



## PAINTING: OBSERVATION FIELD

---

curated by João Pinharanda

---

OPENING 18 JUNE 4 PM

---

18 JUNE - 3 SEPTEMBER 2021

---

ANA CARDOSO | ANA MANSO ANTÓNIO NEVES NOBRE | BEATRIZ COELHO | LUÍSA JACINTO | MARIANA GOMES | MARTA SOARES | RITA FERREIRA | RUI HORTA PEREIRA | RUI NEIVA | SÉRGIO FERNANDES

(In memory of Julião Sarmento, who loved painting  
and was infinitely curious.  
I would have loved to hear his thoughts on this show.)

This exhibition was built upon a vast (but unavoidably incomplete) survey carried out in the artist's studios now producing painting in Lisbon – a survey that will be continued in other geographical contexts – searching for other names (young and not-so-young artists) to showcase many different examples of painting and abstract painting.

The artists in the show are mostly young or upcoming artists, but some have been active for a longer time and bridge current and previous contexts. Nonetheless, historical names have been purposely left out, most of whom are still active and whose production has been stable since the 1970s.

We tried to avoid all historicist, comparative, or affiliational temptations concerning the showcased artists. It should be vehemently pointed out that this exhibition does not intend to produce a historical balance, nor to present any emerging conjuncture; this exhibition is not a manifesto, it does not herald a wave of “new abstraction”, and the artists herein are not part, and never were, of a unified group. This text is void of any intention to present an autonomous aesthetic project.

Nevertheless, it is seemingly easy to note that, in the current moment in Portugal, there is a strong pictorial production (with several origins and representing many universes) that, being churned up by young artists recently out of school (and some still studying), finds its privileged means of expression in abstraction – although the rigor of geometry is absent and some of them even frequently introduce figurative elements. And yet, despite this empirical evidence, this phenomenon has rarely been considered in critical reflection or taken as a whole by curatorial practice. Our intention was to confirm, in numerous studio visits, the intuition of this reality and, from there, create an exhibition.

Departing from a place free of preconceptions regarding the result of this investigation, it was possible to perceive a set of guidelines that confirm all of painting's tensions in the contemporary context: the fragile lines that separate the practice of painting from certain conceptual exercises involved in its production, the contamination between geometry and free gesture, between this freedom and a certain para-figuration (in which floral references seem to be dominant). These are the successive fields of affirmation where colour, matter, or their absence, gestural or its absence, the lack of a message or its rationalized, lyrical or ironic sublimation, and also formal or decorative ploys, seem to be the elements always in play.

This ongoing investigation allowed us to realize that the individual sensibilities of each selected artist do not overlay each other, they do not establish lines of continuity or mutual influence. In other words, the “panorama” of the current time, which we can provisionally establish here, confirms the historical, sociological and anthropological reality of Portuguese visual creation: it is a

---

---

heteronymic scene, hardly referenced to any historical continuity, with rare or absent links to previous or contemporary national contexts but also disconnected from external contexts, or assuming them always in a mode of miscegenation, contamination and hybridity.

These findings determined an exhibition dominated by visual (formal and chromatic) criteria.

Sérgio Fernandes clearly affirms the long and minute fabrication of his canvases, on whose surface light seeks its full radiance and sensuality, density and sublimation more by subtraction and distillation of colours than by additive processes.

Ana Manso gives us a universe where the abstract gesture becomes form and becomes colour (while neither result from a previous decision) and in which the dispersed multiplication of these elements and their vibration creates contact fields between disciplines, languages and intentions.

Marta Soares seeks a performative paroxysm of “making” that is not seen but is present in the grandeur of her works and in the accumulation of heteroclitic materials on her canvases, simultaneously dirty and pure, dark and vibrant with a strange inner light. Ana Luísa Jacinto’s veils are pure testimonies of a proximity to distant landscapes that, translucent and weightless, can also feel close or suggest the trail of angels cutting across the space through which we move.

António Neves Nobre has four works in this exhibition. Each one of them punctuates the show with moments of surprise and commentary on themselves and on their surroundings.

Worthy of note, the rarefied use of pictorial material and the illusion of organic (or objectual) effects that are created and accentuated by the chosen shapes: three “pupils” appearing at all heights on the walls of the two rooms, for example.

There is a clear play of tensions between the shapes (geometric and reminiscent of the 1970s), the gestures and free colours, the sometimes abstract (monochromatic) sometimes floral model in the “shaped-canvas” paintings of Ana Cardoso. There are three, dispersed in the exhibition space and all of them are resolved in the balance between the illusion of the geometric form that composes the puzzle of the shaped-canvas and the superimposed painting that works as a true camouflage, trapping their geometric base.

Rita Ferreira’s large painting/drawing on paper is at the limit of floral patterning (which, however, she systematically boycotts) and at the limit of chromatic saturation; two small paper sheets, later on, maintain this internal ambiguity but undo figurative references until they transform abstraction into a progressive fading of colours and disappearance of forms.

The two canvases by Mariana Gomes replicate themselves and intensely articulate three elements: the matter is thick and irregular but seductive; the colours are glaring but balanced according to the rules of the chromatic spectrum and open to pure joy; and the gesture, apparently sloppy and chaotic, creates regular shapes that mask scholarly references.

Concerning Rui Neiva’s two large paintings, we do not know whether we should give primacy to the unusual shape of the canvases, or to the mechanical gesture that drags and mixes the colours on their surfaces – they shine like ceramic panels and even gain dimension of decipherable urban signs as testimonies of movement and velocity.

Rui Horta Pereira presents a long theory of successive sheets of paper, without formal or chromatic imperatives. At first sight, they may seem very delicate paintings but in reality are the records of the action of sunlight (over months, in different places and positions and exposure times) on simple coloured cardboards – they work as well as random and impossible-to-read meteorological records.

A game, without pieces and open to all possibilities of association, is perhaps the ideal solution to close this set. Beatriz Coelho reminds us, in two diptychs created according to the “traditional” rules of painting, of the undecidable boundary through which we move: the chequered patterns of the two compositions are simultaneously geometric figures and representations of chessboards: abstractions and objects, things and ideas.

The “observation field” is rich and diverse, its weight and depth result in the presentation of a vast spectrum of languages (more contradictory than complementary) that range from purity to an overload of elements, from lyricism to ironic commentary, and that, opening up multiple avenues of work, justify the lack of completeness in the title of the exhibition and announce the necessity to continue the prospective task here endeavoured.

Paris, June 10, 2021  
João Pinharanda



UNIÃO EUROPEIA  
Fundo Europeu  
de Desenvolvimento Regional