

MUSA PARADISIACA

MAURO CERQUEIRA

The bringing together of works by Mauro Cerqueira (Guimarães, 1982) and the duo *Musa paradisiaca* (Miguel Ferrão, Lisbon, 1986 and Eduardo Guerra, Lisbon, 1986) is premised on the interest these artists have shown for different forms of narrative. The fictional universes that function as trigger and context are nevertheless anchored in the real. Filtered and subverted by the instruments and devices with which the artists construct their, they are fragments of histories and events that rise to the surface of the works presented. However, there are clear differences between their ways of understanding artistic practice. While Mauro Cerqueira employs biting sarcasm that is clearly political in his earliest performance-based works or in his most recent paintings, *Musa paradisiaca* operate like ethnographers, inviting numerous collaborations for their projects to gather worldviews from a wide array of origins through performative processes based on shared words and narrative.

In both cases, however, the origin of the pieces, their archaeology, can only be guessed at or emerge tenuously. We do not need any explanations to be able to grasp the poetics that they suggest: the works are self supporting and convey a specific and assertive monumentality, even if based on chance, accident or derision. Although it may be ironic, this monumentality is never cynical, which is the second link that emerges between the artists in this encounter. The rejection of a cynical explanation is key, not because it brings the artists closer to any form of truth or authenticity – we ought not to forget that they deal in fictional universes – but because the game of proximities and distances always maintains a fascination with the event and a respect for life’s fragility. In this sense – and this is the third link we can now see – fragility can only be respected through the fragment and the word, by its echo or the trace of a gesture – one that is clearly apparent in *Musa paradisiaca*’s sculptures – and in the slogans, precarious balances and vestiges in Mauro Cerqueira’s paintings.

Finally, by bringing these works together, it allows us to understand the importance of the notions of community and experience for these



Mauro Cerqueira

—
Uma brecha no muro, 2008

Bricks, wood and old fan
Variable dimensions

artists, the significance of their interest in materiality and immanence that nevertheless maintains a need to restore a pre-aesthetic and idealistically unmediated memory to the arts.

The works presented here by *Musa paradisiaca* are pieces that were recently included in the Cachola Collection and that belong to the duo's most recent group of works. These are sculptural objects that configure bodies out of the trunks of holly oak trees, from which spring heads made of animal glue.

The vernacular power of the images derives from their origin in people whom the artists met in their field work, forming a gallery of primary sources in their narratives. Presented for the first time at CRAC Alsace – Centre Rhénain d'Art Contemporain in the exhibition Alma – Bluco in 2015/16, they are part of a more irregular grouping of pieces (using a wide array of supports) that form a metanarrative anchored in stories partially gathered from S. Tomé e Príncipe in consequence of their complicity with the sculptor Tomé Coelho, with whom they collaborate since 2013. Their names refer to living individuals, metamorphosed into metamorphic creatures, in a game of hidden references to the individual, shared histories, which nonetheless remain in a nebulous limbo, only vaguely coming to the fore. It is from the gazes of these heads, the posture of the satiny oak bodies, that one can liberate a potential that seems to emerge from some sort of origin of discourse or perplexity.

Mauro Cerqueira's works presented here date from various periods of his artistic production: a sculpture configuring a portico with a ceiling fan (*Uma Brecha no Muro*) dates from 2008, while the piece entitled *Orrer Gue d Lutar* is from the following year and was exhibited for the first time at Galeria Nuno Centeno in Porto. The four paintings generically entitled *Arrasto* are works from 2012, which are associated with a floor sculpture in the form of snake skin, a reference to the idea of the trace or the vestige that permeates his work in various forms. Here, they are converted into a typology recognisable from art history: a painting on canvas. The importance of the word as a residual marker is equivalent to these marks left on the canvas, which recover a process steeped in the history of avant-garde artists, materialised in valid, allusive processes that nonetheless gain an aesthetic quality in and of themselves. Emerging out of a dialogue between these works, silent and full of the markings of words, is perhaps the possibility of an art anchored in the real, one that is free of the mannerist burdens of metaphor.



Musa paradisiaca

Cantor—Caído / Singer—Recumbent, 2015

Musa paradisiaca w/ Tomé Coelho
Holm oak wood and animal glue
30 × 32 × 37cm; 55 × 320 × 135 cm

Colina—Mamadeira / Milkmaid, 2015

Musa paradisiaca w/ Tomé Coelho
Holm oak wood and animal glue
33 × 25 × 28cm; 57 × 220 × 110 cm

Coleção António Cachola

EM SAN
TANTO MORRER

23 PUNHO
IGUE DE
LUTAR.



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CACHOLA



Mauro Cerqueira

Born in Guimarães in 1982, he lives and works in Porto. His work involves the use of a wide array of artistic media, from drawing, sculpture, installation and performance to painting. Political and vernacular in tone, his installations are often associated with performative processes. The creation of artist books, with a strong emphasis on the use of drawing, has also occupied an important area of his creative activities.

Since graduating in Drawing from the Escola Superior Artística do Porto, he has been exhibiting regularly in Portugal, where he is represented by Galeria Múrias Centeno, and in Madrid, Berlin, Ghent and Barcelona. In 2012, he received a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to study at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin. He has participated in exhibitions in museums in Portugal and abroad, including the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art (Porto), Museu Coleção Berardo (Lisbon), Arts Santa Mónica (Barcelona), La Casa Encendida (Madrid) and Caixa Cultural Rio de Janeiro, among others.

His work notably involves alternative spaces, often in partnership with André Sousa, including the project *A Certain Lack of Coherence* (Porto).

Musa paradisiaca

Comprised of Miguel Ferrão (Lisbon, 1986) and Eduardo Guerra (Lisbon, 1986), *Musa Paradisiaca* is an artistic collective, “based on a dialogue” – as the artists themselves define it – that involves a wide array of individual and collective partnerships with people from diverse fields and is based on the idea of sharing personal experiences. The performativity of its collective actions is the driving force behind a project that seeks to recover the primordial idea of personal and collective experience. The diversity of means and processes used includes collective actions, podcasts, films, sculptures, installations, drawing and any process deemed appropriate for conjuring narratives and establishing common fields of experience.

Miguel Ferrão and Eduardo Guerra began working together in 2010 and are graduates of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Lisbon, with a Master on Philosophy/Aesthetics by the FCSH from the Universidade Nova, in Lisbon. They have been exhibiting their projects regularly in Portugal and abroad, including the Modern Art Centre at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Kunsthalle Lissabon (Lisbon), José de Guimarães International Arts Centre (Guimarães) and, recently, at CRAC Alsace (Selestat, France).





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