



Fundação Leal Rios

***You've eaten Roses, now you'll drink the Moon!*¹**

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1.Contextualising the Collection

At the start of the new millennium the brothers Miguel and Manuel Leal Rios took the first steps that were to take them towards the establishment of the art foundation that bears the family name. The creative dialogue between the siblings was instrumental in shaping the process: Manuel's desire to acquire individual pieces by modern Portuguese masters from the 1960s up to the 1980s developed in parallel with Miguel's scheme to build a collection of contemporary art, guided and informed by his professional background in art and design. The burgeoning collection grew out of an uncommon passion for art, which was determined from the outset by the development of a curatorial methodology that expanded and matured over time. Subsequently, an eponymous institution was established to enshrine the charitable goals of the collection. The resulting foundation is directed and shaped by Miguel, although the task of collecting is made in the name of its benefactor, brother Manuel.

In his inaugural speech Miguel Leal Rios highlights the overarching importance of 'passion' as the impetus of the collection; while collectors may be regarded as 'scholars, connoisseurs [and] owners', notes philosopher Walter Benjamin, 'but very rarely as that what they above all are: lovers.'² It is strong emotion that guides the collector, but feeling and devotion to a cause alone, suggests Rios, is not enough, and must be aligned with knowledge. He refers to 'contextualisation' as a tool to promote understanding.³ Therefore passion, the *quest* for art, ought to be framed by a close awareness of context - as the linkage between artifacts, locations, discourses, and people. He argues that such a context makes 'collecting, on the one hand more liberating, but also more conditioned.'⁴ Collections are formulated by the discussions with extended peer groups of gallerists, curators, critics, artists and other mentors placing the collector in a pivotal position in art's eco-system. The collection then serves as the connective tissue of shared ideas between all contributors. Such a strategic position can be enhanced by the commitment to a physical location in the form of a home for the collection, a process completed by the Leal Rios brothers with the conversion of a former car workshop in the artisanal area of Alvalade into their headquarters and exhibition space in 2012. This move shows a commitment to the transition from

¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Vertical Plate*, in: *When I Go: Selected French Poems*, Susanne Petermann, trans., Cascade Books, Eugene, Oregon, 2017, p.44.

² Walter Benjamin, Review of Gabriele Eckehard's *The German Book in the Baroque Epoch*, in *Walter Benjamin's Archive*, Ursula Marx et al eds., Verso, London and New York, 2007, p.25.

³ Miguel Leal Rios, Inaugural Speech 24th March 2012, Leal Rios Foundation, Lisbon.

⁴ Leal Rios, *ibid.*



Fundação Leal Rios

selecting artifacts to safeguard in a private collection, to an engagement with living artists, audiences and projects. The term ‘placemaking’ springs to mind, signifying the creation of a social and generative space. Accordingly, the Leal Rios Foundation has undergone an emancipatory process, and become a creative mainstay of the artworld in Lisbon with a reputation at national and international levels.

As public funds continue to shrink throughout Europe, museum spaces are often the first to suffer cuts to their budgets. As the public realm decreases, private collections step into the cultural breach thus vacated. But it is essential that the purpose of a collection be *publicly-minded* if it is to deliver on its cultural mission.

A private collection is at once a hermetic space, a cultural island so to speak, and a partial depiction of a worldview. It is not encumbered by the requirement to represent particular artistic constituencies or historical movements, nor is it bound by institutional administrative red tape. The presence of the collector looms over the institution, rendering policy as something more individual, and turning selection into a more personalized affair. This divergence from public museums makes private institutions potentially more dynamic, but it also demands an adherence to responsibility to peers and audiences alike. Therefore public admission and an ambitious programme are essential elements to complement a cohesive purchasing policy. The Leal Rios Foundation can be counted among a handful of significant collections in Portugal who consider their mission as not only collecting and preserving artworks, but helping in the active generation of new works and exhibition contexts. And it is indeed through the medium of the exhibition - placing artworks in new contexts and encouraging relationships – that the lifespan of the work is sustained and extended. Theorist José A. Sánchez asks if the ‘collector who, not content with the objects, also wants to collect the gazes and the events themselves?’⁵ To do so, collections must serve as both material and site for curatorial practice, not only to expose their holdings to the gaze of the spectator, but in the hope of inflecting the future understanding and destination of the work, along with the possibility of touching the audience. In this way, collecting and curating are scholarly practices that seek to create new readings and forms of engagement. Further, the act of showing a particular work adds to its exhibition history, which in turn enriches the range of its interpretations. A work that remains out of sight is unable to resonate in the presence of other artifacts, or to contribute to a common narrative.

Since any collection cannot encompass all things, the development of a core theme or focus is essential. Author Michael Bhaskar argues that the challenge for the 21st century lies with the management of information in a world of excess information.⁶ He advocates the employment of ‘curation’ as a tool of selecting, refining and distilling content. It would seem evident that an expanding collection of contemporary art be driven by curatorial selection; but we should not confuse the forming of a collection strategy with a striving for simplified content, in order to better communicate its aims. Collecting is not an activity driven by certainty, by dates, numbers or mission statements. Its primary function is bound

⁵ José A. Sánchez, *The Cabinet of Events*, (section e), in: Teresa Calonje, *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art*, Koenig Books, 2014, p.121.

⁶ Michael Bhaskar, *Curation: The Power of Selection in a World of Excess*, Piatkus, London, 2016, op.cit.



Fundação Leal Rios

by *culture* - a term notoriously hard to define according to sociologist Raymond Williams, since it invites and welcomes rather than excludes.

Indeed, the concern with widening the field of enquiry and inclusion forms an important aspect of the Leal Rios collection. The commitment to the legacy of Conceptual art through artworks that materialise the troika of space, time and body is patent throughout the collection. This can be seen in the preponderance of artforms strongly linked to audience engagement such as installation, video, sound and performance. Equally, its exploration of wider cultural contexts beyond those outlined by pivotal art markets in Western Europe and the United States has resulted in the presence of emerging and established artists from Africa and Latin America.

Though guided by an impeccable sense of aesthetic formality, the Leal Rios collection is strongly inflected by the sense of evanescence. While formally entirely distinct, the selection of works remains deliberately transient and elusive. We do not find stable monuments, fixed in space, time and meaning, but things that remain resolutely *in the making*. The artworks abide, like complex and open gestures in search of completion, soliciting engagement from the viewer.

The poet and artist Franck Leibovici links the terms production and performance as markers of contemporary art, arguing that ‘an artwork’s process of production is not reduced to the moment [it is made], but starts to take shape well before this, and continues to develop far beyond the point when it leaves the studio’. In other words, a work ‘performs’ in various ways throughout its ‘life course’ and never stops being ‘produced’⁷. Applied to an entire collection, such an artistic metaphor attests to the collection as a living entity kept alive and relevant by additional purchases and by the evolving relationship with a broad creative community.

2. Curatorial Concepts

The exhibition *You’ve eaten Roses, now you’ll drink the Moon!* is informed by the presence of two sites: the home of the Leal Rios Foundation in Lisbon and the hosting gallery at the newly constructed Forum Braga, a major new cultural hub in Northern Portugal. While the former has a particular exhibition history, the latter’s narrative remains to be written by its recently appointed directors Guilherme Braga da Cruz and Duarte Sequeira. While the gallery space has aesthetic and practical implications for an exhibition, in this instance such considerations are largely conditioned by the content of the collection from which the works are drawn.

Working from a living, growing collection of contemporary art is not without its challenges. Every exhibition made from its holdings is conditioned by two distinct aspects: it should represent the collection in some way, yet it also seeks to have a curatorial autonomy. After all, a collection is not an exhibition, and an exhibition can only show a section of any given collection. The problem is one of scale; but unlike the dysfunctional maps of Jorge Luis

⁷ Franck Leibovici, *An Ecology of Artistic Practices*, in, T. Calonje ed, *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art*, Koenig Books, 2014, p.58-59.



Fundação Leal Rios

Borges that were the same size as the territory they documented, their precision rendering them obsolete⁸, the curatorial process is not driven by representation but by discourse.

The collection invariably invokes the figure of the collector, or the individual whose authorship is inscribed in the holdings. Therefore, the collector remains present throughout the curatorial process, reminiscent of the performer in artist Bas Jan Ader's seminal video works, described as 'a man whose features are barely visible, in order not to interfere with the presence of the work.'⁹

As a result, we found the assignment of curating the first major exhibition of the collection outside its base in Lisbon to be an affair of affinities; the sensation of kinship - of shared aesthetics, concepts and questions - became evident when first visiting the foundation some years ago, an impression that was borne out over time. Our background as founding directors and curators of not-for-profit organisations such as the Museum of Installation or SE8 Gallery in London, along with our sustained writing on the development of installation as a discipline, gave us an excellent purview of the territory that such an exhibition might cover.

That said, the curatorial process, though on the one hand entirely devised by us, actually begins with the collector's practice. In some ways, to borrow a theatrical metaphor, one might argue that the resulting exhibition figures as a conceptual adaptation and staging of a play already in existence. Adaptation and collaboration are terms central to contemporary art, and to our activities as curators and writers. We work together closely with other creative individuals to extend the territory of enquiry, using the references of past practices as a mapping ground. The approach takes something from the idea of the palimpsest, which is inscribed by different hands over and over again. After all, in the present, art is not a matter of invention, but of appropriation and rearrangement, a means of manipulating the past into the present-future.

The adopted curatorial strategy does not set out to fetishise the collection, that is, to display works in splendid isolation and lacking contextualisation. Since the establishment of the so-called white cube in the 1960s exhibitions have tended to privilege ethereal displays, allowing a great deal of space around each item. These strategies prevail in public museums of modern and contemporary art, and are echoed across the commercial gallery sector. It is unsurprising that this trend is not bucked by the growing number of private collections, who wish their holdings to be viewed in a likewise manner.

In *You've eaten Roses, now you'll drink the Moon!* the classic principle of segregation is replaced by a close coexistence between works. Quiet contemplation or rarified intellectual engagement are replaced by absorption in an immersive environment of artifacts that jostle one another, see-sawing between dialogue and dispute, an attitude evocative of André Malraux's rich encyclopedic approach in his *Museum without Walls*, an imperfect but challenging account of culture as a repository of endless recombinations.

⁸ Jorge Luis Borges, *On Rigor in Science*, (1946) in: *A Universal History of Infamy*, translated by Norman Thomas de Giovanni, Penguin Books, London, 1975.

⁹ Jan Verwoert, *Bas Jan Ader: In Search of the Miraculous, One Work/Afterall*, London, 2006, p.3.



Fundação Leal Rios

The commingling of artworks highlight a certain playful manner, understood as the desire to include the audience in an activity. Culture, argues psychologist D.W. Winnicott, is not diminished but more fruitfully understood and cherished as a highly developed form of play. It takes place between the inner world of the imagination and the encounter with the external world, without the need for compliance or anxiety.

Accordingly, the exhibition sets out to keep *the pieces in play*. It assumes there is a tacit game of cognizance and memory taking place, but one that foregrounds the audience's agency without driving towards a set goal. There is, so to speak, no end-game. The arrangement of works supposes and foments a sense of fluidity, which promotes an expansion of boundaries whilst encouraging the audience to make new relationships between the works and thus contribute to the narrative of the exhibition.

In accordance with art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann's notion of the performativity¹⁰, the exhibition seeks to place the conventions of art production, presentation, and historical reference into focus, while showing how these conventions are co-produced by any artwork; as a result, the artwork helps to define and reshape conventions and their understanding. It follows that performative artistic practices are a means of acting so as to co-produce realities. The exhibition thus functions situationally, as a physical and discursive space - and relationally, as a platform for sensory embodiment. If works are to correspond with a performative reading, then they must function as 'acts' to an audience with a sense of their own agency, empowered to interpret and help shape their meaning.

*'In the exhibition...images, texts and objects are used to create meanings or to suggest narratives not always explicit in the artefacts. Works are associated contingently, metonymically. Shapes, forms and gestures bind together things that differ in many other respects.'*¹¹

Artist Elizabeth Price's description of exhibition-making chimes with our own curatorial position, since ideas often originate out of oblique readings of objects that are 'not of the order of explicit knowledge but of the imagination'.¹² This testifies to the extraordinary breadth of readings and richness inherent in the displayed works, as much as it demonstrates the powers of the curators' interpretation.

The exhibition does not approach curating as a path towards certainty, but as an instrument of negotiating meaning. It brooks no distinction according to style, genre, medium or period, terms that have no explicit relevance here. Instead while being respectful to the artists, the exhibition assumes works enter into a disputed territory when placed on display. A gallery space, one might say, functions as a stage to be populated by 'living' actors rather than inanimate props, a place that promotes a choreographic approach where 'acts'

¹⁰ Dorothea von Hantelmann, *The Experiential Turn*, in: *Living Collections Catalogue, On Performativity*, Elizabeth Carter, Vol.1, Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, 2014. op.cit.

¹¹ Elizabeth Price, *In a Dream you saw a Way to survive and you were full of Joy*, Hayward Publishing, Southbank Centre, London, 2016, p.9.

¹² Elizabeth Price, *ibid.*, p.9.



Fundação Leal Rios

play with and off one another. Accordingly, the display is not of a didactic mien, looking instead to convey an atmosphere – a seemingly insubstantial situation in which elements are free to mingle. Such atmospheres, however, argues philosopher Gernot Böhme, are more substantial than they appear, and indeed owe much to theatrical traditions with their carefully crafted sets that seek to generate empathy and *feeling* in the audience. Theatricality is not intended to entertain in this instance, but, according to curator Roger Malbert ‘to reveal something about the fundamental relationship between matter and the mind.’¹³

3.Exhibition Display

Historian Norman M. Klein refers to immersion in ‘scripted spaces [that] are designed to emphasize the viewer’s journey – the space between [where] the viewer walks into the story.’¹⁴

The exhibition at Forum Braga shares something of Klein’s experiential approach. The gallery is divided into three spaces that suggest a distinct parkour, a narrative. The entrance is dominated by American Tristan Perich’s sonic work *Octave* (2015) inviting the audience to be drawn into the exhibition by sound rather than by sight. His 300 1-bit speakers play a multitude of different frequencies in ascending order relating to an octave and introduces the exhibition as a sensory experience, signaling a commitment to feeling as much as to thought.

*While sight isolates, sound incorporates; vision is directional, whereas sound is omnidirectional. The sense of sight implies exteriority, but sound creates an experience of interiority. I regard an object, but sound approaches me; the eye reaches, but the ear receives.*¹⁵

Indeed, sound is used throughout the exhibition, to create points of attention and as a leveling device – as in a library, producing a gentle murmur that raises the ambient noise – texturing the hard surfaces of the newly built gallery.

The first zone, adjacent to the glazed front elevation of the gallery is dominated by a large platform painted in camouflage green displaying a number of sculptural works, which is flanked by video monitors, and framed images. The feature elevates the three-dimensional works above the flat grey floor of the gallery. It functions as a floating ‘island’, giving a common surface to otherwise seemingly distinct works. It references extended plinths, socles for monumental sculpture, and even the mobile platforms employed to pose models for life-classes. Its undulating shape also calls to mind a child’s conception of an imaginary space, in the way that a cardboard box may stand in for a vessel or an oneiric dwelling.

¹³Roger Malbert, Foreword, in Jonathan Allen & Sally O’Reilly, eds., *The Magic Show*, Hayward Publishing, Southbank, London, p.6.

Cyril Connolly, *The Unquiet Grave*, a Word Cycle by Palinurus, W.W. Norton and Company, 2006 (1944).

¹⁴ Norman M.Klein, *The Vatican to Las Vegas: a History of Special Effects*, The New Press, New York and London, 2004, p.11.

¹⁵ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, Wiley-Academy, 2005.



Fundação Leal Rios

These artistic presentation mechanisms are confronted with references to landscape or geography, suggesting an elsewhere in which display operates as a leveling device, rendering all things equal. It owes something to the hypothetical idea of utopia, where propositions and models commingle with worldmaking.

Rui Toscano's *The Great Curve*, 2009, a telescope mounted on a tripod, seeks to demonstrate the laws of physics by representing curvilinear space, as a line of gently arching points of light extending into the distance. It addresses the cosmos as a place of the imagination, rather than as a space of strictly scientific exploration – a kind of 'cosmic landscaping', where reason lives side by side with fiction and desire – a principle also patent on João Biscainho's *Through the liquid, which also moves, (your immortality is the end of democracy)*, (2013-2015). It shows a short video loop on a portable vintage television monitor chronicling the life phases of an artificial jellyfish generated in a hermetic laboratory space, a simulation suggesting that the future is already present in our post-human era.

The question of scale is placed in sharp focus as we seesaw from the vastness of the universe to microscopic space, an unfeasible shift in proportion that can only be demonstrated by presenting models of space. Christian Andersson's *The Sistine Chapel* (2009) seeks to explain the majesty of the firmament by resorting to a description of architectural space, a man-made artifact that promotes a degree of understanding of what cannot be readily explained.

All notions of scale, argues historian Susan Stewart are compressions of time and space, miniatures that privilege a kind of interiority allowing us to grasp the world around us. Here, it is not only space but also its temporal perception that is reduced, since time flows faster inside the model.¹⁶

The typology of the model also features in Pedro Cabrita Reis's sculptures, which refer to archetypes inherent in the commonplace. Here *Untitled* (1990) a well-like structure refers to a familiar typology of architectural space, invoking 'the texture of an elsewhere' writes critic Adrian Searle:

*However material, however specific to a place, however self-contained or abstracted or open-endedly metaphorical, the encounter with art inevitably presents us with something we can grasp only with reference to the familiar, with what we already know for ourselves. [His] sculptures are where we have always lived and go on living in our heads.*¹⁷

This fast forwarding of time in a controlled space is central to Harrison and Wood's *10x10* (2011) a film in which the silent and banal actions of the protagonists play out against the backdrop of model-offices, filmed as a never-ending vertical pan. A range of props is employed, often to humorous effect to stave off the tedium of the workplace. These are human survival strategies to endure another day, repeated ad nauseam. 'Nothing' writes

¹⁶ Susan Stewart. *On Longing*, p.66.

¹⁷ Adrian Searle, *Will you be needing this?*, Guardian Newspaper, 14 December 2004.



Fundação Leal Rios

curator Chris Sharp 'dislocates one from the present and destabilizes the constituent flow of time like a déjà vu.'¹⁸

The reference to the workplace continues in João Onofre's *Untitled (Vulture in the Studio)*, (2002). It references Bruce Nauman's *Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)*, (2001) as both works show footage of the artists' studios populated by animals. The hypothesis presented by the video is of a space that remains productive without the presence of the artist. While Nauman's footage shows secretive nocturnal interlopers such as the artist's cat and some mice, Onofre's vulture is a much more incongruous and imposing presence: brief attempts at flight are interspersed with perching on furniture and pecking at various items, disrupting and destroying the studio.

Remaining with the documentation of a one-off action, Anthony McCall's *Landscape for White Squares* (1972), is a single performance work, filmed on 16mm and transferred to digital format. The film is the sole record of the event, and as such is not only a document or placeholder, but comes to be the actual work.

Many of the works in the exhibition present highly focused, internalized experiences, transmitted to the spectator as immersive engagements. Matt Mullican's *Notebook Pages Cosmology Yellow*, (2003) and Michael Biberstein's *MB/1* both present highly personalised forms of worldmaking, from the former's interior voyages and a utopian state fuelled by mind-altering substances, to the latter's painterly encounter with the sublime. The lack of contours in Biberstein's paintings point towards a boundless spatial rendering in which *atmospheres* predominate, a vision of the insubstantial made palpable. One of Biberstein's paintings was used in a work of Toscano from 1997, in which a red Ferrari is superimposed on a reproduction of the Swiss artist's canvases as a comment on the irreconcilability of material culture and the sublime.

Maison Tropicale, (2007), Ângela Ferreira's project for the Portuguese Pavillion at the Venice Biennale of that year reflects on the resonances of colonial history. It is represented here by a pair of photographs of vacant elevated building foundations and comments on Jean Prouvé's failed utopian designs for model-dwellings in African colonies. The colonies function as a *tabula rasa*, an empty backdrop for the Western experiments with mass-produced housing modules.

Sabine Hornig's *Raum mit grossem Fenster*, (2005), forms the transition between the first space and the second. The trompe l'oeil glass box frames an image of an architectural interior, but is otherwise translucent from either side. It questions the frontal ontology of vision where the ideal viewing position is facing an image head-on.

Architecture has become an art of the printed image fixed by the hurried eye of the camera. In our culture of pictures, the gaze itself flattens into a picture and loses its plasticity. Instead

¹⁸ Chris Sharp, *The indistinguishable Soup of the Present*, <https://www.christianandersson.net/words/the-indistinguishable-soup-of-the-present>



Fundação Leal Rios

*of experiencing our being in the world we behold it from outside as spectators of images projected on the surface of the retina.*¹⁹

The central space of the exhibition brings together artworks that foreground the act of perception. Though none of the works are participatory as such - a feature of the entire collection - they require the viewers to consciously acknowledge their own presence in the work as well as inviting their shifting the conception of seeing from an 'optical event to a phenomenological process, in which works appear to lose their definition and material substance in the face of the self beholding it'.²⁰

Almost Nothing (2003) by Luis Paulo Costa, features a large mirror studded with a number of door viewers that double up as the fittings that fix the mirror to the wall, melding form, content, and display mechanism. The devices lack any outlook since they are set into the thickness of the wall, and, additionally, as the lenses are set back-to-front. By reversing the function of these simple telescopic devices, the artist appears to point towards an ambiguity between what is *here* and what is *there*.

Becky Beasley's photographic screens follow the dialectics of revelation and concealment; the photographs produced at a 1:1 scale with what they depict meld the distinctions between object, subject and support structure, bestowing a dimension of autonomy to the images.

*By furnishing this already crowded world with a duplicate one of images, photography makes us feel that the world is more available than it really is.*²¹

The perception of the real is brought into close focus by Adelina Lopes's *Variações para um Copo*. The sequence of photographs show three drinking glasses as a progression from completeness, to breakage, and finally a return to a precarious, reassembled wholeness. The triptych is a meditation on the truth of materiality as Lopes uses a range of perceptual subterfuges and illusions to conceal the difference between object and image.

Contrariwise, Denés Farkas's delicate miniature models wear their illusory quality lightly, preferring to set out a poetic narrative concealed in the pages of books.

'Solid libraries of wood and paper, or libraries of ghostly flickering screens, stand as proof of our resilient belief in a timeless, far-reaching order that we dimly intuit or perceive' writes Alberto Manguel, who sounds a note of caution by adding that 'however appealing we may find the dream of a knowable universe made of paper and a meaningful cosmos made of words, a library, even one colossal in its proportions or ambitious and infinite in its scope, can never offer us a "real" world.'²²

Joachim Bandau's watercolours layer thin skeins of black washes, casting multiple shadows on the paper's surface. Their edges retain a translucency, while the centre deepens

¹⁹ Pallasmaa, *ibid*, p.30.

²⁰ Alexandra Munroe, *Art of Perceptual Experience*, in *The Third Mind: American Artists contemplate Asia, 1860-1989*, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, D.A.P, 2009, op.cit.,p.287-288.

²¹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, Penguin Books, New York, 1986, p.24.

²² Alberto Manguel, *The Library at Night*, Yale University Press, 2008, p.322-323.



Fundação Leal Rios

to inky black. The works' formal simplicity contrasts with the underlying conceptual complexity. Philosopher Michel Serres writes:

*Now it is probable that true knowledge of the things of this world lies in the solid's essential shadow, in its opaque black density, locked behind the multiple doors of its edges, besieged only by practice and theory.*²³

In a highly condensed gallery, replete with works, monitors display moving images that punctuate experience, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in spaces not physically present. These are scaled spaces of an elsewhere, consolations for the rooted materiality of the body; today we need the camera in our lives, without it is as if life did not happen.

André Romão's *Looking* (2015) depicts a black, unblinking pupil – a hegemonic eye seeking dominance over culture, narcissistically rendering the world in its gaze. The eye, thus detached from other bodily experiences fetishizes the world as a mere vision, a coercive mirror of its streamlined desires. Referring to the eye removed from a corpse philosopher Georges Bataille contends 'the caress of the eye over the skin is so utterly, so extraordinarily gentle, and the sensation is so bizarre that it has something of a rooster's horrible crowing'.²⁴ Romão's eye can be understood as a pure pupil, lacking an iris, rendering it incapable to control light. The massively dilated tunnel as a pure shadow devouring light, unable to distinguish what it sees. The surfeit of vision results in its opposite, a kind of blindness.

If *Looking*, casts human presence into doubt, Helena Almeida's series *Desenho Habitado*, (1975) places the artist's body at the forefront of the process. As the title suggests, these works are inhabited by her image and extended through her gesture using actual horsehair on a background of photographic paper. In accordance with the cuts and perforations performed on canvases by her great influence Lucio Fontana, Almeida's work demonstrates the passage between real and metaphorical space by applying touch, a bodily action that lessens the rule of the scopic.

'I am the space where I am'²⁵ writes the poet Noël Arnaud, asserting the link between the image of self and its situational existence. Mohau Modisakeng's video *Inzilo*, (2013) records the male artist's performance carefully peeling the carapace of hardened layers of ash-black charcoal from his skin, an embodiment of female mourning rites in South Africa, when grief threatens to obliterate the individual.

*Aside I turn to the holy, unspeakable, mysterious night'...'I am ready to sink away in drops of dew, and mingle with the ashes'...'a pathway to higher experiences more heavenly than those glittering stars we hold the eternal eyes which the night hath opened within us.*²⁶

²³ Michel Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*, J.V. Harari and D.F. Bell eds, John Hopkins University, London and Baltimore, 1982.

²⁴ Georges Bataille, *The Story of the Eye*, Joachim Neugroschel, trans., City Lights, 2001.

²⁵ Noël Arnaud, quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, 1992 (1969), p.137.

²⁶ Novalis, *Hymns to the Night, (1800)*, quoted in Jan Verwoert, *Bas Jan Ader: In Search of the Miraculous, One Work/Afterall*, London, 2006, p.13.



Fundação Leal Rios

The final space deepens the shadows from a metaphor to a physical experience. A camouflage grey, wall, the colour of a battleship serves as a division. Focusing on a number of low-lit theatrical tableaux that bring together questions of scale, illusion and atmosphere. Architecture critic Juhani Pallasmaa writes:

'Deep shadows and darkness are essential because they dim the sharpness of vision, make depth and distance ambiguous, and invite unconscious peripheral vision and tactile fantasy.'
27

The darkened room displays 3 works by Francisco Tropa, Sophie Whetnall and Julião Sarmento. Tropa's work *Demonstration of Diffraction using Water Waves* (1992-2010) demonstrates a lightbeam being passed through water; however conclusive the scientific presentation, its actual significance is found in the realm of aesthetics; while objects are material anchors for the construction of meaning, Tropa *subverts and realigns this relationship* by constructing atmospheres in which the real is superseded by a confabulation that functions only in the realm of the imagination.

Atmospheres warrant immersion, soliciting an act on the part of the spectator that requires time to engage memory recall and imagination. *Recording The Light*, (2001) by Whetnall documents the passage of lightbeams through a window, fixing the fugitive patterns on a facing wall with tape. The video-projector and the sun become one and the same, the projected film being akin to a moving sunbeam. The artist reprises one of the classic motifs of Flemish interior painting; the window articulates the dialectic between the inside and the outside, the interior becoming a hermetic world in which time is arrested.

Sarmento's *Guibert* (2008) shows a hooded female figure seated at a rectangular table and facing a mirror. Her gaze contained by the hood, she is unable to close the narcissistic, self-affirming circle. At first sight, the tableau has connotations of captivity, a display of a kidnapped victim, but the restraint appears to be of a different order. The figure is clothed in a black evening dress and the covering is made from soft black velvet, suggesting confinement as a game of affinity perhaps, as demonstrated by René Magritte's, *The Lovers*, (1928) – a close-up of a hooded couple, their heads leaning together in a gesture of blind closeness. Relieved of the eye's distancing effects of voyeurism and surveillance, the body is returned to a richer sensorial state of intimacy. The faceless female figure which also appears in the artist's paintings references the representation of desire played out by montage and cutting techniques of classic cinema.

Sarmento's work returns us to the concerns that underpin the exhibition. Its title, *You've eaten Roses, now you'll drink the Moon!* was drawn from the a poem of Rainer Maria Rilke and indicates an expansion of perception beyond the scopic towards the recollection of what has gone before. Through memory we can address the incorporation of conceptual practices into embodied experience initiated by the audience's own relationship with the world.

²⁷ Pallasmaa, *ibid.*, p.46



Fundação Leal Rios

*He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments. No image satisfies him for he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its folds does the truth reside – that image, that taste, that touch for whose sake all this has been unfurled and dissected.'*²⁸

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, *ibid.*, p.49.