

PRESS RELEASE

MNAC

**LUCIANA FINA
JOÃO PINA
VASCO BARATA**

CURADORIA Emília Tavares CURATOR

*Face à "Vida Nua"
Facing Bare Life*

09.12.20 → 23.01.21

www.museuartecontemporanea.pt
Rua Capelo, 15. 1200 - 444 Lisboa
Terça a Domingo 10h - 18h \ Tuesday till Sunday 10 AM - 6 PM
Segunda-feira Encerrado \ Mondays Closed

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The artists and the curator will be present at the exhibition
on December 9th from 3 pm to 6 pm

Facing the “Bare Life”

The repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic are so disruptive that they allow us to envisage a new global paradigm. Art and philosophy have sought, as they always have throughout the most tragic periods of humanity, to act on and think about this global moment of fear, uncertainty and inequality.

This exhibition brings together the work of three artists who examine the state of exception we are living in, opening up spaces for ‘the universal right to breathe’, as philosopher Achille Mbembe described it, in response to a destructive view of the world inspired by discourses of contagion and immunity.

Luciana Fina shows us a film produced earlier this year at the start of the pandemic, which confronts the devastation of the natural landscape as a result of property speculation, when the virus seemed to bring with it new hope for rethinking the systemic attack on ecosystems.

João Pina, during the pandemic in Brazil, photographed the residents of one of the most emblematic modernist buildings of São Paulo, the *Copan* (1966), by architect Óscar Niemeyer, which is home to approximately 5000 tenants. This microcosm of Brazilian society reveals an endemic social and economic complexity, but also the same global desire to reinvent existence.

Vasco Barata dedicated the months of the pandemic to the practice of drawing. Confined to the physical dimensions of his workspace, this creative process turns towards the hybrid forms that symbolically inhabit us today, organic, mutant, erratic. The works presented here are thus an exercise in community, an act of shared breathing, in view of the *Bare Life*, the concept formulated by Giorgio Agamben, one of the most polemic philosophers of our time.

The *Bare Life* is the political appropriation of the lives of every one of us considering the state of exception we are living in, in which many of the acquired rights we recognise, at least in a democracy, are suspended and the exercise of power results in an apprehension of the body. It is an indistinct territory, in which the biological and political body merge and which involves the political appropriation of each of our everyday lives. A mechanism which can and has been used in both dictatorial regimes and democracies.

Its danger, its intrinsic violence, as another important philosopher (Walter Benjamin) asserted at the height of another state of exception, that of Nazism, is that in these states of exception, of which the pandemic is now the cause, existence is outlawed, becoming a life exposed, deprived (or restricted) of rights by law itself.

In this chaotic moment, the dialogue of these three artists is a form of resilience in the face of a ‘sky that keeps getting darker’.

Emília Tavares

Luciana Fina

Questo è il piano, 2020

HD vídeo, sound, colour, 20'

Director, Image and Sound

Luciana Fina

Editing and Sound Mixing

Elsa Ferreira

Colour

Andreia Bertini

Soundtrack

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, "Questo è il piano" Cantata per contralto, archi e basso continuo, voice Gloria Banditelli, conductor Fabio Maestri.

Complexo Barocco In Canto

Support

MNAC, Kino Sound Studio

Acknowledgments

Cinamateca Portuguesa "Sala de Projeção", Ernesto Rodriguês, Edmea Brigham, Cristina Fina, Luísa Homem.

Filmed between March and April of this year, 'Questo è il piano' is a visual poem about the antinomic exercise of survival and destruction.

In these months of confinement, as appeals were made to the survival of (the) species and many demanded that our ways of life and the systems which govern economic development be reconsidered, in a coastal area of the Alentejo which was once protected and preserved, I came across a vast deforestation project advancing among the dunes, indifferent to the pandemic, devastating a large part of the forest. Acquired by an American conglomerate, this wide stretch of land and its lush forest of pines and cork oaks has been devastated and transformed to give way to a golf course and a luxury resort project. The enormous operation threatens the forest and the water resources of the region, completely ignoring the seriousness of the situation in which we find ourselves, the dangers of desertification, the urgent need to protect the ecosystem and to maintain equilibria that are inseparable from our existence.

During the outbreak of the pandemic and the suspension of our lives it was painful to witness the continuing devastation. I produced 'Questo è il piano' in response to the pressure of two antinomic forces then simultaneous and manifest: the appeal to the survival of (the) species and the indomitable exercise of destruction. Conceived with a nature of urgency, the project sought make use of the limited means I had at my disposal in the contingency of confinement: a mobile phone and a digital recorder.

Questo è il piano premièred in November at Doclisboa. For the exhibition, in accordance with my cinematographic practice, the film acquired the new form of an installation.

Luciana Fina, November 2020

The context of the pandemic we are currently living through has brought about a deeper reflection on the ecological crisis. Many authors have pointed to the relationship between the imbalance of ecosystems and the potential for outbreaks of disease.

Land occupation and property speculation are two of the most disruptive components to environmental equilibrium, and these activities continue to be carried out on a global scale.

The film produced by Luciana Fina during the period of isolation, between March and April 2020, reflects precisely on the destruction of areas surrounding nature reserves for the construction of tourism 'development' projects.

At a time when the effects of the pandemic have led to a slower pace of life, and seem to have incentivised a regeneration of the planet and people's lifestyles, the reality of a continued programme of capitalist development indifferent to the consequences of its destructive activity resulted in this film of denunciation and disillusionment.

Created using only two structural shots, the felled trees and panoramic views of the ravaged landscape, it is through the sustained duration of a wide travelling shot that we witness the destructive effect of machines, only heard, never seen, overcome with a sense of powerlessness faced with the transformation of reality.

Pergolesi's baroque cantata *Questo è il piano* places the film in the allegorical and melancholic field of observation of the ruins of our time. A state which, as Walter Benjamin observed, is established in the confrontation between sadness and rebelliousness, *acedia and anger*. The melancholy of this film can and should be understood in the framework of a critical awareness, in which the artist, like the philosopher, gathers the ashes of the world and gives them new meaning.

Emília Tavares

LUCIANA FINA (1962, Bari, Italy)

Luciana Fina has lived and worked in Lisbon since 1991.

An artist and filmmaker, her film work frequently migrates from the screen to the exhibition space.

She produced her first film in 1998 and was part of the generation that gave new life to documentary film in Portugal. Between 2002 and 2003, with the installation *CCM* at the Gulbenkian Foundation and the triptych *CHANT portraits* presented at the MNAC, in Lisbon, focussing on themes of migration and portraiture, she began her career in exhibition spaces.

Her extensive body of work – films and film and site-specific installations – is presented internationally at exhibitions and film festivals and is represented in the Modern Collection of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum and the New Media Collection of the Centre Pompidou.

Among her most recent works are the installation and film *Terceiro Andar*, presented at the Gulbenkian Museum in 2016/17 and the 34th Torino Film Festival, and *In Medias Res*, from 2014, which won Best Film at Arquiteturas Film Festival and an Honourable Mention in the Temps D'Images Film Award for Films on Art.

This year, Fina's new film *Questo è il piano* premiered at Doclisboa Festival and the artist has been working on a new installation for an exhibition at the Carpintarias de São Lázaro/Temps D'Images Festival. She is also a teacher at Ar.Co, in Lisbon.

João Pina

Copan

March/April 2020

Digital inkjet prints

2020

In the midst of a critical period in the pandemic, João Pina lived in São Paulo, in the Copan building. Since the beginning of the current crisis, Brazil has been one of the countries most affected, not only with regard to the number of infections and deaths but also in terms of the economic and political consequences of the pandemic. The negligent and denialist attitude of its leader, President Jair Bolsonaro, has had a devastating impact on Brazilian society, increasing the gulf of inequalities and social tension.

The work carried out by João Pina in the symbolic Copan building therefore takes on multiple meanings. On the one hand, it observes and documents of the lives of some of its approximately 5000 residents, in isolation, from various social classes. On the other, life in the Copan also has a historical and social significance, as it is one of the most important buildings in São Paulo, built by Oscar Niemeyer between 1952 and 1966, at the peak of the city's economic and urban expansion, and can be seen as a modernist symbol of the Brazilian progressive dream.

The outreach and documentary work carried out there by João Pina reveals to us the city that is the Copan within the megacity that is São Paulo. Familiar with the more violent aspects of the Brazilian reality, of which the work *46750*, about violence in Rio de Janeiro, is an example, this time his gaze is the neighbour and accomplice of a state of exception which has affected the everyday lives of millions of people, across several continents.

The images produced by João Pina depict the life in isolation of Copan's tenants, in gestures, rituals and experiences in which we all recognise ourselves, in any part of the globe. However, the Copan, due to its symbology in the framework of a period of urban development and the proposal of new social models of living, can today provide an overview of the painful and violent construction of a more egalitarian Brazilian society. It is clear that the pandemic has accelerated and deepened latent social inequalities, and that the exceptional measures imposed by isolation also have different speeds and repercussions. The question João Pina poses with this work is also about the social nature of exception caused by the pandemic, and how modernist examples of urbanism and social thought can today serve as resistance to a society in collapse in Brazil and elsewhere.

Emília Tavares

JOÃO PINA (Lisboa, 1980)

João Pina studied at the International Center of Photography in New York, specialising in photojournalism and documentary photography. He began working as a photographer at the age of 18 and has spent most of the past two decades working in Latin America.

He has published three books: *Por Teu Livre Pensamento* [For Your Free Thinking], in 2007, which tells the stories of 25 political prisoners in Portugal; *Condor*, in 2015, about memories of the military dictatorships in South America; and *46750*, in 2018, about the endemic violence in Rio de Janeiro.

João Pina's work has been published in several world-renowned media outlets, including: *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Stern*, *GEO*, *El País*, *D Magazine*, *Le Monde* and *Expresso*. His photographs have been exhibited in New York (at the ICP, the Howard Greenberg Gallery and the Open Society Foundations), Tokyo (Canon Gallery), Lisbon (KGaleria and Casa Fernando Pessoa), Porto (Centro Português de Fotografia), Perpignan (Visa pour L'Image), Arles (Reencontres D'Arles), São Paulo (Paço das Artes) and Rio de Janeiro (Museu de Arte Moderna and Museu de Arte do Rio).

Between 2003 and 2013, he was a member of the Kameraphoto photography collective, a platform promoting the language of photography. He is currently represented by the agency MAPS and has photographs in the Portuguese National Collection of Photography, the Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro and the Joaquim Paiva Collection, among other private collections.

He is also a teacher at the International Center of Photography in New York.

Vasco Barata

Under/Above

March/April 2020

Watercolor on Schut 180 grs paper

29,7 x 42 cm

Acknowledgements

Ana Anacleto, Fátima Mota (Galeria Fonseca Macedo)

The group of drawings produced by Vasco Barata during his period of isolation present a tense path between line and mark, between control and chance. On the other hand, the vascular nature of many of his lines recall the domain of the invisible, a universe suddenly revealed in all its complexity due to the coronavirus pandemic.

When we are threatened by an invisible, but powerful force, the dimension of fragility is reformulated and leads to an unprecedented and unpredictable confrontation with a microscopic world, of which we have always been unaware. Vasco Barata's drawings thus seem to go in search of this invisible, organic, erratic, transfigurative world.

The limitation at the basis of these drawings was overcome by the incursion into a study of essences, drawings which at times seem to want to delineate, and at others thicken, circulating between transparency and opacity.

The reverberation of invisible nature and its fractal forms is implicit in these drawings, which also recall paradox, beauty and violence of any origin. The origin of the place where we are now is also in what we have always been unaware of; Vasco Barata's wandering and probing drawing brings us face to face with the unknown invisible.

Emília Tavares**Vasco Barata (Lisbon, 1974)**

Lives and works in Lisbon.

Since the late 90s, Vasco Barata has been presenting his work under different forms, mainly alternating between a thorough research in the field of construction and perception of the image (through the use of photography and video) and an attempt to understand the mechanisms of expression coupled with an intense drawing practice. In his works, he articulates a particular interest in cinema and cinematographic strategies, language codes and a wide range of referents from popular culture.

It is represented in several private collections, in Portugal and abroad.

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