stopped growing at this height, which seems like a defect, especially when the rest of my family is taller than 5' 7". I sort of feel like a dwarf in a land of giants.

Despite this, my mom always told me that girls prefer the short ones. At the same time that she'd say this, I'd think: great, all that's left now is for me to become bald. Perhaps it was an omen, because wouldn't you know it, at a certain age, I started to lose my hair. I don't think my luck could have been any worse. To be short AND bald – what a total nightmare. Every time I went to the shoe store, it seemed like none of the shoes fit me. It seemed like I was lacking something. At first I thought it was because I was short, but actually it was because I had less hair. It was so awful. I felt so ashamed and sad. To go through life feeling bad about yourself is just the worst of all fates.

Feeling completely desperate, I went through a series of treatments. In all of them I was assured that I'd get my hair back, but none of them worked.

My friends and siblings kept telling me that I looked fine, that not having so much hair made me seem more serious, more grown-up. Another friend of mine, who I think has always had a crush on me, told me that I looked like Marlon Brando, which was pathetic. Not only was he tall and gorgeous, he was never bald! Well, I decided to get a toupee made, with a tuft and everything.

I think the happiest day in my life was the day I stepped out of the shop wearing it. It even made me feel taller. When I passed by a shop window, I saw my reflection and thought, yes,



now I look like Marlon Brando. I felt so elated that day that I invited all my friends to dinner. Well, I should've kept my mouth shut. Never have I felt so humiliated and made fun of in my life. They were sarcastic and cruel and they couldn't see how happy I was and how important it was for me to have hair again. It was like regaining the hope of being a normal person again, with all the right proportions from head to toe. Most importantly, my extremities didn't feel as extreme as they had been when I was bald. The only person who had anything sensitive to say to me was that friend, though I think she had other reasons...but she told me that my new haircut made me look like Marlon Brando.

Forgetting this whole episode, the most important thing for me right now is that I've finally stopped questioning myself about

my size, because I don't have any more problems with my identity. Now, I even look like Marlon Brando.

Perruque 4

It's been six months to the day that I entered the Minister's office to take up my position as cultural affairs advisor. I remember when he called to invite me for the position. I felt so much joy and pride, I was so proud of myself. To this day I can't explain how it felt, not even to my wife. I also remember the moment - it still haunts me now - when I hung up the phone. I put my hands on my head and then suddenly became stricken with panic, a chill running down my spine. I ran to the nearest mirror. In the doorway of my house, in front of that mirror, I said to myself, "What am I going to do? How am I

going to appear in public? How am I going to speak on television....with this bald spot! The horror!!

Until that moment, I had never noticed the problem. My wife had never said anything, neither did any of the other people I dealt with. Maybe someone would snicker, "There goes Baldy", but I never took any notice. When it comes down to it, there are worse things in life. But now, now, it's totally different. I'm going to be exposed in front of everyone, and even more importantly, I've got to take care of my image, which is going to show up everywhere in the media. I immediately thought about getting a wig, a toupee. No one knew who I was before so they wouldn't know if I had been bald or not. They wouldn't laugh at me or say those horrible things about politicians that people usually say, things that serve no other purpose than to hurt someone's feelings. Being a sensible man, after I told the news to my wife, I immediately asked her what she thought about me using a hairpiece to improve my image. First, she laughed at me, but then when she saw that I had gotten all serious, she said, "it actually might make sense, since a person's image, especially a politician's, is so important. My hairdresser always said so. She always tells me that I should go there every day to take care of myself. It's just that I can't afford it!" It was at that moment that I knew for sure what my best option was: I would use a toupee. In the days that followed, I encountered all of the problems related to my new image and to my new position – how to deal with windy days, or days when I'm on the beach, or when someone touches my hair, etc. That's why I'm still having such a rough time of it, as I'm not used to my new image yet, my new role.



Installation view of *Momento à parte*, MAAT – Museu de Arte, Arquitectura e Tecnologia – Fundação EDP, Lisboa, Portugal, 2019

***Far de Donna***

2005

Video

Text: Maria da Graça Queiros

Characters: Pedro Cardoso, Lucia Lemos,

Alexandra Torrens

Duration: 10' 45''

Variable dimensions



Far de Donna (Playing as a woman), is based in a story of a son that had discovered that his voice was a castrati voice in the day that his mother lost hers. So the piece is on the idea of the edipian relationships between mothers and sons, that in most of the times no one really dies but something affects the internal person of each other.

[Watch video](#)

The Girl of the Golden West

2004

Video

Duration: 18'28", Loop

Actress: Esther Kyle

Variable dimensions

"The Girl of the Golden West" is based in the story of Giacomo Puccini's opera "la fanciulla del west", that consists in a love triangle between a girl, a sheriff, and a Mexican/ American bandit.

These two men are in love with the girl and they demonstrate this passion through different ways that results in social abusements and different truths in a place where everything is extremely difficult, this scene takes place in California during the invasion of the Americans in the Mexican territory.

From this point of view I had proposed to a common person, a black woman, that lives in United States and especially in Texas, to see and to make comments of this opera and this film through the way of the Human rights, from what is right and what is wrong in the society rules, and who is the hero of the story for someone that had suffer the punishment of being different.

Watch video

Installation view of *Momento à parte*, MAAT – Museu de Arte, Arquitectura e Tecnologia – Fundação EDP, Lisboa, Portugal, 2019

The Girl of the Golden West

or a story about being different

Isabel Carlos

During the years 2003-2004, Vasco Araújo (b. 1975, Lisbon) was in residence at the Glassel School of Art / Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. There, he conceived and directed *The Girl of the Golden West*. This is a work based on Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Fanciulla del West*, the story of a love triangle set amidst the harsh backdrop of California during the American invasion of the Mexican territories. Opera, singing and divas are the materials that Araújo works with, the way others work with clay, wood, or other media. Opera is his raw material, because he knows, commands and practices it. Yet, opera is neither the object nor the subject of his work, but a point from which he departs from for a reflection about identity and human relationships. The plot of *The Girl of the Golden West* is the love triangle between a sheriff, a Mexican-American bandit – Ramirez – and a woman who both men fall

in love with – Mary. The ways in which these characters show their passions reveal ambiguities and social injustices. More than a love story, the video is about a frontier: it is a story about the limits in which identity and race – Mexican, Gringo, and Indian – are permanently addressed.

Araújo asked a black woman from Texas – in fact, an employee from the Glassel Art School who he befriended during the time of his residency – to watch the 1934 film version of *The Girl of the Golden West*.

Araújo then asked her to play an additional fictional character/narrator by retelling the story in her own words.

The result is a sober piece with an enormous visual and narrative efficacy, bared of any particular effects – the only resources of the work are the use of close-ups that frame the face of the narrator from various angles and the inter-titles that organise

and give rhythm to the register in seven instances: “The true in the heart”, “Kind words can never die”, “Dare to the right”, “I am the light of the world”, “Be not weary in well doing”, “Knowledge is Power” and “No cross, no crown”.

These sentences chosen by the artist from a Victorian book reinforce a kind of ethical and moral dimension, as well as a literary and evocative status. Also, in the course of the video, the narrator says things like “try to exist in a space where there was non-existence” or “there is more than one truth” or, just in the beginning of the video: “I saw justice, injustice, fear...”

Between the story of the opera, the film, and the story told by this woman/narrator, between the European vision (Puccini's) and the Texan voice, between the intimate and confessional register and the disclosure of the racism associated to this particular

political, social and geographical situation, – “Ramirez was a villain... the sheriff was a legal fighter” –, the video seduces us by its simplicity and maturity.

As such, this is a true experience of art. An experience of art for this woman who, genuine and convincing, is clearly not an actress, even if she is wearing all those theatrical props – the scarf on the head, the retro blouse. And for us, the spectators, because we are met with a register that, in the way it is presented and in the realist vigour of the narrator, takes us to a territory between fiction and the truth. Life imitates art, one could say, but the candour and the strength of the face and of the voice of this Texan woman, who sometimes looks at us sideways as if testing if we are truly listening to her, forces us across the border of the usual artistic statements about art, life and experience.



Dilema

2004

Installation

64 colour photos with painted frames
(ranging from 20 x 15 cm to 100 x 70 cm)
Variable dimensions

Dilemma is a game of masks in which the frontiers of the forbidden and the permitted determine the nature of the code of communication that is presented. The piece shows us an old code: a language of fans, in which the relationship between the position of the fan and the expression of the face and of the body transmits a hidden set of pre-defined messages, only recognisable by those who already know the rules for the interpretation of this symbolic pattern of gesturality.

A set of photographs of differing sizes of the three characters are presented in baroque oval frames, installed within a space that is painted as a room in a Museum of Early Art. Each of the images is accompanied by a caption incorporated in its frames in which the meaning of the language of fans is revealed.



Installation view of *Pathos*, Domus Artium 2002 (2006), Salamanca, Spain



Installation view of *Dilema*, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, S.M.A.K., Gent, Belgium, 2005

Sabine/Brunilde

2003

Installation

Stage-setting (800 x 600 cm)

Inspired on the scenographic sketch for *Die Walküre* by Adolph Mahnke, Königsberg, 1942

Video 30'03", loop

Text: *Starke Scheite schichtet mir dort,*
aria of Brunilde/Brunnhilde,
Gotterdammerung of R. Wagner.Performer's: Sabine Urban, Ana Ester-Neves,
Alexandra Torrens

Stage with stairs (600 x 600 x 100 cm)

Video 39'49", loop

Text: Maria da Graça Queiroz

Performer: Sabine Urban

Voice: Sabine Urban

Variable dimensions

Sabine/Brunilde is a set of two installations that consist in the passage from reality to fiction and vice versa through the story of two characters, one being real and the other fictitious.

The first one, Sabine, is a German woman who lives in Portugal. Her story goes through a rather difficult relation ship with her parents during childhood and an adulthood filled with failed romances, where a feeling of unhappiness lingers. She, in turn, dedicates herself to opera singing, but once again she is unsuccessful, being systematically castrated by her parents as well as by her lovers, her husband and life itself, who

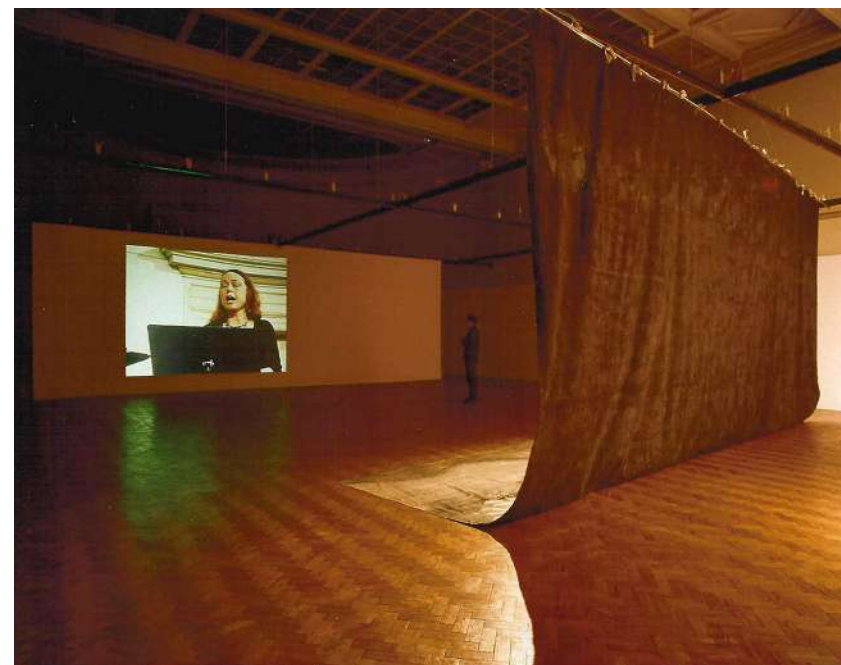
never encouraged her towards a career as an opera singer. Still, she created in this revolt a shell in which she sought refuge and expressed through her singing, working more and more, as if it were an intimate world, where she felt well and through which she found "happiness".

The second one, Brunilde, is the fictitious character which Richard Wagner created for his tetralogy, *The Ring*, who throughout *The Valkyries*, the second opera of the tetralogy, holds the main role. She, by excessive concern for the human race and by falling in the web of love, sees herself condemned by her father to lose her divine condition and assume her human one, thus being confronted with the earthly reality and is obliged to build her own world.

These two installations work as one, but in separate rooms. The first installation, Sabine, will be a video of Sabine herself in a singing lesson practising the aria of *The Valkyries*, through Brunilde. In front of this video there will be a set of *The Valkyries*, with black clouds and behind this scenery Brunild's story will be written, as if it were a novel.

The second installation, Brunilde, will also have a video, of Sabine telling her life to a psychologist, in acts, namely as one would recount the plot of an opera.

Watch video: [#1](#) and [#2](#)





Installation view of *Momento à parte*, MAAT – Museu de Arte, Arquitectura e Tecnologia – Fundação EDP, Lisbon, Portugal, 2019

Hipolito

2003

Video

Duration: 15' 16" Loop

Narrator: José Costa Ideias

Text: Excerpt of the tragedy of Euripedes,
Hippolytus

Variable dimensions



Eurípedes *Hippolytus* is most of all about lust. Fedra falls madly in love with her stepson Hippolytus, but is rejected on religious and narcissistic grounds. The play oscillates between Fedras' unlimited eroticism and Hippolytus' excessive chastity, in a real "drama of language" dominated by the impossibility of verbal communication in situations where it would be essential. And so female character turns into villain and the male character into the hero. The text in the video is an excerpt of the tragedy, but only Hippolytus character. The relationship between the text and the picture (monologue/tragedy) allows countless interpretations and even oscillates in the nature of each character, which goes against the biased interpretations that the fascists made of Greek tragedies. And so the viewer can reach his own conclusions.

[Watch video](#)

Hyppolitus: Pardon and Desire

Mark Gisbourne

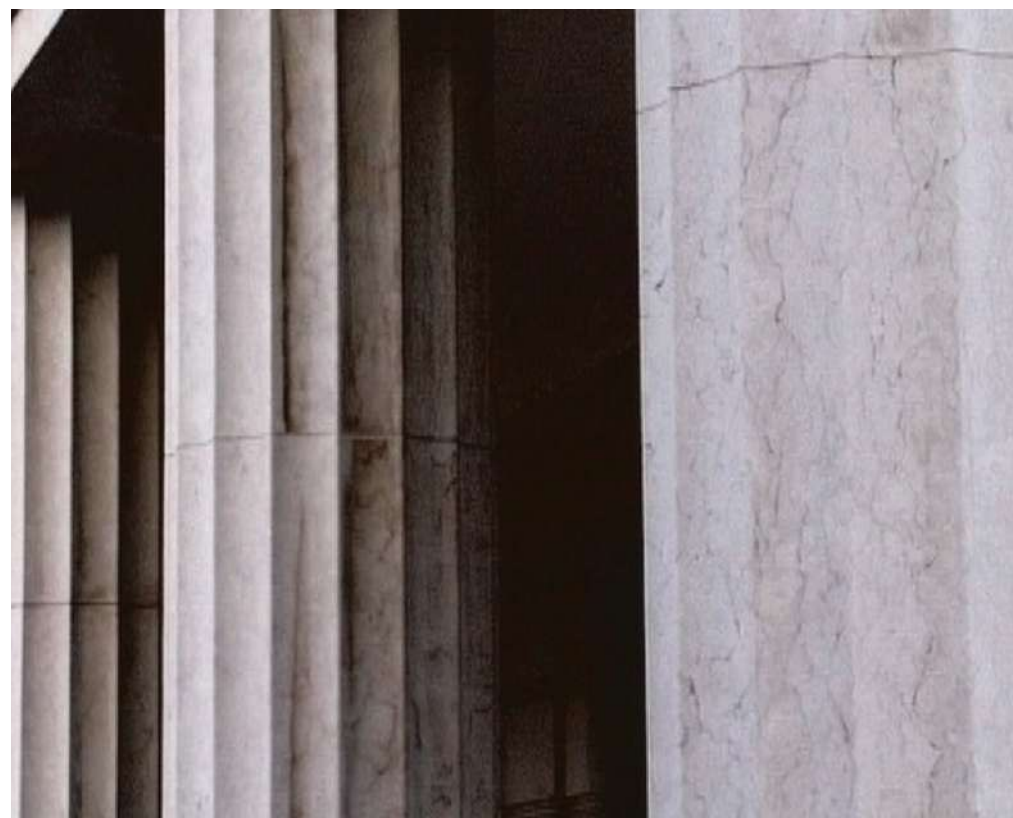
The unforgiving and relentless nature of human desire unfulfilled lies at the heart of Euripedes *Hippolytus*. So also in the video *Hipolito* (2003) of Vasco Araújo, where the visual narrative concentrates on an inability to evocate, communicate, or empathise. Feelings are throughout the Greek tragedy non-negotiable. While at several levels Phaedra's compulsive desire for her stepson Hippolytus (a child of Theseus's bastardy), can be read as a type of simple lust, or alternatively as a driven compendium of emotions without origin – the play never makes clear whence they sprang. These same events or allusions have become extrapolated in Araújo's work into a newer form of singularity. It reveals an aspect or focus using a classical spatial articulation that contains Hippolytus and Phaedra alone: unlike the staging of the play they meet but do not meet, they are present to each

other, but at the same time they never have an emotional bearing on each other's presence. The nurse, the chorus, Theseus, and the sundry acolytes of both Artemis and Aphrodite in Euripedes tragedy have thus been stripped away.

The use of narrative appropriation and the refocusing of a potential visual content, are central to the work of Araújo. Things are taken out of original and conventionalised settings and articulated anew. In this case the adult expressions of desire are revealed through the adolescent characters of Phaedra and Hippolytus, almost as if there were a latter day Romeo and Juliet whose narrative has become somehow inverted. They circumnavigate each other in a temple-like environment but communion is impossible. It is a shaded dance without pre-determined steps whose movements alter the predacious nature of the predator

and prey, villain and hero. And, unlike his earlier videos *La Stupenda* (2001), *Duettino* (2002), and *Recital* (2002), which dealt primarily with performance and/or the lack of it, *Hipolito* is about the inability to express oneself save through the premise of a one-sided flirtation. Its concerns with the allusions of dance and the masque, can be seen as a development from other recent Araújo sculptural work, beginning with *Le Ballet de la Nuit* (2001) through to *La Naissance des Fleurs* (2002), and whose plasticine figures in vitrine installations make reference to the Italianate tradition of courtly dance introduced into France in

the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, performance and the subversion of sincerity (the essential delusion of self-presentation) are the driving force behind much of Araújo's endeavours, whether it is expressed through ironic personal simulacra of the diva and her histrionic self-centredness in *La Stupenda* (the epithet of Joan Sutherland), or the tenor whose voice cannot really sing in tune within natural three hundred and sixty degree circularity that is *Duettino*. And, while the artist's gravitation has increasingly moved towards a spare and indexical presentation, in the character cross-gendered *Recital* it is the faked facial





gestures and body posture of affective performance, his work often undermines the motive for such a performance itself. It is the emotional asymmetry between character and content, of morphology and the means by which it is expressed that most interests Araújo. His concerns are pre-occupied with types of theatre whose forms invalidate their original motive. And yet at the same time Araújo is fascinated by the inevitable illusions composed in order to theatricalise the life of thespian success, as in *Diva* (2000) where he created a simulate installation of objects and affectations which embody the clichés of operatic stardom – that variable pathos that exists between human

sentiment and sincere feelings. In the video *Hipolito* this is expressed somewhat differently since Araújo himself is not a performative participant, he simply directed the film. But there is also an intended performance nonetheless, and freed of self-participation Araújo has been able to achieve a broader ambit of intent. The narcissistic handsomeness of Hippolytus plays out an ambivalent heroic role, while the waif-like beauty of the young Phaedra becomes that of an inferred venal intention. Apart from the ironic counterplay on Fascism (often articulated through a predatory masculine identity with male beauty), for Hippolytus loved hunting and was devoted to Artemis the goddess of chastity and the

hunt, we are left with an open interpretation as to what former gender stereotypes might mean to us today. Euripedes play is essentially about pardon or *syngnōmē* (as distinct from the Christian notion of forgiveness *aphesis*), where pardon and the renunciation of revenge is unable to be expressed. Its second leit motiv is the gulf of non-communication that divides the male and female world. In the *Hipolito* context we are still presented with non-communication, but it is turned outward to the viewer of the video who substitutes for the differing chorus sections and whose commentary shapes an understanding of the narrative. Hence transference in terms of the play's reception has taken place. And, in this *Hipolito* owes less to its Euripedean origins than one might suppose, because it is less a tragedy whose outcome is the death of Hippolytus (as in the play), but those tragedies of life whereby an inexorable desire is unfulfilled. It engages therefore with an insoluble space that exists within all human relations. This makes the video *Hipolito* seem all the more poignant to the viewer, for there may be *hamartia* (literally meaning to miss the mark – an essential error of defect in a character that leads to their downfall) but there can be no *catharsis* (purification – the purging of the effects of pent-up emotions). What Phaedra and Hippolytus are left with is a sense of visualised silence within which to speak. And, what the viewer portends is the outcome of whether any real communication can ever take place.

Friday, 03 October 2003

Recital

2002

Video installation

Video duration: 20'06" Loop

Pianist: Celeste Patarra

Narrator: Lúcia Lemos

Text: Lyrics of four arias of Opera: *Orfeu e Eridice*, *Clemenza di Tito*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Tancredi*

Twenty theatre chairs with painted texts of the arias in Italian

Variable dimensions

Recital is an installation that comprises a video and a group of theatre chairs. The video is a man dressed as a woman interpreting five arias written for the voice of a woman but where the characters are men. The sound of the video is the accompaniment of the piano of the referred arias. There also exists a recording of a woman dictating the texts of the arias. The chairs are painted with the texts of the arias in Italian.

Watch video



Duettino

2001

Video

Text: Duet of the Opera *Don Giovanni* of W.A.Mozart
Duration: 2'06" Loop
Variable dimensions

Duettino is a video where a man plays a text with two characters; the text is from the opera *Don Giovanni*, a duet between D. Giovanni and Zerlina. This man, who isn't defined, transmits passion, anguish and loneliness, because in the film you only see that person and the surrounding environment, like a love/hate relationship between this man and the environment.

[Watch video](#)

La Stupenda

2001

Video installation

Video, staff of a living room, 35 embroiders
cushions

Text: Miguel Castro Caldas

Video duration: 16'45"

Installation dimensions: 300 x 400 x 190 cm

Projection dimensions: 180 x 250 cm

La Stupenda is an installation that comprises a living room of an opera singer and a video projection.

The video is an interview to an opera singer at the end of her career. The living room witnesses the intimate life of this diva, where one can see the cushions she embroiders.



Installation view at MAAT – Museu de Arte, Arquitectura e Tecnologia/ Fundação EDP, Lisbon, Portugal, 2018

Softly Weird

Isabel Carlos

The title, *La Stupenda*, refers to an opera singer, Joan Sutherland, but this installation from Vasco Araújo, which was shown for the first time in Lisbon in 2001, means much more than a putative tribute or fascination for this Australian singer; it is a work about stardom and human condition. And the fact that the work is based on the world of opera does not derive from a mere external enchantment for an unreal and baroque universe, because Araújo himself is not only someone who has a profound knowledge of the matter, he is also a practitioner: he sings opera.

“Cosa naturale”, that’s the way Italian masters designated singing. But in opera nothing is natural: you sing instead of talking, you dance instead of walking, the scenarios are artificial and cumbersome, the wardrobe is excessive and fantasist. In opera, the quest for naturalness is

accompanied by the highest technique, by a degree of sophistication, which is almost artificial, anti-natural we should say, as most radically illustrated by the existence of castrati. Rather than a substitute for women in opera, the castrato was the third sex in opera, the third voice, somewhere between a woman’s voice and a child’s voice. A voice created by man by means of physical amputation.

The imaginary comparison created between castrato and prima donna was based on an erotic notion of the body and on a strictly naturalist notion of sex; thus, it is unsurprising that Jean-Jacques Rousseau hated both the voice and the figure of the castrato and that he favored the primma donna; equally unsurprising is the fact that Sade was a defender of the castrato. The primma donna, with a woman’s voice, exacerbates the sentimental and the

natural, like an epiphany of sensibility; whereas with the castrato we have the cry, the excess, the immolation of the body, rather than of the character, the epiphany of fury.

Once the pair castrato-prima donna ceased to exist, speculation started on the question of the perfect voice, and on the notion of diva. The diva is supposed to have the perfect voice, the complete feminine voice; this is the ideal which Maria Callas incarnated like nobody else: a vocal plenitude allowing her to sing, i.e., to incarnate Isolda as well as Dalila, or Medea or Rosina, covering several feminine tessiture.

Of course, we must not forget that Callas’ case has also much to do with the fact that opera and Greek tragedy have much in common - the existence of a choir, the

artificiality, the mythical, almost absurd, plots. A dark-eyed Greek opera singer tends to reinforce this tragic and dark feature. Tragedy and drama are also characteristic of the most popular Portuguese musical form of expression, the fado. Its lyrics talk about desperate and impossible love, and mismatching and sadness, about the notorious and untranslatable saudade and the difficulties of daily life. And fado also has its own diva: Amália Rodrigues. Vasco Araújo picked from one of Amália’s songs some of the lines of his video’s text: referring to “women washing clothes in the river”, Araújo evokes an image connoted with one of Amália’s famous fados (*Povo que lavas no rio*), but also with an ideological feature of the Estado Novo period (1). Facing the installation, the viewer might start smiling: the homely environment,



almost kitsch, a man dressed as a woman, telling burlesque sentences like “Singing to me is this: the whole universe flows into my chest and then I let it flow out for as long as the music lasts. I offer the universe to my public, and then, the public, in other words, the populace, in other words, the common people, in other words, the rabble, stands up applauding and crying, in other words, the crowd, i.e., the ordinary people, the washerwomen singing by the river, give me flowers and more flowers, which I accept and bring here to dry”. But, as these narrative advances, the initial smile disappears, replaced by an uncomfortable sensation.

Vasco Araújo, in an installation with elements that are simultaneously burlesque and tragic, mingles together the universes of opera and fado: a retired opera singer – or, at least, a singer momentarily at home – uses dried flower petals from bouquets offered by her fans to fill some pillows where she sews dates and places of her performances; a singer who talks about her family as a burden she has to bear and defines her public as an inform mass, in a self-centered speech, refusing to answer any questions being asked, an almost autistic speech.

Visually, the image isn't really one of a travesty, but borders between masculine and feminine become clearly unstable; the apparently bourgeois comfort of delicate velvets and satins on art-deco furniture is a canvas for a weird narrative, confronting the viewer with the solitude of this human being imprisoned between memories of glory and her daily life full of insignificance. *La Stupenda* is a body that has no reason for existence out of stage, out of opera's artificiality, where everything

becomes possible; in a homely and intimate atmosphere, it desegregates into a ruin of a body that does not exist outside the show world. It becomes a soft weirdness.

The artist himself, who thus carries his work into the area of self-representation, incarnates this body; it becomes an artistic act that is both coherent and deeply human.

Isabel Carlos

Translated by Miguel Magalhães

(1) Portugal lived for 48 years, until 1974, under a dictatorship, which was called Estado Novo.

Some Enchanted Evening

2001

Performance

6 muscled men dressed with thongs
 Tulle dress with sequins – black, white, blue
 and grey
 Lyric singer
 Music from Rodgers Hammerstein

Some enchanted evening
 You may see a stranger
 You may see a stranger across a crowded room
 And somehow you know,
 You know even then
 That somewhere you'll see her again and again
 Some enchanted evening
 Someone may be laughing
 You may hear her laughing across a crowded
 room
 And night after night,
 As strange as it seems,
 The sound of her laughter will sing in your
 dreams
 Who can explain? Who can tell you why?
 Fools give your reasons, wise men never try
 Some enchanted evening
 When you find your true love,
 When you feel him call you across a crowded
 room
 Then fly to her side and make her your own
 Or all through your life you may dream all
 alone
 Once you have found her never let her go
 Once you have found her never let her go

Watch video

Diva, a Portrait

2000

Installation

Dressing table, clothes rail, items of clothing, props, fresh flowers, 16 black & white photographs
Variable dimensions

Using objects that usually decorate and bring life to a prima donna's dressing-room (dressing-table, flowers, dresses, make-up) and blending them with one more masculine items (razors, after-shave, men's shoes), not only is there an attempt to recreate a typical diva's backstage environment but also to suggest a possible double identity, or sexuality, of the character in question. The installation comprises a series of portraits of the cross-dressed supposed diva, in theatrical poses.





Installation view of *Gênero na Arte. Corpo, sexualidade, identidade, resistência.*, Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado, Lisbon, Portugal, 2017

The Other and the Ellipsis

Chantal Pontbriand

Je crois que souvent les artistes ne savent pas ce qu'ils peuvent le mieux : il sont pour cela trop vains. Leur idée est tendue vers quelque chose de plus relevé que de se manifester comme de petites plantes neuves, rares et belles qui savent se développer dans leur réelle perfection sur le sol qui leur est propre. Ils estiment faiblement les derniers produits de leur propre jardin et de leur vignoble : leur amour et leur intelligence ne sont pas du même ordre. Voici un musicien qui plus qu'aucun autre est maître dans l'art de trouver des accents pour exprimer les souffrances, les oppressions et les tortures de l'âme et aussi de donner une langue à la désolation muette. Il n'a pas d'égal pour rendre les colorations d'un été finissant, ce bonheur indiciblement profond d'une dernière jouissance, la dernière et la plus courte de toutes ; il connaît une mélodie

pour ces minuits de l'âme intimes et inquiétants où cause et effet paraissent disjoints et où à tout instant quelque chose peut surgir du Rien. Le plus heureusement du monde il puise tout au fond du bonheur humain et pour ainsi dire à la coupe vidée où se trouvent finalement confondues les gouttes les plus acres avec les plus douces. Il connaît ce glissement de l'âme qui ne peut plus ni sauter, ni voler, qui ne peut plus même aller ; il a l'aspect farouche de la douleur cachée, de l'intelligence qui voit sans espoir, de l'adieu sans aveu ; comme l'Orphée de toutes les misères intimes, il est le plus grand de tous et il a été le premier à introduire dans l'art bien des choses qui paraissaient inexprimables et même indignes de l'art — les révoltes cyniques, par exemple, dont seul est capable l'homme qui a épuisé la souffrance, de même tout cet infiniment petit et ce microscopique

de l'âme qui forme comme les écailles de sa nature amphibie. Oui, dans l'infiniment petit il est passé maître. Mais il ne veut pas l'être ! Son caractère se plaît bien plutôt aux grands panneaux, aux grandes fresques audacieuses. Il lui échappe que son esprit a un goût et une inclination autres — une optique opposée — et se trouve le mieux dans les recoins tranquilles des maisons en ruines : là caché, caché à lui-même, il écrit ses vrais chefs-d'œuvre, qui tous sont très courts, longs souvent d'une seule mesure — là seulement il est absolument bon, grand et parfait, là peut-être il est unique. Wagner est un homme qui a beaucoup souffert — c'est là sa supériorité sur tous les autres musiciens. — J'admire Wagner partout où il se met lui-même en musique. Nietzsche (1)

An ellipsis, often signified by three dots in the beginning, the middle or the end of a sentence, points toward a gap, something lacking, something unknown. Some information is missing, or one has not made up one's mind about something, or else, something cannot yet be decided or acted upon. The ellipsis is an invitation to let one's imagination wonder, as it calls upon desire, curiosity, time also. The ellipsis does not cover any territory of any sort in any way, it leaves things open, un-ended. For some, it can be frustrating, disabling even, as it cracks open that field that lies in between subjects. It is difficult to offer any response to an elliptic statement, unless one wishes to engage into the gauging of complexities surrounding the issue. The ellipsis is at the opposite realm of the authoritative statement. It recognizes that the authority, that truth is not in the hands of one subject, that one that is the emitter, the "author". Truth, in the case of the ellipsis,

is not one-dimensional nor unidirectional. On the contrary, it displays itself in all possible directions. Neither is there an end to the ellipsis, a straight axis that would lead in principle to a final conclusive result. No straight road lies ahead. The temporal dimension of the ellipsis signals the inherent complexity of reality. Time is needed, time is called upon, in order to pursue any statement, any description, any series. Mathematics makes an extensive use of the ellipsis in this sense, as it deals with logics that aim at describing reality conceptually. Time addresses time, it lets the working out of situations inscribe itself in a dimension that allows flexibility, and change to happen. Time is unpredictable in principle, especially what happens in time. Contrarily to spatial territory or occupation, time cannot "occupy", it cannot squat any territory or situation. It releases different energies, or different intensities as it advances. These intensities are defined by tempos, by rhythms. Most often, we try to control those rhythms and intensities by drawing up agendas, schedules, and timetables. Something always slips away; in that something, in that surplus, which is hard to control, we can find the locus of future change. What slips away, what evades control is mostly seen as negative, and characterized as crisis. The ellipsis engages into any foreseeable crisis. It acknowledges that possibility. But it also acknowledges that there will be time and space to resolve any crisis be it may. Imagination and creativity plays a role here, as from the remains of any attempt to control the world, there can emerge interesting avenues, solutions, ways of doing. Vasco Araújo is a contemporary artist whose work has always seemed to me quite elliptic.

Starting with *far de Donna* (2005), one of the first works I encountered, I was struck by the way the work would simply take one aboard, “swallow” the viewer in some way, leading him or her into another world.

I wonder now what that other world can be, or could have been for me at the time. Swallow might not be the right word, as the feeling *far de Donna* generates, the intensity it generates, cannot be totally explained, nor possibly understood. Even when one learns about Araújo’s professional involvement in opera, the video seems not to be about opera, but more so about encountering something other, some unknown quantity. Possibly, that is why the notion of intensity comes about. The work addresses one’s psychic energy, and it is in that space that it resides. It is a space in-between that of the author and the receiver, the spectator or viewer as it may be. The video starts off with a text displayed on a blank screen. The text says: “My son started singing the day I lost my voice.”

Then we see a rehearsal studio, followed by close-shots of a woman gesturing in sign language. These sequences where we see her are subtitled with a narrative that unfolds until the end of the video, telling a story about a son, a mother, and recalling the myth of Oedipus. The singer appears: a young man that has the voice of a countertenor and sings an aria from Handel, *Lascia ch’io pianga*. The singing is the only voice heard throughout this work where one encounters the workings of a common relationship, that of a son, his father and his mother. But not only that, since the masculine and the feminine worlds come together here, interplaying one with other, one gender mixing in with the other, existence unfolds, performativity

unfolds. The male body holds a feminine voice, the female has no voice, the male sings with the voice she might have if she were not mute. *Far de Donna* recalls an even earlier video, *Duetto* (2002). Araújo sings himself, dressed with a romantic white blouse. As he swirls around, he sings an excerpt from Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni*, alternating between singing Don Giovanni’s and Zerlina’s lines. Here again, the feminine and the masculine join in one persona, one sequence, one moment of “intensity”. Opera has this characteristic of generating immense mind-fields, psychically rich and generous (this is to be found in some rock concerts also, the modern version of opera). This intensity raises consciousness, as it shakes the body and the mind and provokes emotions and sensations that work out the classic tropes of human psychology, be they male-female relationships, power relationships, solitude, madness or magic. Araújo has a contemporary take on the historical phenomenon of opera, that is that he does not seek to simply interpret or stage the repertoire in his works but develops new narratives that relate to our common experience and conceptualization of contemporaneity. His keen interest in gender questions arises from this position. However, beyond gender questions, his work offers a larger view of contemporaneity, as more recent works show.

To start with the most recent video, *Retrato [Portrait]* (2014), while it poses the question of what is a portrait or how does one go about making a portrait, it does so with the idea of integrating issues of intersubjectivity as well as community into the work. One of the first images to appear is that of a house set on a hill, and shot from below. It is lit, as night is falling

down. The house is full of portraits, many of them painted by Eduardo Malta, a painter very much en vogue in Portugal at the time of the Salazar regime. Many portraits were commissioned by the bourgeoisie of the period, including politicians, business people and artists. The camera navigates through this “people” world, as a voice-over speaks out a text commenting on voices being heard, the color of the skin, identity, death, memory, vision, and painting itself.

The portraits are of the classic modernist type, realist but slightly abstract, sometimes showing an attitude like smoking a cigarette. Each appears as a protagonist in what becomes a theater-play, as the shots go from one to another, and to each corresponds a set of lines. The house is made up of these multiple individuals and stories floating about, in ghostly fashion. Because of the painterly style of the portraits, a sense of something from the past comes through. This past is unknown to the viewer, it holds some secrets, some dark zones, as most things that reside in the past do. The past is in some sense unknowable in all its complexity, it can only be understood through fragments, incomplete stories that have come down in history through verbal communication, or documents that constitute archives giving some information on what happened in former times.

Retrato brings to the forefront a series of painted faces (Araújo used digital images of these paintings for the video). Painted live, these portraits now show images of dead people. It is left to the viewer to imagine who were these people, or what were their lives. We as viewers are in the present, these ciphers of history come to us as we are living in different times, and we relate to them differently than if these people were

our contemporaries. What sort of dialectics arises from looking at these portraits today? The forgotten past holds many mysteries. In a country such as Portugal, one can imagine that history is full of shadows, following the dark ages of dictatorship. How heavily does this heritage weigh on the current situation, on everyday lives today, on individuals as well as communities? The elliptic montage of the video seems to indicate that we can only investigate into the reality of the past, and that no coherent narrative can offer a full view of the picture. The Portuguese word for portrait is “retrato”. It is worthwhile to pay some attention to this word. It is composed of a “re”, such as in repetition but also retreat. The retrato repeats the image of the person it seeks to portray, it submits to the logic of representation. It is, from the perspective of the history of painting, inscribed in this logic and this type of metanarrative, where the painter was seeking to imitate nature and give a “realist” view of whatever presented itself in front of his/her eyes. Modernism broke with this metanarrative painting, as it brought in a more subjective view of what painting could do, and how it could be efficient in crafting a different view of the world. The paintings shown in *Retrato* belong to the beginnings of modernism in their workmanship. They still cling to the idea that a world or a person can be represented, and give a good view of reality, render a good resemblance, even a “truthful” one.

The elliptical comments that we hear spoken by the multiple voices in the voice-over posit the questions of seeing and speaking/hearing per se (following an original text by the Portuguese author José Maria Vieira Mendes). These tropes are often alluded to in the fragmentary

comments that start off with:

A: How long have I been talking? Or is it not me? Is it someone else's voice? Or is it my own echo? I'm already inside. Or I have never left.

And finish with:

VOICE 1G: Adil.

A: What language are you speaking, Adil?

VOICE 1F: Emelina.

A: What language are you speaking, Emelina?

VOICE 1C: Ernest.

A: What language are you speaking, Ernest?

Edward? Ana? Miguel? Atanasius? Oskar?

Paulo! Viktor!

Who is here with me? Won't anyone answer?

Who is here with me?!

Languages, the spoken word, hearing (hence emission and reception, transmission even), are invoked in an incantatory fashion, giving rhythm and intensity to the document.

Already the first phrases allude to identity, place, and belonging (being inside... or outside). The black man, the stranger, the outsider, comes in when the 7th line is pronounced:

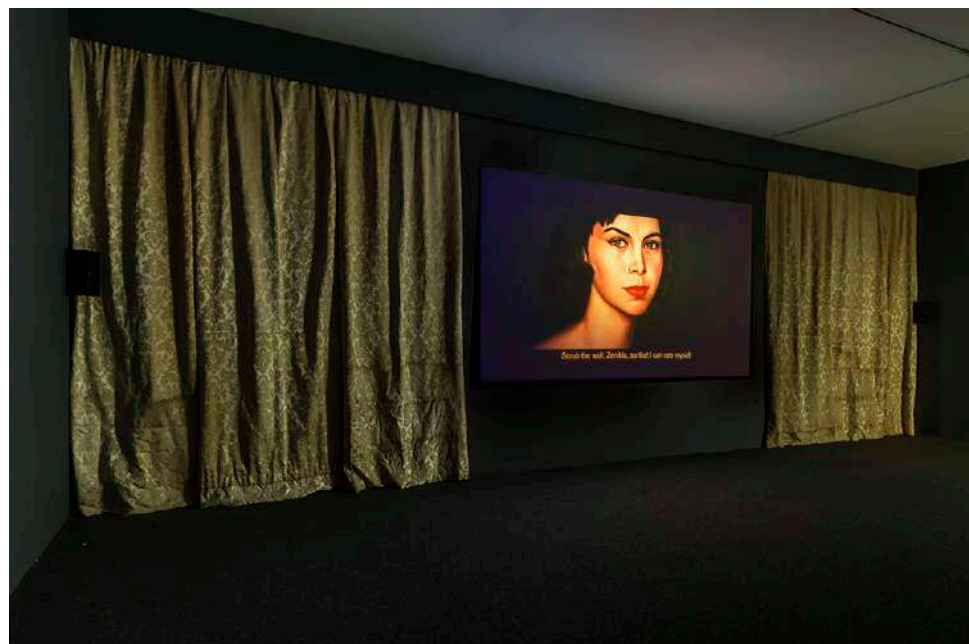
B: Edward? Ana? Who are you?

VOICE 1A: I'm the nigger. The one you don't know. I'm symbolic.

B: Poor soul.

VOICE 1A: They have painted my skin, and I have a monkey on my shoulder. I don't know my story because I don't have anything that's mine. I'm out there and can't come in. There is a rebound effect that appears in this sequence as the idea of portraiture versus community and inclusion/exclusion is posited. The statement made by Voice 1A saying that "he" is symbolic, that his skin has been painted by "they", bridges the endeavour with racial issues. Dispossession and the erasure of memory with regards to identity come up.

Araújo has taken up these issues in other



works such as *Botânica* (2014) and *O Jardim* (2005). The first is comprised of a series of sculptures mixing tables and photographic documents. From slits in the tables emerge a multiple arrangement of black and white photos of tropical plants, mixed in with photographic documents of indigenous people across the globe. These documents reflect the colonial times, and fascination for the Other, as represented by far-away lands and exotic cultures and people. The outsider, the "nigger" alluded to in the *Retrato* text, is recontextualized in *Botânica* in a museum type display. The museum in our societies is the locus of memory, and is inhabited by the past and by the dead. By bringing these museified memories to the forefront in his installation, Araújo questions the status of museum-like representations. Mixing in flora with human bodies, he is asking us what there is to make of these

"symbolic" associations. Obviously both flora and indigenous bodies were sought after (and still are in the contemporary situation) with a conspicuous desire to capture sensations and images that could bring about interest and even envy in the Western world. But, what wonderment did there exist for the actual living conditions of the people's that were visited and in which context these photographs were taken? To this day, history has shown that colonialism exists as the will to acquire, squat and profit from exotic situations. Araújo's attitude is not to condemn the colonial era nor to bundle it up in post-colonial theory, which could be just another recuperation and encapsulation of the situations where colonialism develops. Instead, while whole-heartedly addressing the legacy it represents, he proposes to ask questions, arouse doubt and imagination,

creating aesthetic situations where images and ideas, words, are arranged in such a way that they produce a sensation of destabilisation for the viewer. The ellipsis that are recurrent in the work favour the advent of such a positioning on the part of the viewer. The ellipsis prevents the "language" spoken to be completely authoritarian or dogmatic in one's approach to a subject. Facts are laid out though existing images and methodologies (documentary photography, anthropology, botanics, meta-narratives of sorts), forms are put in place, and the questioning arises from the associations put in place, but also by the rhythms that punctuate the existence of the works (all of Araújo's works). And especially by the system of gaps that he thoughtfully inserts into any works.

These gaps are the locus of imagination and thinking beyond existing systems, dogmas or ideologies. Another example of this way of working comes up in the video *O Jardim*. Filmed in a tropical garden in Lisbon, the sequences alternate between all-over shots of the plants and trees and close-shots of statues placed in the garden. The garden itself came to exist as a project for the Portuguese World Exhibition in 1906 and was then referred to as the Colonial Garden. In 1974, after the end of the Salazar regime, it was renamed the Tropical Garden. Araújo's filming of the garden concentrates very much on the faces of the statues of "colonial" subjects, black people which were commissioned for its opening in the context of the fair. The statues carry an abstracted quality characteristic of the modernist times they were produced in, influenced already by indigenous African sculpture. The film shows the faces of the six men and women so many times that

it gives the impression that the garden is filled with these statues, as though a whole virtual “population” were occupying the space, possibly recolonizing the garden of colonization. In reality, only twelve statues exist. The impression of a large number is increased by the many shots that alternate between the different statues, and the corresponding words that are pronounced in the voice-over, lines taken from the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer. Using these powerful texts that have come down through Western civilisation, putting them in the mouths of blacks, is a move towards the symbolical empowerment of the subjects represented. This empowerment goes for the woman represented also. The virtual population is inscribed into a new world, one that exists out of Africa as well as out of Europe. It is active in the realm of the viewers’ imaginations; hence the video acts as a tool of consciousness, powerfully moving the audience at hand. The many shots and accompanying voices convey much intensity, a phenomenon that increases the quality of the reception of the work. On the whole it offers a counter-narrative, not only to that of colonization, but, as mentioned earlier on, also to the pitfalls of theorizing post-colonialism.

The close-up shots give life to the statues, animating the stone faces with the capabilities inherent to the moving image, playing with light and angles. In comparison, one thinks of the film made by Alain Resnais and Chris Marker, *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953). In this somewhat militant documentary, black sculpture and black people seem to be shown as artefacts of a remote foreign culture that should be considered in its own right, we are repeatedly told. Although the premise is

unquestionable, the result, as seen from today, still seems linked to a patronistic style of documentary-making. In *O Jardim*, different factors allow a more interactive dialectic with the document. Contrarily to *Les statues meurent aussi*, there is no hint of didacticism in the video, one does not try to convince the viewer of any point of view or perspective on colonialism in Africa. Rather, it exposes a set of paradigms that are collaged into a document: the image, the text, the statues, and the plants. The intertwining of the one with the other produces a multi-faceted view of a situation, and of the issues encrypted in it. “Clouds” of meaning arise from the joining of the different elements. These clouds are made up of concepts, ideas, colors, sounds, giving way to sensations and feelings that generate intelligence about the exposed situation. These in turn form consciousness. The viewer finds himself with a mindscape that is transformed by the experience of viewing. What is left behind is a knowledge that is different from any knowledge acquired before, it is that of the artistic experience, that of an aesthetic encounter. It is a singular experience, as one is not being asked to stick to any didactic discourse. It is in the end the singularity of the viewer that is summoned, more than his ability to absorb prescriptive knowledge, as is often the case in documentaries. One could say that Araújo’s work leads to a paradigm shift in the viewer, the view is displaced, hence modified, deterritorialized.

Hence through the ellipsis, which characterizes his way of “making a painting”, be it in the style of the moving image, Araújo counters the lacunae in history, the gaps that contain secrets or generate

misreadings. The ellipsis defines his own artistic methodology, a response to the elliptic memory we have of historical situations. *Retrato* [Portrait] is a retraction of historical myth in this sense. It is a counter-narrative to bourgeois portrait-painting in a society where dictatorship and colonialism have weighed on its evolution. In both cases, *Retrato* and *O Jardim*, Araújo shakes up a seemingly dead world, old bourgeois portraits, an old house, statues from a bygone era, an old garden, reflecting in their time a sense of power, along with a territorial imperative. Today, the territorial imperative carries on as it does still in Africa, as one nation gnaws upon the others land, and in other parts of the world, just as in Homer’s time.

In Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, and in the excerpts Araújo decided to use as a script for *La chute vers...*, we find these words amidst the dialogues :

Oh, man of misery, whose land have I lit upon now? What are they here? Violent, savage, lawless? Or am I really close to people who speak my language?

....

Who are you? Where are you from? Your city? Your parents?

Man of action! Who in foreign land always charges ahead giving ground to no one in his fury.

....

Tell me why did you come to this land.

As I said to you, nothing is worse for a man than not having where to sleep and what to eat, I have an empty stomach.

The choice of these sentences seems to point more to today’s conditions of immigration, than to those of the colonial times and of slavery. Today, the black immigrant chooses to flee his/her land in

a desperate fight for survival. In colonial times, Africans were made slaves and taken to foreign places to serve the wealthy and the prosper. As slavery has been abolished (in principle) in today’s world, suffering has morphed into a different paradigm, although in both eras, people are forced to espouse a condition which they have not desired. Being looted along with so many other resources, or being subjected to an imposed exodus, many Africans are still in extremely precarious living conditions and limited to bare life, as Giorgio Agamben would put it.

Dialogical relationships are ever present in the work, as they appear in the form of dialogues between figures in the videos, or dialogues with the viewer who is always being addressed directly or indirectly. In *O Jardim*, the dialogue goes from man to woman and vice versa, alternating throughout the video. Same for *Retrato*, where multiple voices come up. The dialogical resonance in the work is even recognizable in the music Araújo chooses. *O Jardim* has no music, the only sound being that of the voices we hear. The texture of the sound is very “dry” in contrast to that of *Retrato*, where the voices are interspersed with music. The music repertoire consistently refers to Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde*. He uses transcriptions of the orchestral score for the piano (one of which was made by Franz Liszt, the composer/pianist). *Tristan und Isolde* is an opera about a great love story between a man and a woman. It tells of the pain and the sublime that is the flesh and blood of love. For opera aficionados, it is the quintessential love story, and a masterpiece about human relationships. Araújo’s choice of Wagner’s music, in all its beauty, holds a political comment, as we know how Wagner was favoured in the context of Nazi

Germany, as being the composer which best expressed the “purity” of German heritage and culture. For this music to be used here is meaningful in many respects. As was said earlier, the paintings that appear in the video are from an era that corresponds to the dictatorial Salazar regime. Establishing a correspondence, a subtext, between the selected paintings and the music, further enhances the critical exegesis that arises from the work.

Thinking about using Wagner’s music, and especially this particular opera, can possibly give us another lead on the work, as it is essentially based on a relationship to the other (2). It may be also interpreted in the great void it embraces with a sense of the sublime, by trying to deal with the ultimate frontier, which is that of the void, and the great Other, the distinctly unknowable. This unknowable can only be partly grasped, partly felt, partly apprehended in the course of one’s life. Lacan defined it as “the inverted other”. One interpretation of the Lacanian statement is that there is no objectivity in knowing the Other, but only subjective intuitions or inclinations that can lead to any knowledge of the Other. Araújo deals with this issue in a piece called *La chute vers...* (2014). It is based on Cesare Pavese’s “Dialogue with Luecò”. This installation brings together large light projectors facing one another, speakers, an 8” sound recording and chairs. It is a theater play in itself. The text is spoken out by a woman and a man (the voices are recorded); regular thunder sounds interfere with the voices. The projectors face one another and light up in sequences that correspond to the female voice (standing in for “Europe”, following Pavese’s text) or male voice (“Thunder”). There are actually three actors in this piece,

the two voices (without any bodies being seen), and the thunderous spurts of the cymbals. These seemingly overpower the human dialogue (all about one’s knowledge of the other), echoing the presence of a vast and unknown beyond, the great beyond that is the cosmos. A larger world than that of humans. The ellipsis is brought here to its cosmic proportions, where it gets to be as large a gap as the imagination permits.

(1) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Œuvres*, coll. Bouquins, Robert Lafont, Paris 1993. In *Où j’admire*, first section of the book *Nietzsche contre Wagner : pièces au dossier d’un psychologue*

(2) Let us note about Araújo’s use of Wagner in the work *Retrato*, that there is a double « ellipsis » present. The opera *Tristan und Isolde* is about impossible love and was inspired by Wagner’s own meandering affair with Mathilde Wesendonck. Secondly, Liszt, his future father-in-law when he married Cosima, did the transcription for the piano that is heard in the video. It is derived from the last aria at the end of the opera *Isoldens Liebestod* – *liebestod* meaning “love/death”. Araújo also uses Wagner’s *Elegy in A flat*, begun while he was still working on *Tristan und Isolde*, and said to be the music he played on the night before he died. Again, love and death are intertwined here. The third piece of music heard during *Retrato* is *Ankunft bei den schwarzen Schwänen*, Albumblatt in As-Dur für Klavier (Arrival of the black swan), subtitled *Seiner edlen Wirthin Frau Gräfin von Pourtalès zur Erinnerung* (as a remembrance for his noble hostess Countess Pourtalès). The video is thus filled with music that alludes to love and death, the basic paradoxes in life itself, the ultimate “ellipsis”.

Echoing the complexities of Wagner’s music, Liszt found a way of making five different voices exist in his piano transcription of a score meant for an orchestra. Araújo’s recourse to multiple voices speaking the text of Portuguese writer José Maria Vieira Mendes finds an echo in the music being heard. Using Wagner is also a statement in itself, as Wagner is one of the most glorified as well as critically discussed composers of modern times, one of the reasons being that he was revered by the Nazi regime and had anti-Semitic dispositions. Friedrich Nietzsche spent much time trying to understand Wagner. His writings are collected in two books: *Der Fall Wagner* (The Case of Wagner) and a sequel titled *Nietzsche contra Wagner: Aktenstücke eines Psychologen* (Nietzsche Against Wagner: a study for a psychologist). In the quote heading this essay, the philosopher explains his preference for the «intimate» Wagner. This also could explain Araújo’s choice of this specific Wagnerian repertoire he chooses, an elegy and the transcription in question; possibly, he himself finds more truth in the way complexities show up in Wagner’s penchant for “tranquil ruins”, as Nietzsche puts it, as they are closer to the dialectics his own work seeks to display. Nuances, paradoxes, ambivalences and ambiguities make up the space of the in-between that elliptical processes allow.

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