

# THE HOME AND THE ESCAPE

21.02–10.05.2020



## ANA VIEIRA

## THE ESCAPE... A FUTURE YET TO COME

Imma Prieto

A female silhouette searches for itself in the mirror; a silhouette in profile, centred and geometric, made of remnants, tissue paper and fragments in various shades of blue. A blue that will continue to appear in the different media which Ana Vieira (Coimbra, 1940 – Lisbon, 2016) had gone on to explore.

If we stop at this small collage from 1963, it is not without reason. In some manner, we find in it the different elements that will serve as an introduction to some of the interests that accompanied the artist throughout her career. In this work from the nineteen-sixties, a clear interest in the relationship established by the subject, especially the woman, with visibility and with domestic space is already there. A relationship with what we see and what we do not see. What does the mirror return to us?

Vieira invites the viewer to take part in the dialectic game she proposes with *A Senhora M.M.T.S.* [*The Lady M.M.T.S.*] (1967): again, a female silhouette, a mirror; but this time, the mirror is real and awaits the visitor's reflection. The early two-dimensional fragments, in turn, extend into space and come forward to meet us. The artist's need to explore artistic media in relation to frames (physical and symbolic), led her to a spatial opening-up of the physical limits. Layers of space framed in wood capture an overexposure: a male silhouette in blue and the female silhouette in the mirror within the first. It is curious that the same blue fills the whole of the body imprinted on the steps of *A Passagem da Senhora M.L.T.* [*The Passage of Lady M.L.T.*] (1967). Perhaps the artist projects this body imbued with blue into an unknown, desire space as a rising path to liberty.

Ana Vieira, *A passagem da Senhora M.L.T.* (The Passage of the Lady), 1967-2007. Wood and acrylic ink, 80 × 74 × 116 cm. Ana Vieira State Collection. Photograph: Frederico Brizida

The series of silkscreens done between 1973 and 1976 and some of the intervened photographs (1973-1978) introduce us into a reflection about the domestic sphere, those everyday tasks associated with women and the responsibilities that women acquire for family life to go smoothly. Is it a simple thing? A plate, some silverware, the necessary everyday intimacy; setting the table for the satisfaction of the those to be fed. Vieira introduces the elements, but she also includes the longings, projections of the future. A train, a ship, a road; signs that materialise the wish to find other ways to live. The blue associated with liberty, from the sea to the sky, frames the furniture.

Gradually, the house bursts, scrutinizes itself and shows its guts. Leaving, going out to the exterior, is a must. Vieira oversteps the boundaries of private and public and brings us to the possibility of another reality. Blue tinges black and white photographs in the intrusion of objects and structures that make up a private identity. The stairs, a wall clock, a chair. Of all these, two are surprising. The reflection of a woman projected in a window; it is literal, we do not know if that female silhouette is an object, like the furniture, or a reflection of that projector drawn at the top of the stairs. And the curtains, curtains that insinuate two of the constants that begin to appear in the artist's references: movement and visibility.

The installation *Ocultação/Desocultação* [*Hiding/Unbiding*] (1978-2010) is resolved with a direct gesture, marking the architectural limits of the home with the habitual construction materials, that is to say, bricks. The definitive feature is the inclusion of language, which leaves no room for doubt. Vieira marks and writes out everything that she would like to do; perhaps surprisingly, even the action of breathing is included.

Between 2004 and 2008, Vieira creates work that is part of a natural process of evolution with respect to the body, to the corporeal. While until then, she introduced us

into her thoughts using gestures and subtle suggestions, she now makes us take part. Our bodies are to move around the work, touching or, rather, grazing the space and the materials (it is interesting to underline the subtlety, not lacking a certain seduction). In the *Close-Up* series (2004), the artist regroups several of her interests with a special emphasis on internal observation. She delves deeper into the observation of relationships between human beings, on the one hand, and the objects and spaces they live with, on the other. Her work establishes a dialectic between that which is visible and that which is invisible, between exterior and interior, or even between movement and pause. At the same time, she questions the fragility of what we call the politics of the household.

The play and seduction that is inherent in all that is to do with visibility is one again present in the work *Atravessar o Visível* [*Crossing the Visible*] (2008): words reduced to their minimum expression hide behind the white of the page. Like a *voyeur*, the visitor examines them and seeks to read them coming nearer to the work, the paper and the white tinged with inscriptions.

The spectator's gaze and presence are altered by the challenge posed by Vieira's work. It is the spectator who decides what to see and what not to see. At the same time, the artist's interests have been shaped by a constant need to transgress limits, both on the semantic and spatial levels. Since the nineteen-seventies, Vieira is immersed in a series of projects in which she gradually introduces new challenges: the frame or the medium, the object, the perimeter, the volume; invisibility and movement. Travelling on physical and mental paths, the visitor's perception of and relationship with the work and the space are transformed.

Vieira's reflection on the home, traversed by a multitude of signifiers and signified, is extended from the moment when she introduces socio-political interests and issues. The gesture of going outside is neither easy nor

simple. Once the home opens up to the exterior, what do we find? What do the street and the square have in store for us?

Ana Vieira establishes a dialogue with domestic space and with the social fabric; a reflection in which she engages, in some cases, by employing a metaphor from the artistic language. Architecture turns into a framework from which to broach issues ranging from the situation of women in the home to the weakening of the social structure as a result of the 2007-2008 financial crisis. This leads her to reflect on the exclusion suffered by everyone.

In 2014, Vieira creates pieces which represent an important turning point. The objects that accompany the house, those that have reached beyond the limits of the home, undergo a drastic intervention. Vieira splits them open, as though with a scalpel, and shows us the interior. Objects that lash out against the situation of those who live with them. As though the smallest and most personal thing, perhaps an essence, were to wish to abandon its form and search for a new body to inhabit. Between the installation *Sala de espera. Os móveis a afirmarem a sua inutilidade* [*Waiting Room. Furniture Affirming its Uselessness*] and the photographic series *Os móveis a fugirem do seu destino* [*Furniture Running Away from its Fate*], the artist proclaims her indignation.

In the first work, we find an empty dining room, which is always a waiting room. Chairs, a table, a hanger, chairs that blend into the walls, beginning to lose their identity and wandering between the colour of the wood and the white of the walls. One chair amongst the furniture seems to rise and completely merge with the wall. Emptiness stirs up the conscience, and not few are the hours that many women have remained in waiting in their own homes, with no other dialogue than that of the silence of the objects. Those same objects that lose their usefulness in a general crisis. The installation creates a great pause within

the space, it freezes time and reminds us of passages of the texts of Kafka or Brecht. What are we waiting for?

The photographic series, on the other hand, reveals the relationship between people and institutions; the images convey reaching a saturation-point. Guts and rebellion, again, but also, wounds and scars.

The project invites to reflect on how, from the outset, and using diverse languages and media, the artist sets forth a series of procedures which place us on a threshold and lead us closer to crossing it. Her frames of action allude to the dialogue between person and space. The aim is to exhibit the mechanisms delimiting our everyday life, that is to say, lend visibility to the relationship of the subjects and their context. In terms of integrity and responsibility, Vieira's body of work, created over more than fifty years of activity, speaks of audacity and strength. With masterful subtlety, Vieira employs the languages of art and architecture to propose new ways of thinking about the life situation of millions of human beings throughout the world, and especially women. Owing not only to being responsible for the organization of most homes, but also to occupying an exceedingly fragile place at a time in which the system that, in theory, supports us hardens. One of the artist's last works is a metaphor for that. *O desenho da menina a fugir do seu suporte* [*Drawing of the Little Girl Running Away from her Medium*] introduces the audio-visual language for the first time, and with an absolute simplicity, synthesizes and redefines: the silhouette of a woman who is fleeing, escaping from the structure, this time artistic, architectural and social.

Writing about Ana Vieira's work also compels to contemplate the nostalgia, the solitude of generations of women who inhabit homes with no other company than that of objects. Women who construct the individual and collective identity without being acknowledged. In this sense, Vieira's work is an homage. Countless instants that

come together not only in the execution of each one of the works, but with all that they come to signify. As she reminds us in one her last statements in 2014, this solitude also translates into social abandonment; into the neglect to which economic forces subject the lives of communities. To leave, to flee, to escape, to run. Like those young girls who inhabit the walls and disappear behind them.

## THROUGH THE... TRANSPARENCY AND OPACITY IN THE WORK OF ANA VIEIRA

João Fernandes

“In the work of Ana Vieira, the house becomes a place for the passage of the look and sensorial perception. In this sense, it is a nomadic house, passed through by the crossover of continuities and discontinuities which confuse that which could be understood by its “inside” and its “outside”, which either distinguishes or makes the domains of the private and the public, of intimacy and revelation indistinct. The house thus becomes the territory of a shared complicity with whoever sees it, a secret where knowing does not diminish its mystery but rather accentuates a subtle play of approximation and distancing that localises and marks the path of the visitor within it.

The works of Ana Vieira have, since the very beginning, been “crossable” by the eye. The contours of the figures and objects that she presented in 1968 did not only dematerialise their referents by outlining their absence in white wood, but also similarly revealed the space that can be glimpsed behind them, configured by the memory of the figure or the object on which they are based. The figure or object is thus the starting point for the space, as if curtains, screens or windows became thresholds of another dimension we were promised.

The environments in which Ana Vieira presents and represents the sites of a possible domesticity dramatise the intimacy without stealing their secrets. Their walls (when materialised) are turned into points of passage from opacity to transparency, through the fabrics, nets and veils that filter, centre or decentre the look of the viewer. The concept of fabric mixes with the concept of house, awakening the

textual possibilities (both tactile and textile) of their domestic interweaving.

The theatre curtain is suggested in the result of a scenographed intimacy, only to be shared based on the complicity and curiosity of whoever is laced with it. The paradigms of fabric and house evoke Penelope in their narrative possibilities, intuitable yet forever untold. There is neither “inside” nor “outside” in this furnishing of the space. The furniture, the clouds or other objects are just as relative as their painted shadows: they are constituted as settings of their compositional and semantic associations, turning the viewer into the subject and object of his own memory, locating him as a projected character of himself. For this reason, the windows and doors that many of Ana Vieira’s works present do not define spaces but configure the crossing of the look. They are spaces “between”, as if there was not a before and an after in the time and place of their remains.

Hiding and un hiding reciprocally imply a tension in each project between what is revealed and what is hidden, like the interstices of the desire that convert it into the principle of a world architecture. All Ana Vieira’s work transfers the plane of architecture into the plane of intimacy, distancing itself from what in the first is monument, the narrative of the exterior and ideology, to centre on the second, a labyrinth of sensations and perceptions where desire is intuited as a complicity shared secret.

To gather, reconstitute and present a vast group of Ana Vieira’s works in a house, as has happened with this exhibition at Serralves, goes beyond the risk of possible redundancy to prompt the discovery of a meta-architecture of the intimate, emerging as a subtle irony on the modernist pretensions of the original outline. The exhibition not only occupies as it envelopes a house: the opening of the house onto the garden gives place to the discovery of the garden inside the house. The windows are turned into walls of these other windows and landscapes that rediscover the

other side of the mirror on this side so there is no necessity to leave it. Between being and travelling, the course of the visitor reflects itself and is reflected, in an exercise of immense laziness revealing as much wisdom.

“Here I will know how to discover” –is written on the floor of the plan of a house. Between skin and fabric, the floor and the carpet, the wall and the screen, the camouflaging of a place is extended, a game of hide and seek, a door ajar. The visitor will never arrive, never depart. Walking forever, along the corridor, through walls, objects and figures, at times hesitating between its opacity and transparency, walking forever. Through the”.

Catalogue *Ana Vieira*. Porto: Fundação da Serralves, 1998, p.165

Catalogue *Ana Vieira: Muros de Abrigo / Shelter Walls*; Ponta Delgada [Azores], Museu Carlos Machado, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2010, pp. 235 (org. Paulo Pires do Vale)

# ANA VIEIRA INTERVIEWED

by Hans Ulrich Obrist

HUO I have studied this great book that is extraordinary (catalogue prepared in partnership between the Carlos Machado Museum and CAM-Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon).

AV I also like the catalogue that was organized by the commissioner Paulo Pires do Vale who is still very young and has a degree in Philosophy. Did you read the text?

HUO Yes, yes. I thought it was very good.

AV Starting at the beginning, how did it all happen, what was your first epiphany like, how did you get into art?

AV I began by taking painting here in Lisbon, which interested me very little and that was totally academic, only formal and allegoric... but fortunately I became involved with a group of students who were steeping out of such conformism. Among them there was an artist, a painter, whom I ended up marrying at the end of the course. He was the person who gave me strength, who understood my creativity, which was complicated once I did neither paint nor sculpt and this was disastrous at the time, at least in Portugal.

HUO It was a difficult time with the dictatorship in Portugal?

AV Yes. But and besides the dictatorship, I think that Portugal continues to be conservative and insecure in its relationship with art.

HUO Which is interesting is that since the beginning and after leaving School, you were not connected with painting. You were beyond painting.

How did you get the idea to go beyond painting?  
Had you already seen a lot of painting?

AV Yes. In art books, in magazines, in the Paris biennials, and in New York at the end of the 70's that I went on seeing left a very strong imprint on me, including the confirmation that art should and could be lived in a more dynamic and active manner.

HUO Yes, biennials were important and they were set up at the Museum of Contemporary Art by its director (?). They were very important at the time.

HUO Further to the Paris Biennials, you also say that you were inspired by Lourdes Castro and Noronha da Costa. Can you tell me about those influences?

AV The first time I saw a Lourdes Castro exhibition was in Lisbon and I was not only enchanted but also expectant, without really being able to understand why. A couple of years later I found out that it was the concept of "absence", so detectable in the "shadows" of Lourdes Castro.

In respect of Luís Noronha da Costa it was the freedom to try out, to experiment, as well as to propose new perceptions for art. Noronha da Costa had studied architecture and maybe or certainly because of that, he had a very great connection with space.

HUO They are alive, aren't they?

AV Yes. Lourdes Castro has been living in the Madeira Island over the last couple of years. Noronha da Costa lives in Estoril (near Lisbon) but he's rather ill. He was very important in the 70s, however. But I still have another very important source of inspiration that is Michelangelo Pistoletto.

HUO Yes, I knew him very well still as a student and I thought he was so important that it led me to learning Italian.

HUO Which was your relation with Pistoletto? The idea of the spectator entering into the work is very important.

AV Yes, it is essential and it was a great discovery.

HUO Where did you see his works?

AV I began by seeing them in *Domus* magazine (an architecture magazine with articles on plastic arts).

HUO Did you read *Domus* magazine on a regular basis?

AV Yes, yes.

HUO How were you influenced by architecture?

AV In principle architecture has always inspired me. I've always been very interested in space and architecture lives for and with space. At such time I was also interested in the theatre that lives on pretending (on make-believe), on illusion and on a particular notion of time, which is that it does not exist on a permanent basis.

HUO The theatre has a performative component.

HUO I've heard that you felt inspired by Joan Jonas whom you saw with Helena Almeida, Artur Rosa and Eduardo Nery. In which year did you see her?

HUO More or less around 1973/74.

HUO What impressed you the most?

AV Maybe the total integration of body and action.



Ana Vieira, *O desenho da menina a fugir do seu soporte* (Drawing of the little girl running away from her support), 2014. Photocopy, 156 × 92 cm. Ana Vieira State Collection. Photograph: Frederico Brizida



Ana Vieira, *Os móveis a fugirem do seu designio I*  
(Furniture running away from its fate I), 2014.  
Inkjet print, 163 × 126 cm. Ana Vieira State Collection.  
Photograph: Frederico Brizida



Ana Vieira, *Sala de espera. Os móveis a afirmarem a sua inutilidade*  
(Sala d'espera. Els mobles afirmen la seva inutilitat), 2014.  
Instal·lació. Mobles antics de fusta intervinguts i linòleum,  
dimensions variables. Col·lecció Norlinda i José Lima,  
en dipòsit al Centro de Arte Oliva, João da Madeira.  
Fotografia: Paulo Cunha Martins



Ana Vieira, *Projecto Ocultação/Desocultação*  
(Hiding/Unhiding Project), 1978-2010.  
Installation. Bricks and white vinyl, 10,80 × 4,65 m.  
Ana Vieira State Collection

HUO You made a work that was very new in 1968, *Silhouettes*. Where did they come from?

AV I don't know exactly where they came from, always from within. But the "absence" that came from Lourdes Castro is there, just as the integration of the silhouettes into the space, maybe via Pistoletto. But the figures I made were cut out and emptied, they were placed in space and they were human scale figures. They integrated the space including the people that walked around.

HUO There is a text in the retrospective book (catalogue) about your coming home from school. What is this story of yours in Sao Miguel?

AV My parents' home was located on a small farm and there was an area closer to the sea where there were several stone walls that were very tall to protect the vines from the salty sea air. Such walls all had different doors and keys and in order to go through each one of them I had to take a brunch of keys with me. I had a true obsession for that space such walked all the way through it every day. It was a very important path for me. It entailed a journey, a ritual and a pace through several types of spaces. It ended by opening the door that looked onto the sea or still and as an alternative, next to a tide pool (in direct contact with the sea and, therefore, a former lobster nursery) where my sister and I sometimes bathed... it was icy cold!

HUO So there were doors and keys; are these memories from your adolescence?

AV Yes, yes.

HUO You had those experiences and it is interesting because your first work, *Silhouettes* began with two dimensions.

AV But the silhouettes were placed in the space.

HUO So it was already three-dimensional. But true three-dimensionality is in the *Ambiente* (Environment) of 1971. Can you tell me about such epiphany of *Environment* of 1971?

AV It was the beginning of my work on three-dimensional painting, which was also another obsession of mine. I did not want there to be only a (two-dimensional) image but the body of the image, visible through the body of the spectators, because you do not see only with your eyes but also with your entire body.

HUO Could one enter into the *Environment*?

AV No, it was not meant for one to enter into it but for one to walk around the piece and its superimpositions.

HUO It is as if the walls were transparent and one could not go in.

And then there are those fabulous painted facades; were they actually done or are they sketches?

AV I painted directly on photographs. It was not my intention to make them in real life size. They are always an inside/outside passage. I've done this almost always that is mixing the inside and the outside, which cross refers to painting that is a sort of membrane...

HUO A curtain, a clock, a table, it is the reversion... (laughter).

AV Yes, I did that many times, the inside and the outside.

HUO And then there is this famous *Mesa-Paisagem* (Table-Landscape) that is the inversion of your previous work, isn't it?

AV But it still has the inside!

HUO And the outside. ...Where does this extraordinary invention come from?

AV Where does it come from? Well, I think it comes from me, I don't know... (laughter).

HUO One other version, isn't it?

AV Yes, in another version.

HUO The idea is a landscape and a dinner or a lunch?

AV Yes... or the inside.

HUO Because there is the sea and there is the mountain... (laughter).

HUO In spite of going beyond painting, you made these two-dimensional silkscreens. What is the role of these silkscreens?

AV The role? Maybe it was to have more portable pieces...

HUO More accessible, to travel, like Duchamp with his portable museum... (laughter).

AV The truth is that further to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, there were no more Modern Art institutions at such time, let alone Contemporary Art institutions. And maybe because of that, at least in my case, I did not sell anything.

HUO How did you support yourself financially?

AV I was a teacher, I taught and I did not live too badly.

HUO You had a lot of freedom... .

AV Yes, I had freedom and I could have it.

HUO And then there is this object *Porta* (Door) between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional in which both dimensions coexist, isn't it so?

The doors are directly linked to your adolescence memories, aren't they?

<sup>AV</sup> Yes, the doors, surely. But although I think that memory is very important, I prefer the word experiencing because experiencing things leaves more of an imprint.

<sup>HUO</sup> Living?

<sup>AV</sup> Yes, living.

<sup>HUO</sup> Which has a lot to do with your relationship with living art. You have said that the theatre has inspired you a lot. You said in an interview to a newspaper that a production of Víctor García had deeply touched you. What did you learn with Víctor García?

<sup>AV</sup> *O Jogo* (The Game). Víctor García made it quite a point that he was going to present and perform an illusion. In this case the artist's entered into the spectators space with common clothes on and they stepped up onto the stage where there was a transparent wardrobe hanging, from the time of the Moliere's *Tartuffe*. Once they put on such clothes over the ones they were wearing, the "game" and the "illusion" began.

<sup>HUO</sup> Not hiding the illusion. This also leads us to this sketch.

<sup>AV</sup> Which is part of the installation *Santa Paz Doméstica, Domesticada?* (Holy Domestic Peace, Domesticated?). I wanted to make a movie based on such sketch. I had requested a friend to direct it but the occasion was lost because on top of it all, she lived far away from Portugal.

<sup>HUO</sup> Can you tell me about this installation, which is very cinematographic? Did you watch a lot of films... did you?

<sup>AV</sup> The entire installation is ironic and it's focused on the social role assigned to women. With regard to the cinema, yes I saw a lot of films including in Paris where one could see films that were forbidden by censorship in Portugal. I saw *Teorema* by Pasolini, for instance, which touched me a lot.

<sup>HUO</sup> *Teorema* touched you, why?

<sup>AV</sup> It has an approach to the sense of the sacred that is very unusual, almost seen on the reverse because it is neither kind nor redemptive.

<sup>HUO</sup> A little harsh.

There is a mirror, there are flowers, a chair, in the installation...

<sup>AV</sup> It is all very ironic, about the role of women, exaggerated and very kitsch.

<sup>HUO</sup> May one think that in 1977 you already had a relationship with feminism?

<sup>AV</sup> I never knew very well, but yes. I read Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Wolf, Ibsen, Anais Nin... further to myself being irritated at the time by domestic tasks that I had no wish whatsoever to perform...

<sup>HUO</sup> You say in such newspaper interview that it is not only a criticism of women but a criticism of society in general.

<sup>AV</sup> Yes, I think that society in general is really male-centered everywhere. In the large centers where it is more disguised, or in the outskirts where it is transparent. What I can criticize women for is that they do not claim their situation of minority, whichever it is and not stating their "difference" and their ability to go deeper into their own self... (added to the interview)

HUO Does such installation question women?

AV Yes, yes, above all, women.

HUO The magazines, the photographs and the objects, where did you find them?

AV In several places and they were not always easy to find.

HUO It is a piece that coincides with the revolution. How did you feel the liberation from dictatorship?

AV It was very positive, very optimistic but once again difficult for art.

HUO Why?

AV It was one more crisis that our country has gone through. Many people left the country and they were the ones who had a higher economic power, and also because art is always immediately affected by declared crises.

HUO Was the revolution a liberation for you?

AV Liberation!... I was already free but I have a tendency to always be a little bit of an outsider, a little bit out of touch with what is surrounding me.

HUO And as such always free. What are these drawings that I cannot understand very well that you call *Janelas* (Windows)?

AV It is a script for a slideshow. This work is going to be assembled in January at CAM. If you could come and see the exhibition it would be great!...

HUO Yes, I'll come. And it is seen from the outside of the houses, isn't it? Yesterday I was on a terrace and I could see an elderly woman through a window who was watching TV.

AV Ah, but that's extraordinary! This piece was made from the home of Helena Almeida and Artur Rosa who let us photograph the scenes we wanted. It was Eduardo Nery who took me photographs.

HUO Helena Almeida was a great friend of yours, wasn't she?

AV Yes, we were rather good friends. And besides I think that she is very important as an artist, one of the best of her generation (independently of art forms).

HUO Are you still friends?

AV Not really because in the last couple of years Helena Almeida has withdrawn herself a lot from everybody.

HUO She was a friend at the time. Were you part of a group of artists?

AV We had a group, some of them already connected with Eduardo Nery. We were friends with Luís Noronha da Costa, Helena Almeida, Artur Rosa, Manuel Costa Cabral and Graça Costa Cabral, Martim Avilez, José Nuno Câmara Pereira and Mercês Câmara Pereira, Luísa Constantina Ataíde Costa Gomes, Marie Canto da Maya, Jorge Martins, Tomás Borba Vieira and others...

HUO Another question that still has to do with the *Windows* arises out of this extraordinary photograph with windows from Lisbon. Tell me about these drawings.

AV It is a montage. I placed a piece of glass that I carefully broke into small fragments over a photograph that already existed.

HUO Then it is not a collage, but a two-dimensional or three-dimensional montage. But it is about the "travel"; the aeroplane, the boat, etc., recurring

themes in your work, as if you had your “home” on the one side and your “luggage” on the other!

AV That theme is very, very important. As you’ve already understood, I lived on the Island of Sao Miguel until I was 19 that is, until I began studying in Lisbon. But my mother was from the mainland and she lived in Coimbra and, therefore, for a great many years we travelled by ship to the mainland to spend the Summer. Later on, already as a student, we began traveling by aeroplane, which was a bit complicated because we never knew whether or not we would arrive at our destination, at least on the date set. There was a large airport on the Island of Santa Maria but after that we still had to catch another small aeroplane from Sata to go to the Island of Sao Miguel where there was an airport. That was a pasture where the cows alternated with the comings and goings of the aeroplanes in the same space.

HUO It was an adventure then, and all that are memories of your travels.

AV Maybe they are.

HUO Then there is this house *Ocultação/Desocultação* (Hiding/Unhiding). Can you tell me about this house, which is a cartography that allows the spectator to go in, and that is a very important project.

AV Yes, yes, I don’t know, but I like this piece. At that time, I was about to leave to the United States in 1978, and I was very restless and not very well. It is a house in “suspension” that hands the entire experiencing and reading space over to the spectator.

HUO It is a house of expectation, things are awaited for. Can you tell me about such awaiting time... there are sentences on the floor. What are these words?

AV They are wishes.

HUO Then it’s a house of wishes...

AV No, of awaiting, of expectation, and still of suspension.

HUO Is it an evolving house?

AV It is to come to be, it is not yet.

HUO After that there is another house that looks like a tunnel, an interiorized house, an empty corridor.

AV It is a passage and an initiation. Painting is also a passage, or rather, everything is a passage.

HUO It can be a metaphor about your work.

AV Yes, but always with the body.

HUO Then there is an exhibition under the title “Estendal, Texturas, Cicio e Percurso” (Washing Line, Textures, Cycle and Path).

AV It was commissioned by Museu Nacional do Traje and it was intended for the blind.

HUO One can understand that it is very tactile.

AV It was necessary for it to be fully sensorial and tactile.

HUO To allow everything to be touched.

AV Even more than touched; there were sounds and smells such as of the laundry bleached with ashes, wish was the “laundry wash” method that I saw as a child. The floor was varied with differentiated materials, such as gravel or sand, etc.

HUO And how was the painting touchable?

AV There was no painting. There was a line where fabrics with different textures were hanging.

HUO A bit like a washing line.

AV Yes, or like the very cycle of laundry, which is washed, put out to dry, ironed and finally stored.

That was the general theme of the exhibition.

HUO In the midst of all that there is once again a boat. (laughter)

AV Yes!? There is no doubt that I need to make a trip by ship and as a matter of urgency. On a real ship that does not look like a floating shopping centre. I would rather have it on a cargo ship where one experiences a pure and a hard trip. I once travelled on one that was going to Leixoes (Porto) where I got off.

HUO Then there is the work *Diário de Cinco Dias* (Diary of Five Days) that surprised me and that seems like a return to painting; is it ironic?

HUO Yes, it's very ironic. It's a standardized landscape with moons, houses, flowers and wings. Then there are also some plaster fragments of demolished buildings, of what is left from the traces of their inside... almost like a skin.

HUO It is painting and it is not painting, and there are three dimensions.

There is also a very mysterious work called *Constelação Peixes* (Constellation of Pisces).

AV It was made on the Island of Faial where I was at a symposium. In the end, each person presented their work. My choice of place was the Capelinhos volcano that emerged after a series of earthquakes in 1959. I chose to perform in the volcano's crater where I wanted the shape of the constellation of Pisces to appear outlined by hand-made torches that for such reason only lasted for one hour and thirty minutes. The extension of the shape was four hundred metres so that the people at the top of the volcano could see and feel it rightly.

HUO The dimension is huge!

AV Yes, it was a very intense and emotional experience that I really enjoyed accomplishing.

HUO These are projects that were developed. Do you have any projects that have not been developed?

AV Yes, I have several. To start with, a commission for ICEP (presently AICEP - Trade & Investment Agency) for a fashion stand that I enjoyed doing but that ended badly. After that I had a commission for the Saint Paul Cathedral (Macao) to make a tent to celebrate a Christmas mass. And another one for Lisbon, in 1994, where I presented works with light projections on two buildings and one intervention in a building in ruins on Rua do Alecrim. I would very much have liked to have developed the first and the last one.

HUO A great project that was developed is *Casa Desabitada* (Uninhabited House), which is an extremely beautiful project in an empty house. Can you tell me about this installation?

AV In the beginning it was complicated to find somebody who wanted to produce it, and it was an expensive production. But after a couple of years, I managed to have Jorge Silva e Melo, the Director of the theatre group "Artistas Unidos", he accepts it enthusiastically... which was a great gift. It was a very provocative proposal in between theatre and inhabited cinema and that surprised even myself. There was a lot of emphasis put on the role of the observer. There were also water sounds, a discussion and finally, a voice, which was heard every now and then and that said that such space was a private home and, therefore, that it could not be occupied by strangers, inviting people to leave.

There were also five videos always shown through mirrors with staged angles but never in direct projection. Finally, there was a neon sign with the word "Look" that also offered a double view because by way of another mirror

its contrary could be read, that is, “Kool”. I think that the entire exhibition revolved around this binomial of being one thing but also its contrary.

HUO What is the video for you, given that you always work with installation, the space...?

AV Maybe it is the replacement for things.

HUO Or then the absence...

AV Yes, maybe rather the absence.

HUO Then there is the text, which amazes me.

AV The things do not exist themselves but there is the text that leaves the spectator with the possibility of obtaining an image, a personalized and freer visualization.

HUO The History of Art once again enters into your work. What is the role of such appropriation?

AV In the case of Manet and *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, it's a painting that I like very much, and it was also a pretext to give it body, playing with its virtual and real sides.

HUO And the *Venus de Milo*?

AV I don't really know, but maybe it was its solemnity and distance.

HUO What advice would you give to a young artist?

AV To make space for discovery.

*The home and the escape*

Ana Vieira

From 21st February  
to 10th May 2020

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