

«UTOPIA, TODAY»

Based on Fernando Pessoa's "Mensagem" and José Saramago's "A Jangada de Pedra"

Augusto Brázio, Cláudio Garrudo, Hélio Luís, Joanna Latka, Marta Ubach, Paula Almozara, Pauliana Valente Pimentel, Rui Soares Costa, Teresa Gonçalves Lobo, Tiago Casanova

Curator: Ana Matos

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"Europe lies, resting upon her elbows" staring at a peninsula that, as it detached itself from the old continent on its way south, became an island that, as Saramago himself described it, "is a utopia". The exhibit "Utopia, today" proposes a dialogue between these works by two of the greatest names of our literature: "Mensagem", by Fernando Pessoa, and "A Jangada de Pedra", by José Saramago. A reflection on that place that does not exist, that non-possibility of a perfect and ideal world that Thomas Moore chanced on his book and that provides the motto for this 2nd edition of FOLIO.

In Art we often look for signs that help us reveal the world in which we live, put the past in context and envisage a future that may be "for God to know", as a Portuguese saying states, but is for Men to realize. In this sense, artists, writers, philosophers and thinkers have the extraordinary ability to create new territories, filled with sensitivity, beauty, the essence of human nature, where imagination dilutes into our spirit so that we may accept the invitation for a journey... may it be auspicious.

Presented in two separate groups, intended to spark this reflection through the works of Pessoa and Saramago, each of these ten artists focused his/her soul and thought on the aspects that appealed to him/her the most, whether aesthetical, historical, geographical or political, presenting multiple readings and interpretations which are not to be understood as illustrations, as they go beyond the literary texts that inspire them.

Augusto Brázio presents a diptych from the "Bang!" series, a perambulation through the deepest and more traditional Portugal where the imaginary of an authoritarian past confronts the chandelier that casts light on a "new time". **Rui Soares Costa** proposes an ink on paper drawing that evokes Pedro Orce's seismometer, where all the waves from that device could shatter in the search for a new order. The fragmented and fictional landscapes by **Paula Almozara** reveal how the drift of this peninsula-turned-island could take place, reminiscent of the Northern beach from where Joaquim Sassa tossed his stone. **Tiago Casanova's** installation "Is it a Revolution?... Or just bad weather?!" portrays a natural catastrophe in a very real way while, at the same time, his pertinent question carries us, by way of a metaphor, to a time of revolution, evoking a different "Bad Weather" that also seeks release. "The devil fools with the best laid plan", by **Hélio Luís**, takes us to that territory, somewhere – perhaps - between Africa and South America, in an apparent contradiction of conquest and surrender, where one feels the scream that claims that, even if paradoxically, utopia may be possible.

In "À Noite" **Marta Ubach** explores the mysterious night atmospheres of "Mensagem", in a monochromatic fog where a lone barge sails through the unknown. **Teresa Gonçalves Lobo** found her inspiration on the last verse of the poem dedicated to D. Fernando: "And I go forth and the light of the upraised glaive shines / On my calm visage./Full of God, I do not fear what will come,/Because come what may, it shall never

be/Greater than my soul". In "Intervalo" **Joanna Latka** depicts, through this woman, a country that is (always) waiting for King Sebastião, the one who left and became lost in the fog. The work of **Pauliana Valente Pimentel** brings to mind the discoveries of Afonso de Albuquerque, mentioned in "Mensagem" as "the other wing of the griffon" and whose influence persists to this day on the garments of these Iranian women. In "Trindade", **Cláudio Garrudo** registered - in an atmosphere of dream and voyage and in three separate moments, like Pessoa's work (present, past and future) - the room where the writer passed away, at Hospital St. Louis, in Lisbon.

Contemporary allegories that represent that utopia or utopias that Fernando Pessoa and José Saramago approached in their seminal works "Mensagem" and "A Jangada de Pedra" and that discuss a time that is also "our own time" since, now and always, "the hour is now!". 500 years after the publishing of Thomas More's "Utopia", 82 years after Fernando Pessoa's "Mensagem" and 30 years after José Saramago's "A Jangada de Pedra" what meanings can we find today for the word Utopia? The non-place, in its etymological sense, the projection of a world we claim to be better because it is fairer and more beautiful? Thus, this exhibition proposes reflections not only of aesthetical and artistic nature but also of political and social characteristics around the concept of Utopia because, in the words of Victor Hugo, "There is nothing like dream to create the future. Utopia today, flesh and blood tomorrow". In the search for the best and most beautiful meanings for Life and the World, Art being the place where everything is possible.

Ana Matos

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(curator and artistic director at Galeria das Salgadeiras)



Parceria:

