

The background is a solid teal color. There are three large, expressive black brushstrokes. One is in the top right corner, another is a long, sweeping curve across the middle, and a third is a smaller curve at the bottom.

4 + 4

PROPOSALS
FOR MAKING
SENSE
OF TODAY'S
CONVIVIAL
CULTURES

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TRANSCENDING CONFINEMENT

PETER HANENBERG

This small book marks a difference. The difference between 'at the time' and 'afterwards' and thus between 'at home' and 'elsewhere'. The four exhibitions took place during the period in which Portugal and many other countries in Europe and beyond were 'locked down' or sent into 'confinement'. The exhibitions were timely launched by Luísa Santos and the 4Cs project and held online during the month of April 2020. They were expressively meant to be an answer to the conditions under which the production and exhibition of art were 'locked down' and 'confined'. They were meant to alleviate or ease these conditions by offering time, space, and a small amount of money where money was lacking, space limited and time unconstrained as if in life imprisonment. When the exhibitions ended, Portugal left confinement and the state of emergency, moving into a new phase named state of calamity. The difference between 'at the time' and 'afterwards' is the difference between confinement and emergency at the time and calamity afterwards.

The four online exhibitions do not represent the state of emergency or the corona crisis. They hardly address it in any way, they certainly do not deal with it. Instead, they open up to something that would be missing, which would not be there at all without Luísa's invitation, the curators' diligence and the artists' readiness. In times of confinement, these exhibitions attest to voluntariness and freedom. They engage in an "undemanding and concentrated practice of presence"¹, they question and offer meaning and they mediate between 'at home' and 'elsewhere'. Two of the exhibitions deal with space, where nature meets culture: as landscapes and by inhabiting. In two moments, the artists refer to the sky, turn our gaze upwards where unexpected adventures might await. Why does the English language so pedantically insist on the difference between sky and heaven where Portuguese *céu* and German *Himmel* get both in one? Looking up is not just for dreamers. Why not count clouds? Or Cs: 4 for the project, one as change, another as chance or even choice and all because of corona and covid. Or confinement and commitment. 10 or 11. Why count Cs?

There is an infrastructure to these exhibitions, first as an EU-funded project, then as a virtual platform and finally on each screen where they appear (and afterwards in the book that you read). But the pieces seem to free themselves beyond this infrastructure "expanding our range of experience by moving it away from a solely rational and logical approach". Where does this lead to? "Evolving from an aesthetics of visibility to an aesthetics of involvement which might give rise to an aesthetics of commitment"? A commitment to 4Cs? 10Cs? From conflict to conviviality? This is not the place to decide on this.

While you read this, the four exhibitions assume an archaeological perspective of what art has been under the conditions of confinement. The common point of archaeology and art is transcendence. Deeper than today, beyond something. It might be that we like the move more than where we get to. This comes with no surprise in times of confinement. What we are longing for is movement, to reach out, go further. Or step back. Again, no decision on aims, goals, meanings and achievements is needed here. But the thankful recognition of the possibility of being 'at home' and 'elsewhere' 'at a certain time' and 'afterwards', still and again.

A friend asked me whether we have made the most out of this time of confinement. I would say yes: We have transcended it, also with the help of four careful exhibitions.

May 2020

PETER HANENBERG

Associate Professor and Director of the CECC (Research Centre for Communication and Culture of the Faculty of Human Sciences of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa)

Research Coordinator of the 4Cs: From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture

¹ All quotes refer to the texts in this book.

4+4 PROPOSALS FOR MAKING SENSE OF TODAY'S CONVIVIAL CULTURES

LUÍSA SANTOS

The moment we, as a team, in Lisbon, have decided to commission 4 artists and 4 curators to reflect upon the current global crisis of the Covid-19, on March 16th 2020, the national Portuguese news stated that 331 cases of Covid-19 had been confirmed. By then, in the world, more than 6.500 people had died since the first case was identified in China, in early January 2020.

Only one month and a half is between that moment and today. In Portugal, which is regarded as a good example, 928 deaths and 24.027 cases of Covid-19 have now been confirmed. In the world, 211.941 deaths and 3.076.185 cases have now been registered.

In this short time, the world has changed immensely. Many schools, Universities, and museums remain closed across the world. Access has been restricted to shops and to public spaces. The streets are emptied. Human presence and human contact are avoided for human's own survival. Many borders remain closed to constrain the spreading of the virus.

Across the (virtual) world we live in today, people pledge for unity; for solidarity with the elderly, with the independent workers, with doctors and nurses, to name a few examples. Artists and designers upload drawings for free download, to enable parents to teach and distract their children. Parents are all now stay at home parents, without a choice and despite the need of working remotely in their full-time jobs if they want to keep them even if it's for half the pay. Artists and cultural producers join forces to find alternatives and to ask for help from the governments. Some people upload images in different languages so that neighbours can print and offer to go shopping for the elderly or anyone in need.

And, somehow, the digital becomes close to the physical. Just as it has been in the past decades. However, until now, the digital was the perfect tool to keep the social distance that we are now being required to keep — at least 1 to 2 meters distance from each other, no kissing, no hugging, no touching. Today, we are being forced to keep a distance from other humans, to close borders

and deny access — ironically, the borders being shut are mostly to the ones that have been denied access in the recent past (Mexico is closing the border with the USA, to name an example). Many scholars argue that we are facing even more racism. That might be true but I honestly think that today, a few months after this pandemia has started, we are in the breaking point. We can't handle more of social isolation. We need other humans.

In such a fast paced emerging reality, countries, institutions, companies, families, individuals, need(ed) to come up with alternative solutions to continue their activities, many of which have migrated from the physical to the virtual realm. From pre-school to University, programmes are rethought and reframed, being now held online, with its implications at the level of accessibility. If, on the one hand, this means that teaching is still possible despite the physical distances, it also means that this is not an option to the many that do not have the financial conditions to own a computer or a stable Internet connection. In the cultural field, large museums, small non-profit organisations, galleries, theatres, biennials, and festivals, show their exhibitions and artistic programmes online, mostly for free. Artists, filmmakers, performers, and other cultural producers share their works, also for free. Access is granted to *all* (all who have internet connection and a digital device) for free, in a — to some extent — democratic and generous way. But such generosity has consequences — financial to their promoters but also cultural to everyone, producers and audiences — that must be addressed.

In a joint letter, signed on April 3rd 2020, José Manuel Rodríguez Uribe, Michelle Müntefering, and Dario Franceschini, the Ministers of Culture in Spain, Germany, and Italy, wrote: "In this emergency, a culture of solidarity is the best antidote. A community based on mutual support will help us — closer to home as well as in the European Community — to overcome this difficult period." Under current circumstances, art and culture — the three ministers remind us — show how togetherness

and solidarity are key in overcoming the crisis. Despite the burst of activity among cultural producers and the growing consumption of free artistic production, available to *all* in online platforms, there is not a common planetary strategy to find ways of maintaining artistic activity with sustainable and dignifying working conditions for cultural producers under (and after) such a crisis.

The current global crisis will hit the third sector, in which most artistic and cultural initiatives operate, the hardest. In the midst of the coronavirus lockdown, the 4Cs has decided to follow a path of solidarity, support and reflection for the immediate future of artistic and cultural production. 4Cs has started out of the belief that art and culture can have a role in our conflicted times. Since its inception, 4Cs has witnessed the rise of many global conflictual phenomena, from the refugee crisis to the Brexit; as much as it has faced local and even organisational conflicts. 4Cs was born out of the belief that art and culture can play a role in conflictual phenomena. Much more than an expedient to conduct social policy, we see art and culture as a diagnostic tool and a vernacular space of encounter and participation. Art and culture, at their best, are as much producers of convivial spaces as of productive conflictual spaces as they involve rupture and the collision of differences. In other words, art and culture have — as many have claimed before — a transforming potential.

We — as institutions — are to be held accountable for our potential. As a consortium of Faculties, museums, and non-profit organisations, we believe that we should do whatever is in our power, within our (limited) resources, to support arts and cultural production, to offer cultural producers and artists who are freelancers the possibility of continuing their activities, and to encourage future collaborations and scholarships. We are aware of our own limitations and we know that we cannot do enough for all. However, we do hope that this small action of commissioning 4 artists (Jabulani Maseko; Cristina Mejías; Joana Patrão; and Gregor Graf)

and 4 curators (Sofia Steinvorh; Andreia César; Maria Eduarda Duarte; and Teresa Pinheiro) to reflect upon the current times, will inspire other institutions as well as individuals and Governments to stretch their transforming potential. More importantly, we believe that we need to expand our actions because we have the responsibility to contribute to a wider reflection and action that goes beyond this emergency, when small movements of solidarity towards the arts will not suffice.

In our first meeting as a collective of 8 institutional partners from 8 countries, Professor Arjun Appadurai said that maybe we would not go from conflict to conviviality, maybe we were travelling from conflict to conflict via conviviality, creativity and culture. I'd add a 5C to 4Cs — we are travelling from conflict to conflict via conviviality, creativity, culture, and change. Ana Margarida Abrantes, in her text presented in the reflections' section of this publication, added another C, for chance.

Today, as institutions, we have to adapt our activities not only to what our audiences want and can afford but also to a world that has had enough of inequalities, indifference, and destruction. Above all, we have now the chance to choose the path for a nourishing society, in which we can all co-habit in a true, trusting and respectful convivial way. Taking this chance is an individual choice that lies within each of us.

Lisbon, April 29th 2020

LUÍSA SANTOS
Assistant Professor and Researcher at the CECC (Research Centre for Communication and Culture of the Faculty of Human Sciences of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa)
Artistic Director, Scientific and Project Coordinator of the 4Cs: From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture



PROJECTS

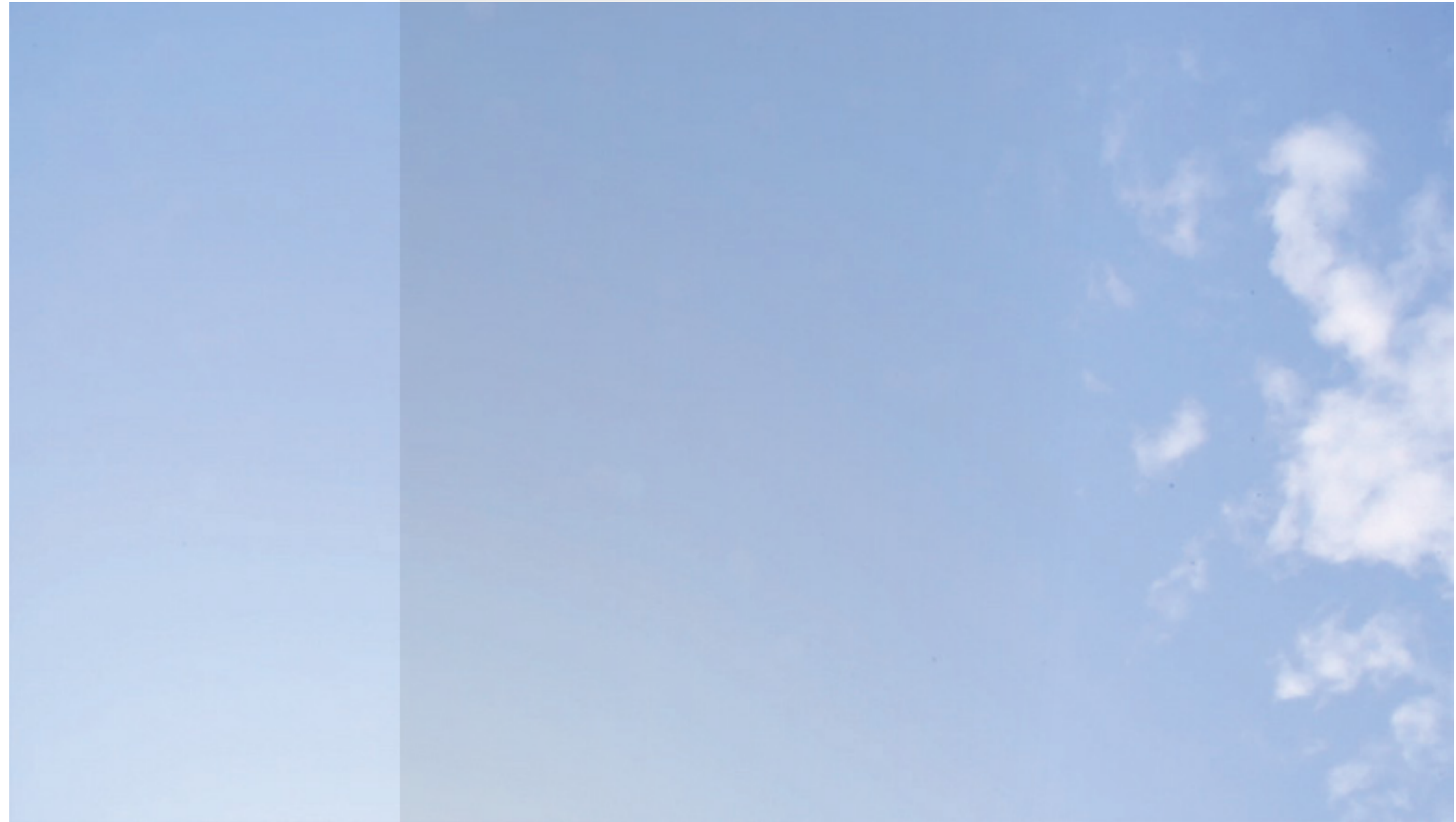
I. ATMOSPHERIC CONDITIONS

JABULANI MASEKO *(artist)*
& SOFIA
STEINVORTH *(curator)*

The following five days will be dedicated to the sky. To the great immensity above us and the clouds in movement. To the possibility that lies in the air and the cyclic mixture of changing combinations of elements. Throughout the video series *Atmospheric Conditions* Jabulani Maseko inspects the phenomena of slow observation and non-expectation. Rather than reacting and communicating, these works are traces from an undemanding and concentrated practice of presence, from a state of listening and receiving. Visuals and soundscapes come together as settings that expand space and conjure unexpected relations inviting images from times past, present and yet to come. As in a series of photographs and installation drafts from Gerhard Richter's *Atlas** in which walls and windows become sky and clouds, so too do Jabulani's *Atmospheric Conditions* turn our attention from an apparently solid and confining interior towards the sky as an infinite projection space.

Links

Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*
<https://www.gerhard-richter.com/de/art/atlas?p=7&sp=32>



(DAY 1)

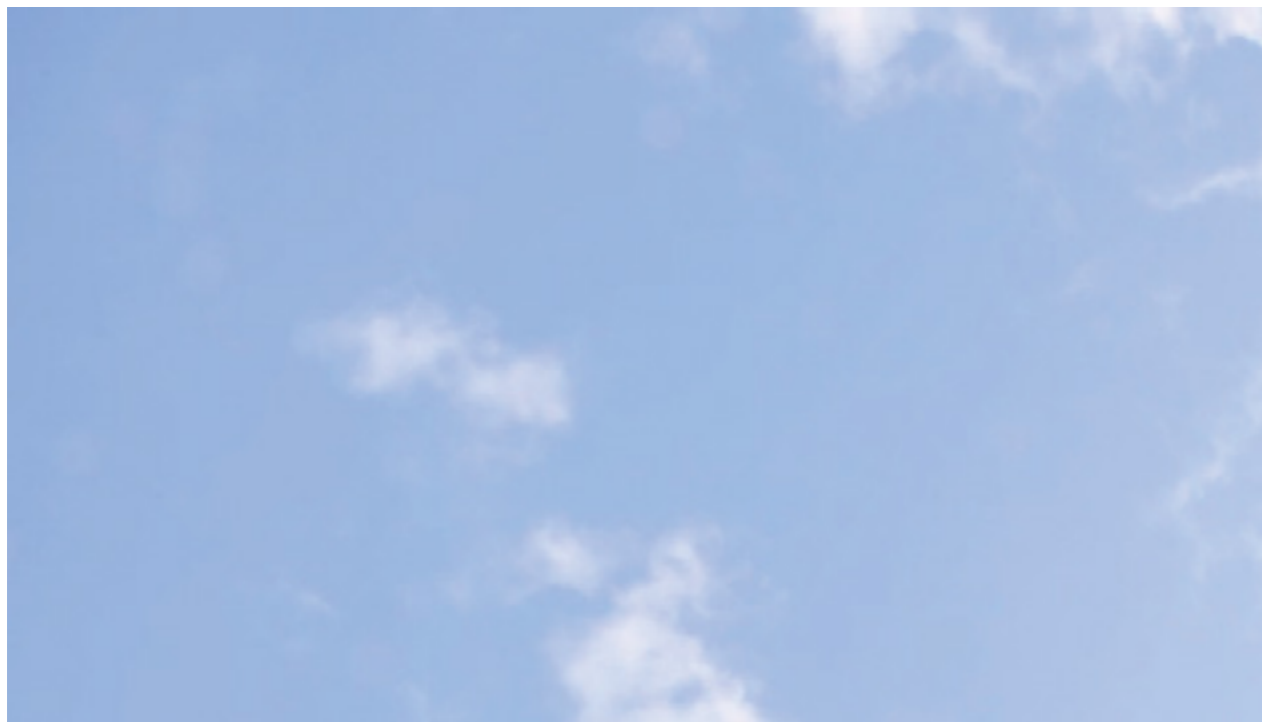
An exercise.

A musical instruction by Yoko Ono.

EARTH PIECE

Listen to the sound of the earth turning.

1963 spring



(DAY 2)

One cloud, two clouds, three clouds, four clouds, five clouds, six clouds, seven clouds, eight clouds, nine clouds, ten clouds, eleven clouds, twelve clouds, thirteen clouds, fourteen clouds, fifteen clouds, sixteen clouds, seventeen clouds, eighteen clouds, nineteen clouds, twenty clouds, twenty one clouds, twenty two clouds, twenty three clouds, twenty four clouds, twenty five clouds, twenty six clouds, twenty seven clouds, twenty eight clouds, twenty nine clouds, thirty clouds, thirty one clouds, thirty two clouds, thirty three clouds, thirty four clouds, thirty five clouds, thirty six clouds, thirty seven clouds, thirty eight clouds, thirty nine clouds, forty clouds, forty one clouds, forty two clouds, forty three clouds, forty four clouds, forty five clouds, forty six clouds, forty seven clouds, forty eight clouds, forty nine clouds, fifty clouds, fifty one clouds, fifty two clouds, fifty three clouds, fifty four clouds, fifty five clouds, fifty six clouds, fifty seven clouds, fifty eight clouds, fifty nine clouds, sixty clouds, sixty one clouds, sixty two clouds, sixty three clouds, sixty four clouds, sixty five clouds, sixty six clouds, sixty seven clouds, sixty eight clouds, sixty nine clouds, seventy, seventy one clouds, seventy two clouds, seventy three clouds, seventy four clouds, seventy five clouds, seventy six clouds, seventy seven clouds, seventy eight clouds, seventy nine clouds, eighty clouds, eighty one clouds, eighty two clouds, eighty three clouds, eighty four clouds, eighty five clouds, eighty six clouds, eighty seven clouds, eighty eight clouds, eighty nine clouds, ninety, ninety one clouds, ninety two clouds, ninety three clouds, ninety four clouds, ninety five clouds, ninety six clouds, ninety seven clouds, ninety eight clouds, ninety nine clouds, a hundred clouds, a hundred and one clouds...

(DAY 3)

SOFIA STEINVORTH

Jabulani, we started our conversations talking about infrastructure and its undeniable influence in our lives — both in public space and our domestic environment. How do the skies in Atmospheric Conditions reflect the sudden and dramatic change Covid-19 has brought in terms of a “normal” functioning of our infrastructure?

JABULANI MASEKO

At some point early in February NASA released some satellite images of the world highlighting the reduction of pollution from some of the most densely populated cities in the East, namely China. These images did the rounds and generated conversation. Shortly after, as the Covid-19 scenario moved further afield, more satellite images were released showing other world landmarks which are renowned for their heavy human traffic — deserted. These images were one of those reminders of how we are being watched from above. Later on, around mid-March, I encountered an article talking about the lack of parking space for aeroplanes as more and more airlines were grounding their fleets due to the reduced numbers of passengers from the spreading lockdown we were experiencing. It was for the first time at this point that I started to look up and notice how much emptier the sky was, how much quieter the atmosphere was. Traffic on the ground was reducing dramatically, and it was reducing in the sky, too. We were living an unprecedented moment. We had been ordered to stop moving; we had been ordered to stay home. All the tools and instruments of modernity had been paralysed and

we were all still awake to see it. It was at this point I decided to point my camera skywards. Firstly, to observe the sky without the distraction of any aeroplanes criss-crossing. Secondly, and equally importantly, to embrace this order to pause. After all, this is what it was going to be — a momentary pause before having to get back up and get on with the business of rushing around again. Up until this point nobody could remember a time in living memory where we had been ordered to put down our tools and go inside, during peace time, and wait. Suddenly, we were starting to understand that this modern world where one is expected to be a fully participating player, this being signified best by how far and how fast one can move, was built on a strangely precarious infrastructure. An infrastructure which only works as long as everything and everyone is moving frantically. Should any cog of this machine need to stop completely the repercussions reverberate all the way down the line in ways we had never imagined before.



(DAY 4)

SOFIA STEINVORTH:

Especially throughout the past years, a significant part of your work has evolved around domestic space. How is this very specific part of our infrastructure worth reflecting upon?

JABULANI MASEKO

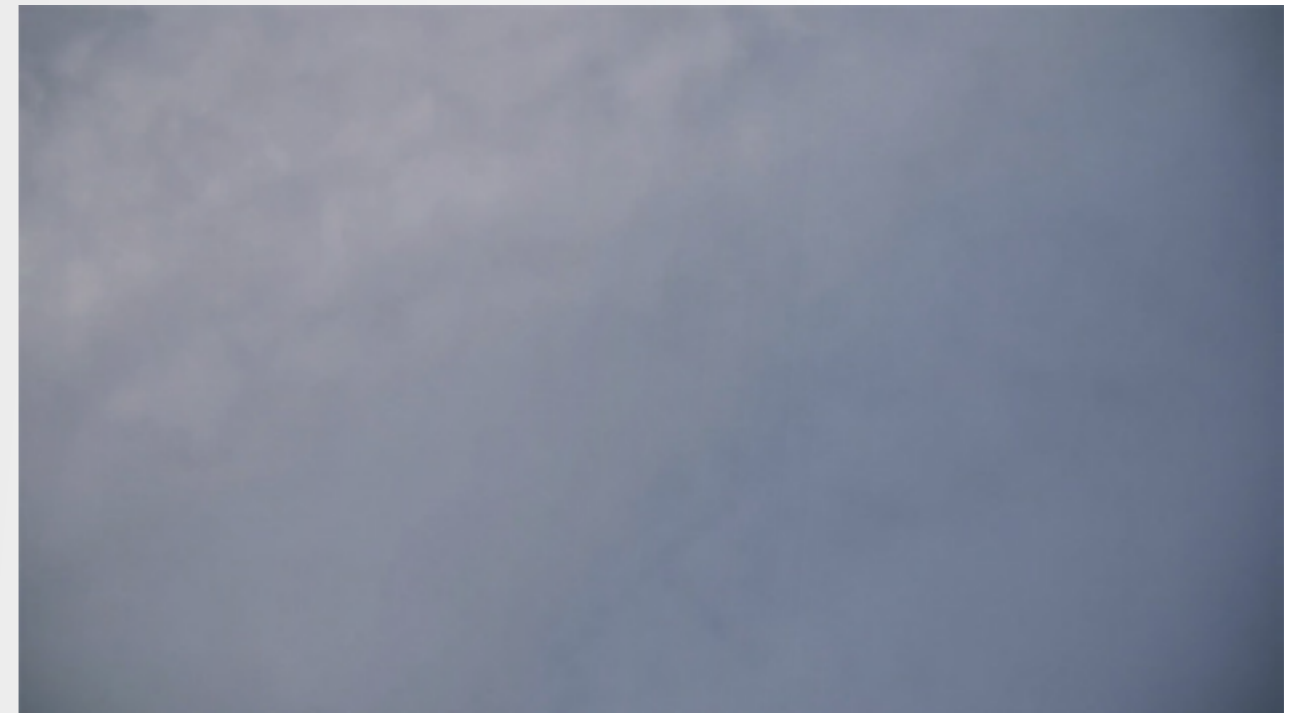
I've always been struck by the network of infrastructure which underpins the lives we live both personally and collectively. The network of infrastructure which underpins the ideals we subscribe to. How much of who I am is really who I am, with free will? How far into my home/personal space is the collective vision embedded for me to believe I am the captain of my own ship? If you think about it this way, the domestic space is a direct reflection of the public space. For society to function, for the collective to exist, its norms and morals have to be adopted and normalised in the home so as not to cause a rupture in the facade when the individual goes outside and encounters the rest of the picture. But I'm interested... How do you think that art can engage with contemporary issues in a meaningful way?

SOFIA STEINVORTH

That's a question I'm really excited about and there are many possible answers. To speak about art in general terms, I believe that it has the potential to challenge our ways of knowing and understanding. This is especially so, when thinking about the space that art and art institutions of all sizes create for experimentation, reflection and different ways of communication and storytelling.

This process can happen in different ways, for example by speaking to the senses and expanding our range of experience by moving it away from a solely rational and logical approach. But also, by the “simple” fact of providing a different (visual) narrative than the one we get through the media. On the other hand, art often happens to give us tools to understand not only our personal realities but also the world we live in and the relations between these two spheres — which goes back to what you just mentioned, about understanding the entanglements between the personal/domestic space and the political/public space (as the sphere where dominant norms and morals of a society are performed and perpetuated).

Another important aspect that we should think about is that everything and everyone wants our attention nowadays. This is what is at the heart of what has been called the attention economy in cognitive capitalism, for example. In addition to this, it becomes more and more difficult to shelter oneself from these “outside” stimuli, because even at home, and especially thanks to the penetration of information technology into this sphere, it has become very hard to switch off. This is one of the reasons why Yves Citton, the cultural theorist, has described aesthetic experiences as ‘vacuoles’, “which allow for the temporary suspension of the demands of communicational attention, so as to be able to concentrate full attention on a privileged cultural object over an extended period of time” (Citton, 2017: 159). If you think about it this way, it is art that allows you to slow down or to switch off – and that's becoming a rare and ever more valuable experience.



(DAY 5)

Recently, Paul B. Preciado* wrote about the current Covid-19 pandemic. To encourage us to disconnect ourselves from the satellites that monitor us, he calls out for "the big blackout".

* **hyperlink**

https://elpais.com/elpais/2020/03/27/opinion/1585316952_026489.html

OURS IS BLUE.



II. AN APPROACH TO THE MEANING

CRISTINA MEJÍAS *(artist)*
& ANDREIA CÉSAR *(curator)*

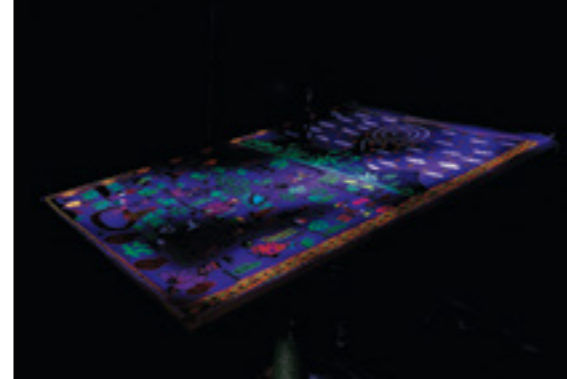
From where does our relationship with reality come? How is established the experience of both the world and ourselves? In a time of social isolation, we are led to reflect on the subjective frame that underlies our narratives, our individual and collective certainties, practices, and habits. This reflection highlights the intertwining of reality and fiction as the source where the sense of meanings rest, as expressed in cultural, symbolic and historical practices, and knowledge.

From where does our relationship with reality come? How is established the experience both the world and ourselves? In a moment of social isolation, we are led to reflect on the subjectivity of our narratives, certainties, and usual practices of being, doing and feeling, both individually and collectively. By taking place in the realm of recollection, this reflection embraces the potentiality of a distant point of view, which is essential for an attentive observation of the meanings carried by the cultural practices and their embedment in intersubjective relations.

The worldview that we find in Cristina Mejías' work suits entirely in this framework. Starting from oral tradition and knowledge as her primary subjects, the artist develops a set of reflections, through which

the intertwining of reality and fiction becomes explicit. Within her various visual proposals (which stem from the artist's close and engaged position), the importance of this intertwining for the formation of beliefs and habits is highlighted; which is also true for our manifold forms of knowledge and their associated narratives. Accordingly, giving a closer look at Mejías' work, we can perceive a branching in several sub-topics, which, nevertheless, end up bringing us back to the initial subject.

The selection of works here presented invite us to take a journey through the creative processes of stories, imaginary and knowledge, as well as the dynamic relationships established between them. We are taken by the hand and guided through stories that tell us about other stories; we pass through images from different geographies which, although seemingly detached one from another, arise unified in Mejías' universe. From story to story, from image to image, her worldview pierces ours: its meanings are apprehended, reformulated and transmitted... Thus, if in our experience of the present day, we have been inadvertently misguided, and following T. S. Eliot, an approach to the meaning enable us to restore the experience.



View of the exhibition 'Generación 2020', at La Casa Encendida, Madrid.



View of the exhibition 'La tierra tiembla', curated by Raquel G. Ibáñez for Area 60, TEA Tenerife. © Adrián González



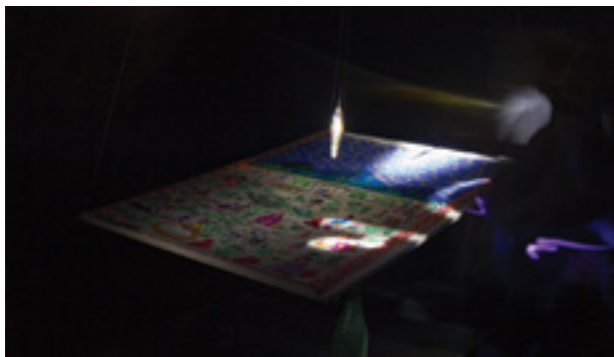
View of the exhibition 'Tocar la tierra', curated by Patricia Bueno del Río and Javier Bermúdez Pérez for Contemporary Art Center C3A (Córdoba, Spain). 2019-20. © courtesy of the artist



View of exhibition 'Boca y Hueso', at The Goma Gallery (Madrid, Spain), 2019 © Roberto Ruiz



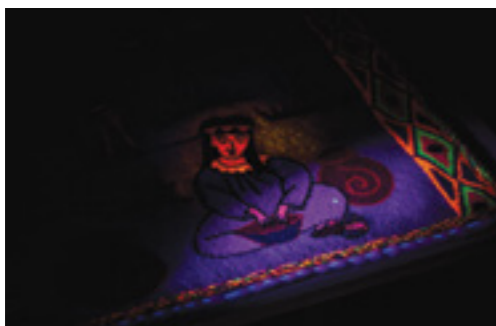
Screenshot courtesy of the artist
Temps vécus
Single channel video, 8'48"
2015



© Christian Lagata, 2020



© Christian Lagata, 2020



© Christian Lagata, 2020



© Christian Lagata, 2020



©Manuel Blanco
/La Casa Encendida, 2020

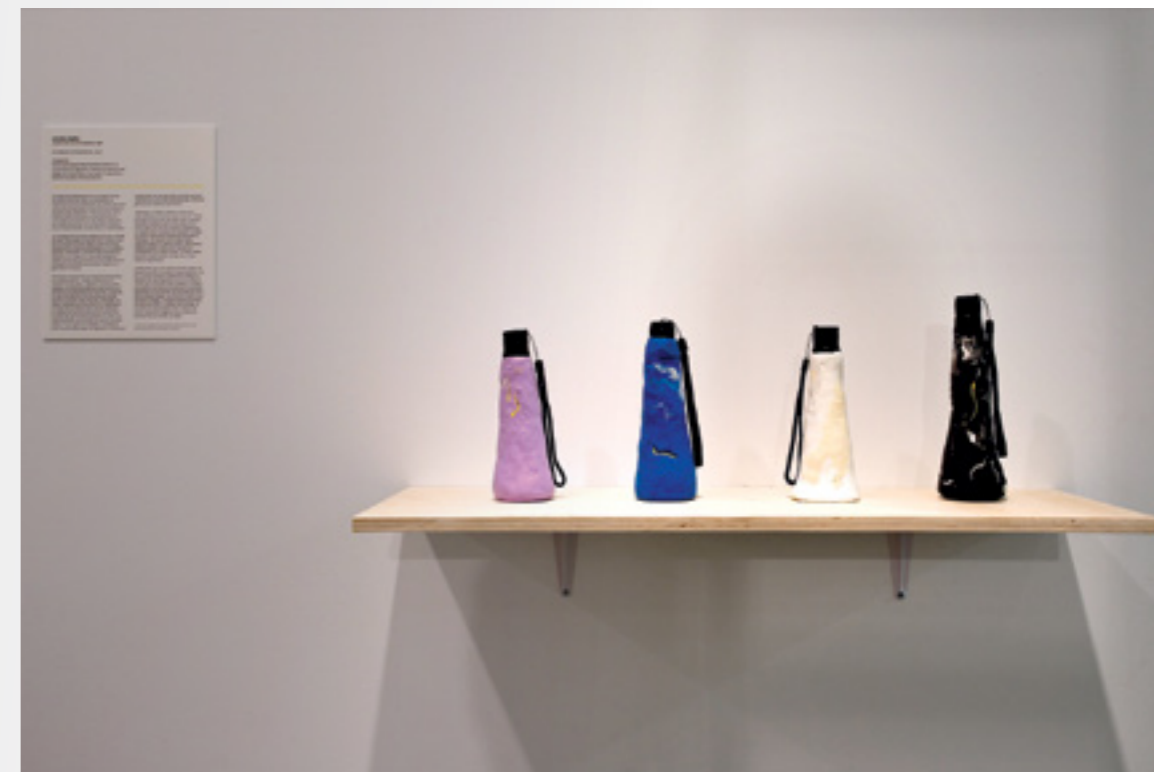
“LA MÁQUINA DE MACEDONIO”

In “La Máquina de Macedonio” Cristina Mejías addresses the close relationship between habits and collective fictions in the formation of stories. The artist starts from the dialogue between two different sources: a story-generator artefact (taken from Ricardo Piglia’s novel “La Ciudad Ausente”) and a custom of the Wayúu indigenous community, in Maracaibo (Venezuela). This custom consists in the report of dreams, and subsequent interpretation in collective key— an activity that plays an important role in organizing the meaning of the past and future. Within this keen observation of the Wayúu oral tradition, Mejías establishes a parallel between the weaver’s craft and the dream teller. Hence, the nature of the narrative construction manifests itself, with its inevitable transformations, exposing the invisible thread of meaning that unites objects, images and words.

La máquina de Macedonio,
2020
Project winner of Generación
2020 Art Price from
Montemadrid Foundation,
La Casa Encendida

Installation. Hanging Textile
Piece, Sculptural Elements,
Handmade Torches
And Audio
Dimensions Variable
2020

Audio Design
By Marcos Carnero



View of the exhibition ‘Generación 2020’, at La Casa Encendida, Madrid. © Manuel Blanco/La Casa Encendida, 2020

“AN OTHER HISTORY”

“An Other History” is a branch of Cristina Mejías’ artistic investigation, in which the historical narrative and the very fragilities of its construction are observed. By underscoring the historical relativism, the relationship between memory and imaginary becomes explicit. Accordingly, subjects such as the historical legacy and the knowledge perpetuation are brought to certain reinterpretation and ensuing resignification. Thus, between the underlying subjectivity and the inevitability of filling the gaps, a correspondence with contemporary creative processes appears.

Taking all these matters into account, Mejías’ artmaking process borrows the eye from the archaeologist and the historian. The project results from the collaboration with the archaeologist and performer Efthimis Theou, having as a starting point the excavation of Katalymata (Gavdos, Greece), working, simultaneously, as a prelude and reservoir of all possible narratives and formulations. Nevertheless, although tangling with the historical relativism, another angle seems to overlap in this same “oeuvre” — the one brought by strength and repetition of gestures and words, within the temporal distance, attesting the survival of memory, despite the new names and meanings.

Ask me then, if I believe in the spirit of the things as they are used, and I’ll say yes. They are all here. All the things which had used. All the mountains which had names. And we’ll never be able to use them without feeling uncomfortable. And somehow the mountains will never sound right to us; we’ll give them new names, but the old names are there, somewhere in time, and the mountains were shaped and seen under those names. The names we’ll give to the canals and cities will fall like so much water on the back of a duck. No matter how we touch Mars, we’ll never touch it. And then we will get mad at it, and you know what we’ll do? We’ll rip it up, rip the skin off, and change it to fit ourselves.

«We won’t ruin Mars, we won’t ruin Mars» said the Captain.

Ray Bradbury,
in “The Martian Chronicles”



Project funded
by TEA Tenerife Arts Space

An Other History
2018

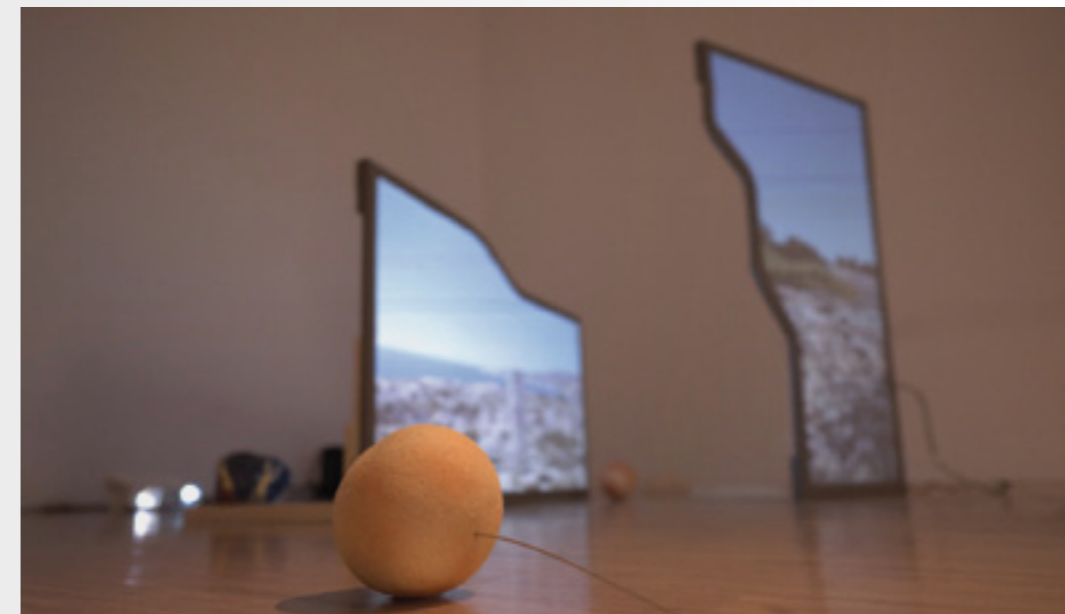
Project done in collaboration
with archaeologist
and performer
Efthimis Theou

View of the exhibition
‘La tierra tiembla’, curated
by Raquel G. Ibáñez
for Area 60, TEA Tenerife
© Adrián González

Video-installation,
2 channels of video
projections, audio, ceramic,
glass, aluminium

19' 07"

Audio voices
by Efthimis Theou and
Elektra Angelopoulou



“THE HOST AND THE GHOST”

This post presents two branches of Cristina Mejías' project *The Host and The Ghost*, — namely “Gozo” and “From things to Flows” — which departs from the collaboration with the archaeologist and performer Efthimis Theou and his team at Katalymata's excavation site in Gavdos (Greece).

The video-installation “Gozo” shows a poetic point of view of Gavdos' landscape, accomplished by the overlapping of the footage of a boat crossing in its slow approaching process, and the delicate and gently wobbling artefacts that occupy the showroom. Within the soft fluctuation established by these two components (and their different natures), Mejías conveys us to the reflection on the paradox mentioned by Benoît Mandelbrot, whereby the length and detail of a geographical feature depend on the scale of the measure employed, or the zoom chosen to be used. The closer one gets, the more folds appear until it reaches the infinite. In this telescoping of time, a new set of considerations

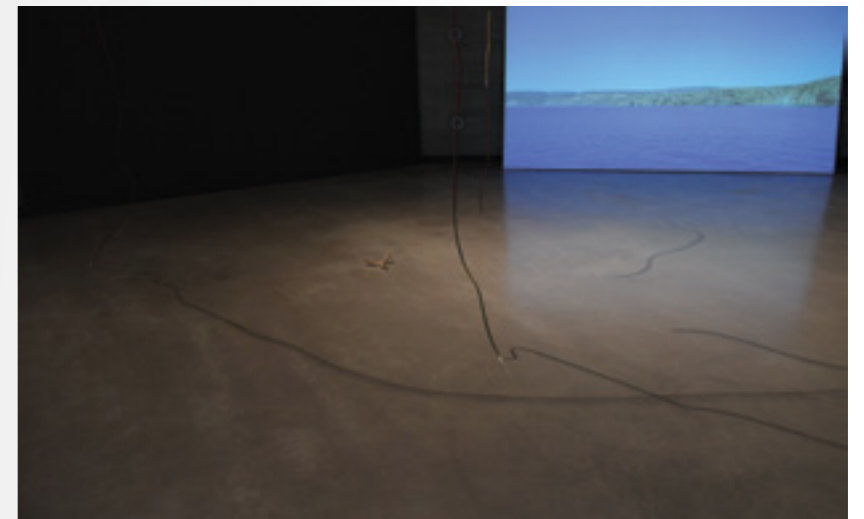
arise around the idea of the archaeological site as a living place: where objects are found and where stories appear; where facts merge with legends, myths and beliefs; where, from the chaos of dirt, the items that support narratives and the possibility for their crystallization emerge.

And, if in the non-presence of this living site, one cannot recover a breath of history, one can at least reenact, recreate it by taking memory to the realm of artmaking, by staining hands and ideas with the old rites and crafts — this is the case with “From Things to Flows”.

By looking at Gavdos, one looks into more than a territory, a landscape, and an excavation. One is staring at the place where Ulysses was shipwrecked and the nymph Calypso detained him for seven years on his return trip to Ithaca, and also a temporary shelter for St. Paul, when the ship carrying him and other prisoners to be tried in Rome went adrift. One is peering not at Gavdos, but at the setting once called Gozo.



View of Openstudios during residency of research and production grant in Tabakalera (San Sebastián, Spain), 2018 Project funded by Tabakalera Donostia as part of the international grant for research and production. Video and audio made in collaboration with Efthimis Theou Credit of the pictures: Gómez Selva



© Courtesy of the artist



© Pablo Ballesteros

View of the exhibition *Tocar la tierra*, curated by Patricia Bueno del Río and Javier Bermúdez Pérez for Contemporary Art Center C3A (Córdoba, Spain). 2019-20

Project funded by Contemporary Art Center C3A (Córdoba, Spain) as part of a residency program for research and production.

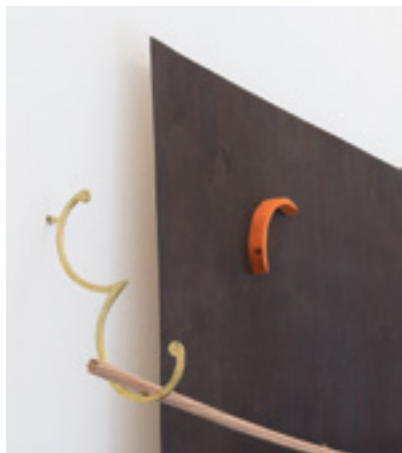
GOZO

Video-installation, video projection and audio, mixed wood, bone and ceramic.

2019



© Courtesy of the artist



Pentagrama (detail), 2019
 Fir, rosewood from India, cedar wood, cypress and ebony, bone, brass, varnish and guitar string
 155 x 210 cm



General view of the exhibition



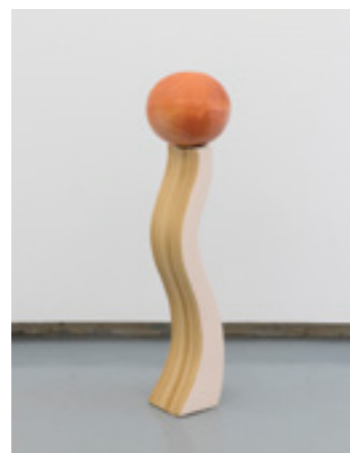
Hueco de boca y hueso (left), 2019
 Fir, rosewood, dyed wood and ceramic
 155 x 55 cm



Pentagrama, 2019
 Fir, rosewood from India, cedar wood, cypress and ebony, bone, brass, varnish and guitar string
 155 x 210 cm



Tapa armónica: cedro, arce y ébano
 2019
 Cedar wood, ebony and maple, bone and shellac
 54 x 87 cm



Untitled
 Ceramic
 15 x 60 x 15 cm



General view of the exhibition



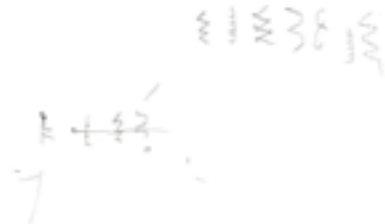
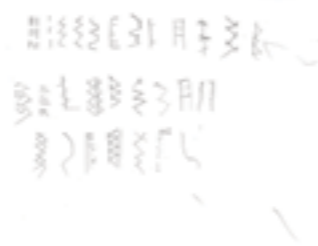
“BOCA Y HUESO”

In “Boca y Hueso” Cristina Mejías addresses stories in what distinguishes them from history. Her work challenges the strict, traditional methods used to construct a historical narrative through a linear structure. She departs from the general idea of knowledge in its usual practices and devices, to draw nearer to a more primal and authentic way of transmitting crucial information and learning. A more engaging way, and also physically more demanding... The one that cuts across bodies, requiring listening and a better capacity of our minds and memory — the one, indeed, that is found in the oral tradition. Along this pathway of the learning process, it becomes noticeable the underlying importance of intersubjectivity for knowledge itself. The artist focuses her investigation around the figure of the luthier, to give expression to one of our oldest motivations — learning a craft, a *téchnē*. Settled on familiar narratives (as in the case of this project,

in which she spent time learning from her brother the luthier’s skill), Cristina Mejías’ work is centred on the experience of shared-processes. Merging this handcraft practice with the viewpoint of artistic experimentation, she establishes another link in the transmission process and body embedment.

In the beginning, it was sound and rhythm. Oral poetry is rooted in melody and trope. Strabo tells us that in ancient times singing and saying were the same thing. This project focuses on artisan guitar-making, because the flamenco guitar, unlike the rest of the standardised school of plucked string instruments, came about as an accompaniment for troubadours in taverns and markets and today guitar-making is still a form of learning that in many cases is passed down orally from master to master. The voice gives shape to the wood.
 Cristina Mejías, 2019

View of exhibition Boca y Hueso, at The Goma Gallery (Madrid, Spain), 2019
 Credit for pictures: Roberto Ruiz
 Project done thanks to the help and teaching of Flamenco guitar maker Javier Mejías



“TEMPS VÉCU”

“Temps Vécu” consists of a joint writing exercise, in which the receptor only discovers the message to be conveyed when the narrator takes and guides her hand. The project originated in a string of conversations between the artist and her grandmother, in which, not surprisingly, the resulting stories spring from a personal place. Within this familiar background arises a silent dialogue under the form of a drawing.

From this tracing emerges the outline of different types of sewing stitches, functioning, every single one of them, as a trigger of the connection between memory, transmission and learning. In this procedure, the drawing's features show a defect as the result of the natural interaction between teller and receiver. By recording this action, we are led by a “guiding” which, much like what occurs with language, brings us from one private realm to another. We are also taken by the hand and guided through stories that tell us about other stories; we pass through images from different geographies which, although seemingly detached from one another, arise unified in Mejías' imagery.

Diálogo 1, Diálogo 2, Diálogo 3,
Diálogo 4 & Diálogo 5
Technique: Print on Hahnemühle,
30x40 cm ea, 2015

We had the experience but missed the meaning, and approach to the meaning restores the experience.

T. S. Elliot, “Four Quartets:
The Dry Salvages”



Video, images and screenshots
courtesy of the artist
Video and screenshots
Temps vécu
Single channel video, 8'48"
2015

III. BECOMING: MEDITATIONS

JOANA PATRÃO *(artist)*
& MARIA EDUARDA
DUARTE *(curator)*

A drawing on a white background, a black line that delineates the shape, that grows. A landscape, our landscapes, yours, everyday landscapes and those that we have yet to discover. Through three videos and three drawings, we will build a narrative, an emotional space to reflect on different relationships based on the elements of nature. "Becoming: meditations" is an online project/exhibition with works by Joana Patrão in close dialogue with Maria Eduarda Duarte.

It all started with a question. What's your meaning of landscape?

I know that it is not a simple question, maybe I'm too curious to know what Joana thinks about that, or what everyone thinks about that gigantic space that can be almost everything.

I'm absolutely sure what my grandfather would answer me: Douro. For him, landscape had a name and it was this magical place that is a river, that is rows of vineyards, that is the unique composition of the site made by man centuries ago, but most of all it is people and community.

Allys,
Calhau,
Carneiro,
Christo
and Jeanne-Claude,
Mendieta,
Long,
Smithson.

In the idea of landscape, these are some of the names that come to my mind, these days our landscapes have to be more than our rooms, have to be more than our houses. These meditations reflect on the idea of conviviality, in different approaches on the relations of men and nature, of different elements, densities, spaces, atmospheres and times.

Maria Eduarda Duarte

**reparar nas coisas pode ser
reparar o mundo onde estilhaçam as coisas
no incurável decurso dos dias**

**[noticing things can be
repair the world where things shatter
in the incurable course of days]**

Miguel-Manso. Persianas (2015)

BECOMING: MEDITATIONS ON LANDSCAPE (I)



What is landscape?

I believe landscape is the experience of an encounter. Even though it is born from a separation, a disconnection from the unitary feeling of nature as a whole (cf. Simmel, 1913), landscape might also be the key for reconciliation, for a relational approach, based on a feeling of reciprocity (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

By recognizing the relational potential of landscape, we can shift this paradigm, evolving from an aesthetics of visibility to an aesthetics of involvement which might give rise to an aesthetics of commitment (cf. Berleant, 1993). We need then to reconsider the Western idea of landscape as something to be looked at, framed nature, presented as passive, available for being possessed and commodified. (cf. Thomas, 1995)

Thinking of landscape as a process rather than a territory or a view is then a way of understanding our ontological involvement with it, considering ourselves as intertwined beings. As Mitchell writes, landscape is “a process by which social and subjective identities are formed” (2002, p.1). The cultural history can be told through landscape, through the story of images, but mainly through the structures of thought and relation involved in the construction of those images. There is a universal level in this approach but there is also a deeply personal level of engagement with landscape based on how we conceive our views, how we participate with our experience, how we are affected or affect it. That is why I think the status of landscape is always being in-between, bridging apparent opposites (nature-culture, personal-collective, intimate-sharable).

I think landscape has a great potential to explore those dialogues, enabling us to rethink the common relations and separations, providing other structures of representation. We can then embody other ways of being in the

world, opening up the senses to other natural entities. Recognizing agency in other beings, other centres of experience, is to broaden our perception of the world, towards a respectful relation.

It is also in this sense that Augustin Berque writes about an urgency of landscape (cf. Berque, 1993). The urgency to redefine our relations with the land, to reencounter the sustainable proportions of that relations. He highlights the epistemic and practical value of landscape: to reencounter the measure of the natural world. It is in landscape that we express the meaning of our relation with the earth.

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BECOMING: MEDITATIONS ON SHADOW



MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

Seeing the first frame of this video with a hole, like a well or a cave, made me think like an archaeologist. That can also be related to the “excavation work” that you’ve done for this video, searching your archive, could you please share your thoughts on this process of returning to old footages and creating new work with them?

JOANA PATRÃO

I really like that analogy, I like how an archaeological approach convokes both the materiality of the earth and the act of entering it while it is a way of digging history. There is a very tangible relation between the layers of sediment and the layers of history.

In this project the process was quite peculiar as it was not about producing something new from scratch but to dig for things that were put aside for some reason. It was a slow process of going through the archives of other projects or footage of casual phenomena that I felt the urge to record. The process of isolating and combining was a very intuitive one as I was not searching for something in specific, it just allowed me to revisit the places and times where that footage was made. It was a kind of voyage (maybe more like a drift). Going from one place to another, to one folder to the next, picking a few recordings that resonated somehow. This process gave me a great liberty to work, merging places from afar, and thinking of the new combination of images as a place in themselves.

Looking at my choices I started realizing there were some recurrent images, archetypes. Elementary images shared by many cultures from different places and times. This video happens in the subsoil, maybe also in the sublayers of experience and shared imagination.

MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

In the video, there is shadow and light, there is immersion and matter, a past written in stone, and in all this an almost meditative and transcendental lightness. In your works, I often find a narrative dictated by time, a slow and long time. How is this reflection on time decisive in the construction of your stories and investigations?

JOANA PATRÃO

In this case, and even though the video is very short, I am precisely trying to address that slow and long time, an idea of a cycle, something that keeps happening beyond our presence. I also thought of a place where the dichotomies are fluid, the micro and the macro are interchangeable, the water is stone and the stone is water.

Also, the idea of a past written in stone is really important. In a way, it is about acknowledging other kinds of participation in the world, acknowledging a story that is not written by us.

I believe that idea is almost always present in my works, I tend to enhance a sense of a natural time, aiming to slow down our patterns of interaction. It is a way to convey a dissonance with our time (a quick life on earth), but also a dissonance with the pressure that we put nature on, on the point that it has no time to regenerate. It is a way of proposing a readjustment of times.

MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

This video reminded me Alberto Carneiro’s work — Ser árvore e arte [Being Tree and Art], 2000/02 — when it is displayed around a tree seven holes covered with glass panels, like a cosmic drawing that transport us to different times. Our reflection on the glass can be similar to the one that we search on the water, leading to a communion of man and nature.

JOANA PATRÃO

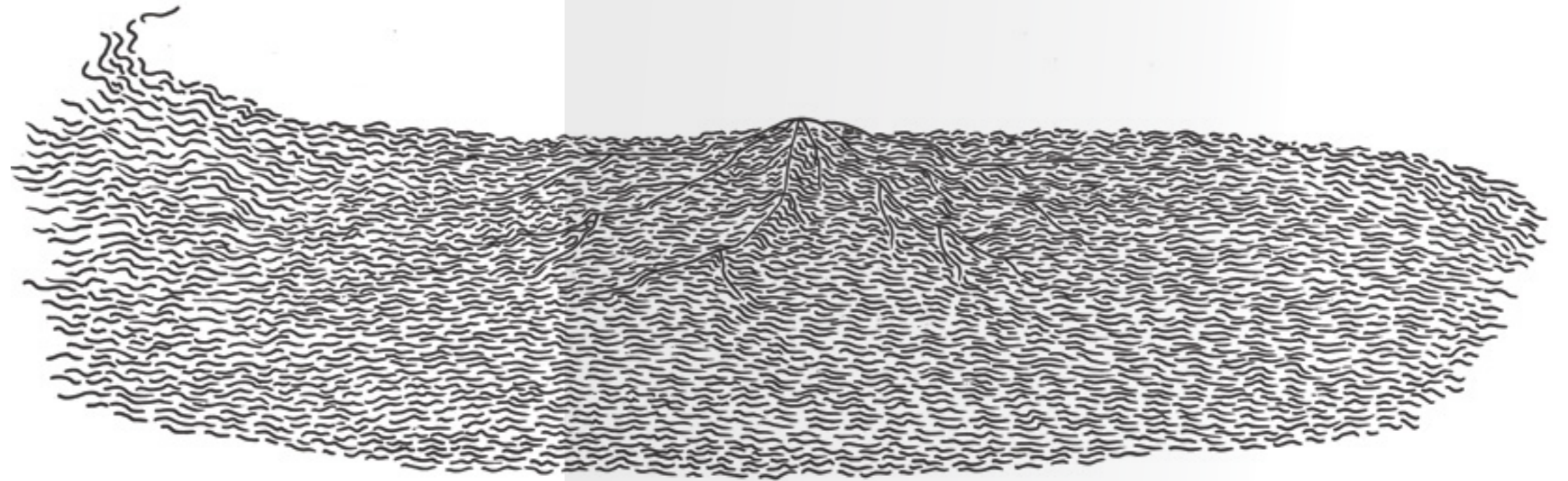
I am really glad that you made that connection. I admire Alberto Carneiro’s work greatly and his thought and poetics resonate a lot in the way I aim to embody a dialogue with nature. The complete identification between body and nature, nature and art.

I am also quite interested in the idea of a material imagination, derived from Bachelard, which was a great reference to Carneiro, as well as the relation with the four elements as sources of poetic and material energies. Alberto Carneiro pursued the tree as the total image, growing in both directions, inside the earth and to the sky, a microcosm calling the elements to itself. I think that the beautiful work *Ser árvore e arte* is pretty effective in convoking our image inside that microcosm. The superimposition of our reflected image with the branches of that tree is also an identification with any other tree, with the whole nature. In my video there are some fundamental experiential differences: it is mainly visual, the body is not involved in the perception of it, but it might be immersed, projected onto that space. Instead of a spatial experience there is a temporal one, potentially cyclical (the video can be seen in loop, there is no beginning and end, everything returns).

As I have said before I am also really interested in these symbols, the water as the possibility of forms, the fluidity, with the potential of dissolving or destroying.

The mirrored image in the water has that meaning of communion that you referred to through the visual connection, the fusion of images, but it also has another dimension, the possibility of disturbing that superficial image and actually immersing in the depths of water.

**BECOMING:
MEDITATIONS
ON LANDSCAPE
(II)**



MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

In these long days, it seems to me that we look more at the sky. Most of the time we walk and look ahead, sometimes we look at the ground. We grow up telling us to be careful, to see where we are walking, why do you think that we look so little above?

JOANA PATRÃO

Maybe it is all a question of time and openness. In our daily life, we look ahead while walking, we are following a purpose, we have somewhere we want to get to (and sometimes as quickly as possible). We are told to look below to prevent us from falling and we keep doing that when we are afraid, when we don't know the place we are stepping in. Looking above is for dreamers. There is no practical reason for doing it, yet, it is a beautiful thing to do. It is an act of wonder and curiosity, something we are tempted to do as a child, but as we grow up we get shaped to not waste time with that reverie. I can tell you about four experiences that made me look again to the sky:

- Walking on the beach, filming the sea, and noticing the variety of colours, tones, and light intensities. The sea as the mirror of the sky where it all changes at an impressive pace.
- In a remote island in the Baltic Sea, Utö, I participated in *A Deep Listening Session*, a performative session led by the artist (performance-maker/researcher) Saara Hannula. The proposal was to walk in the direction of the sun, to the sea, becoming progressively silent, aware of the surroundings. Walking was all about the experience of discovering, to awaken the senses: to the sound of the rocks or to the silent clouds in the sky. Each one defined their own pace, their own path, their own vision. I have a vivid memory of the sky and the sea and the synesthetic feeling: merging with water, listening to the music of light touching the waves.
- Goethe's poetry on clouds, following Luke Howard's classification of different clouds, I found out shapes that I never acknowledged. Seeing images of John Constable's paintings. We know the sky is not only blue, but how many times do we notice the oranges, violets, the multiple cloud shapes and densities? The ever-changing sky, the poetry of everyday.
- Stargazing, looking at the sky at night, to the light coming from dead stars. We lost the habit of looking to the sky wondering about meaning. Sometimes I find myself wondering how it would have been to look at the sky without scientific knowledge. The mysteries of it, the unreachable source of sun and rain, essential for life. Looking at the sky might also be about connecting with different times and imagining different experiences of the world.

And, in the end, looking up might not be that different from looking at the ground. What we need is to preserve the ability of awe and admiration. Of enchantment.

MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

This video made me think of old films, a transposition of time, as in a second, a similar time to breath in and out, something could change, gain strength, contrast, or even burn.

JOANA PATRÃO

It is curious that you bring up the idea of breath, a very cyclical everyday life act, bringing in the outside, releasing the inside, "offering ourselves to the world at one moment and drawing the world into ourselves in the next..." (Abram, 2010, p.58).

If we look for the etymology of soul [alma] in Latin we find the word *anima*, that meant both air and breath. Also *spirit* and *respiration* have a common root, in Latin *spirit* meant both breath and wind. We can find that correspondence in multiple languages, evoking breath as the very substance of the mystery of life (cf. Abram, 1997, p.237). The invisible substance that is everywhere and participates in every being. I like that idea very much, and I think somehow in the video there is that pace of breath (also the pace of the wind that touches the leaves, or the fire that moves the leaves).

This video is also about the idea of accessing something hidden, the hidden essential energy or the seed of destruction inside every being.

The tree in the video is a white poplar, known for its double faced leaves, white and green, used as a representation of duality in many cultures. It is often used as a tree of passage, a funerary tree. This tree represents another duality: water-fire. We often find it near the rivers because of the humidity it demands and the poplar can relive after a fire, due to the ability of sprouting from the root. Life and death, water and fire.

MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

Perseverance and continuity. I would like to hear your thoughts about the capacity to look to places that have suffered heavy losses with time, do you think that it is possible to see them the same way as previous to that phenomena.

JOANA PATRÃO

In some way I tried to address those ideas in this video. I was quite impressed to learn about the perseverance and capacity of continuity of the white poplars. They have the ability of cloning themselves, reproducing from the roots, which they extend shallowly in the ground in search of water, in multiple directions. They might be labelled as an invasive species in certain circumstances for the ability of reproducing quickly, but they are also quite susceptible to winds and storms. Conceptually, I like that ambiguity, the duality between resilience and destruction.

Anyway, I think it is impossible to look at a burnt forest as the same place it was before. We can wonder if ontologically it is still the same, but the life and the feeling of being in it certainly changes. We might translate that into a sublime feeling, the mix of awe and fascination in face of danger and devastation, but also the feeling of being

too insignificant, the respect for that place or phenomena. And if it is true that after destruction there might be new life, regeneration, the scars of the destructive event remain. Even when the signs of life appear, a fragile hope, we cannot dissociate it from the lives that were lost. It is a new place with a new story. Our role is to reimagine how that might be, envisioning ways to prevent massive destruction.

Footnotes

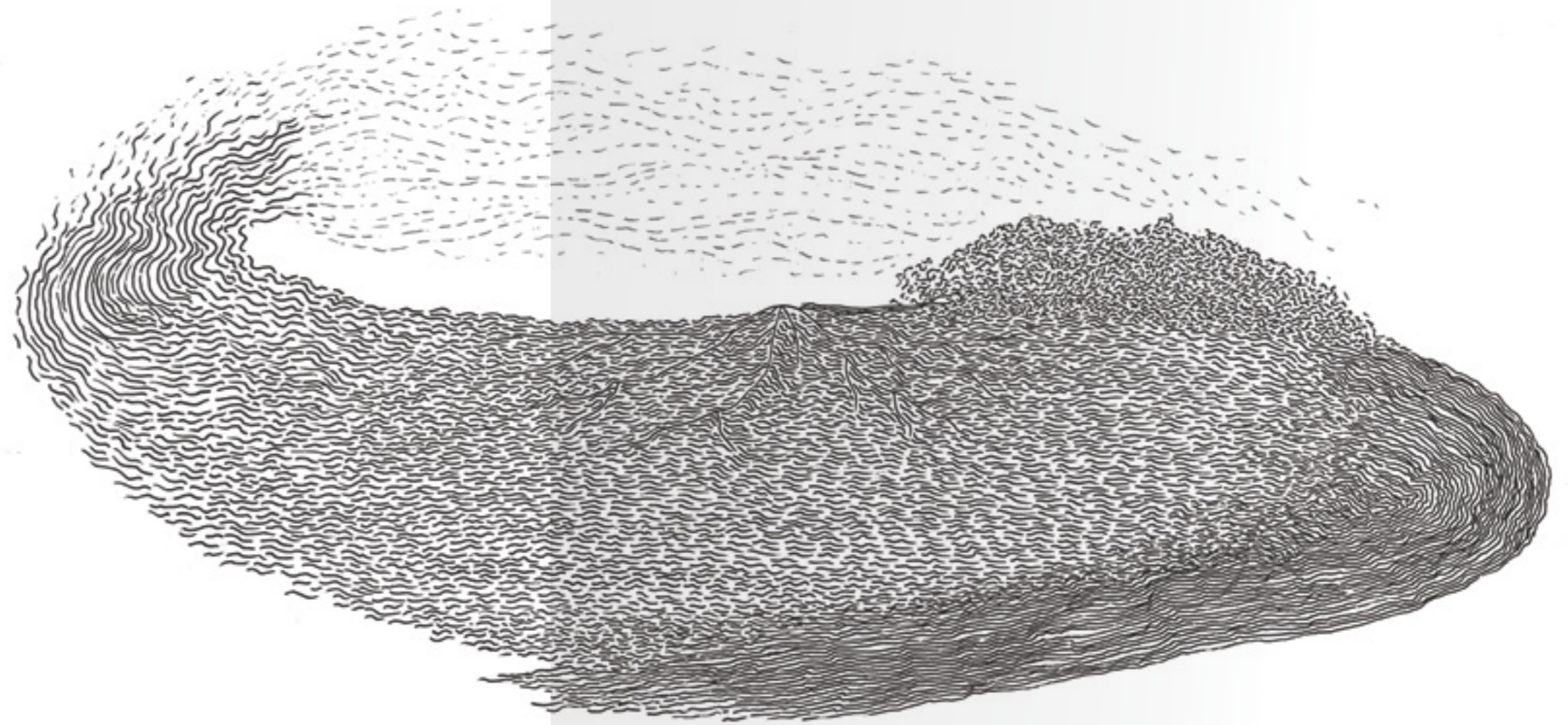
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BECOMING: MEDITATIONS ON LIGHT

**BECOMING:
MEDITATIONS
ON LANDSCAPE
(III)**



MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

In our conversations, this video has always been described as “the sap”, sap represents vitality, strength and energy. In a way, the beginning of everything, of growth. I think that our final day on this project could have also been the first, the beginning.

JOANA PATRÃO

You are right. If we think of that symbolism of the sap, it could have been the first. But I thought more about its cyclic dimension and how it is connected with a vital rhythm, the circuit of the sap, flowing up and down, merging the profoundness of the earth with the energy of the sun.

I thought of this video as the last one because I was searching for a kind of synthesis of the ideas behind this series of posts. In spite of not having a linear narrative for the videos, there is a progressive simplification from one video to the next, involving less and less my gesture of construction in the combination of images. In the first one there were 3 images involved, in the second there were 2, in this last one, we see only one image: one shot, with the sap dropping and a movement that we can guess it's from the presence of my body behind the camera. It is also the shortest one, a glimpse of the essential.

MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

It is also the work that most reflects on time, a slow time, that counts drop by drop, a falling movement that represents a renovation of shapes and forms. This is the video that I think shows more the material side of nature, its textures and chemical effects, almost like an experiment in a laboratory. I really like the scientific approach that you have on some of your works, like “Cultivo” [Cultivation] (2019-2020) or “Impressões marítimas” [Sea Prints] (2015-2018). I would like to ask you how important is this technical knowledge of the reactions between materials in the development of your artistic processes.

JOANA PATRÃO

I would not call it technical or scientific knowledge. It is actually something that comes from the fascination for simple phenomena, reactions, dissolutions, transformations of matter, something that Bachelard calls the innocent chemistry of poets. I identify a lot with this idea because it defines the way of looking, the attitude behind this interest that is more poetic than scientific: it is not utilitarian or logical, it deals mostly with an enchantment for things. My experiments are not done with the intention of testing and analysing, in fact, I am always expecting that something different happens, that another factor enters the equation, that unpredictability gets involved.

I also consider this approach as a way of dealing with natural processes, involving a language that is not my own and dealing with a natural materiality, not only with the appearances.

Also I like a lot of the idea of an encounter, between

different materials, between my gesture and natural processes, and what might result from those encounters.

In the case of *Impressões marítimas* I was interested in the idea of index, how the moment of contact between the surface I was carrying and the wave could leave its traces. I first started with metal plates, because of the relation with the idea of matrix, something that involves the multiplication of images (as the multiplication of waves), and also for the changeable interaction with light through the reflections. The fact that the zinc corrodes faster with salt water than other metals, creating a kind of slight engraving that goes beyond the superficial image (created by the removal of ink), is something that I just discovered by doing. There is a lot of empirical knowledge involved, things that I discover and incorporate during the process. Also, salt crystals started appearing with time, with the evaporation of seawater. Creating another layer of time and evolution of that image.

I often use salt crystals in my works, I like them for the material connection with the sea, for its symbolism, and I also have a fascination for the simple process of growing them.

In *Cultivo*, the processes are even simpler. I collected a part of clay soil, but I didn't even filter the clay from it, so all the “impurities” of that soil are present in the works. It was more about using the raw material from that place, sometimes using water to dissolve and reveal the composition of it, and using my hands to model the forms on paper. I believe it also connects with ancient relations between art and nature, hand and matter.

In these works as in many others, these techniques and natural processes are part of the conceptual framing of the work but are also ways of conveying a materiality to them different from the conventional artistic techniques. Providing a space to develop a relation with nature through these organic materials.

In this video, the materials are not involved in the making, but the main focus is on the sap, on act of recording this phenomena, without any manipulation provoked by my action, only implying the poetic look that I defined in the beginning.

MARIA EDUARDA DUARTE

This video evokes me an abstraction, an image that conveys a stillness, a silence, an echo projected from these slower days.

I could say that these days were a journey to an intimate space, a space for meeting our ideas. I hope this phase that we are crossing promotes reflection and dialogue, in a path to a more balanced world.

JOANA PATRÃO

I would like to start from the idea of an abstract dimension. I understand it as a matter of distance: the camera is so close that we don't even see the contours of the tree, there are no references. I like that closeness, to be as close as possible, almost inside, and how the strangeness and ambiguity attracts us to the mystery of the image, even if we don't completely understand what is happening.

In fact, to me, that image is not abstract at all. Each

time I look at it I can still feel the smell of the sap mixed with the orange fungi, something between a fruity and rotten smell, the tree leaking, dying.

Also, I think this video is not that still, I see the camera movements as quite unsettling. I like this contrast with the slow dropping of the sap. I think this image is quite powerful, because we see that liquid, that has all the symbolism of vitality that we spoke about in the first question, but it is coming out from a doomed tree.

Speaking about these times, I wouldn't identify them only as a period of slowing down, a time for reflection. We can relate with this drop by drop, slow time, but without forgetting that it is framed in a context of suffering.

I would say that we are in disruptive times, and of course I have the same hope that we can take this opportunity to rethink, to readjust and implement alternative ways of relation to the world, to regenerate after a serious wound.



BECOMING: MEDITATIONS ON SHADOW

IV. WALD: INHABITING SPACES

GREGOR GRAF *(artist)*
& TERESA PINHEIRO *(curator)*

A dialogue between Gregor Graf's series of drawings "Wald" and Teresa Pinheiro's reflections on the emotional, familiar, collective connection to the sceneries of our memories.



Disc
Ink on paper
40 x 40 cm
2020

WALD: INHABITING SPACES I

Gregor Graf's work and the dystopic reality we're living today take us to a critical analysis of our relationship, as human beings, with space and nature. Our ways of inhabiting them results in multiple relations, interactions and consequences. Maybe due to our lack of recognition of humanity as nature, it is exploited in such a destructive way that, ironically or not, it ends up damaging ourselves.

The following series of drawings explore the multiplicity and complexity of the dichotomous relationships between city/countryside, people/environment and humanity/nature in a way of understanding their coexistence as complements and not as opposites.



Forest 1
Ink on paper
147 x 101 cm
2019

WALD: INHABITING SPACES II

In 2018 and 2019, the Austrian forests Waldviertel and Mühlviertel suffered serious damage due to extreme climate changes. After unusual amounts of snow, these forests experienced a long period of dryness and warm temperatures that facilitated the breeding of the bark beetle. As a consequence, large amounts of wood had to be taken from the forest areas which transformed visually the landscape.

As Gregor explains, “the normally vertical orientation of the forest merged into a linear and light jumble of standing trees, lying but not yet processed damaged wood, clear-cut logs, young trees and bushes.” The need the artist felt to register these changes in such raw and physical gestures — big brush and dark ink against the fragility of paper — reveals this close relationship we have to what surrounds us. An emotional, familiar, collective connection to the sceneries of our memories.

WALD: INHABITING SPACES III

“Our house, apprehended in its dream potentiality, becomes a nest in the world (...) The nest, quite as much as the oneiric house, and the oneiric house quite as much as the nest — if we ourselves are at the origin of our dreams — knows nothing of the hostility of the world.”
(Bachelard, 1994: 103)

Our sense of belonging to spaces culminates now that we are forced to stay home. The shelter that protects us from the outside world just as the nest guards the birds against harm. The place where we build our memories, grow our creativity and exist within our deeper self. The global conflict we’re living is being solved through individual actions towards a collective good — an isolated but convivial existence not only between ourselves but also with nature, that continues to regenerate itself while we are confined.

Bachelard, Gaston (1994), *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How we Experience Intimate Places*, translated by Maria Jolas, Boston: Beacon Press.



Nest
150 x 110 cm
Ink on paper
2020

WALD: INHABITING SPACES IV

Gregor's drawings are visual translations that show us a dialogue between his childhood and the process of construction/deconstruction these landscapes are going through as industrialized natural spaces. The forests are perceived both as natural and personal spaces and carry with them multiple layers of memories, narratives and connections.

In an increasingly globalized world, we are now even more aware of how connected and interdependent we all are and how it is impossible to distinguish humanity from nature. In this forced deacceleration of time, we are able to reflect and transform — through togetherness, collaboration, empathy, research, dialogue, creativity — the way the spaces are inhabited.



Stump 1-9
42 x 59 cm
Ink and gouache on paper
2020



Bark beetle
150 x 109 cm, Ink on paper,
2019

WALD: INHABITING SPACES V

"The day advanced as if to light some work of mine; it was morning, and lo, now it is evening, and nothing memorable is accomplished. Instead of singing like the birds, I silently smiled at my incessant good fortune. As the sparrow had its trill, sitting on the hickory before my door, so had I my chuckle or suppressed warble which he might hear out of my nest. My days were not days of the week, bearing the stamp of any heathen deity, nor were they minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock; for I lived like the Puri Indians, of whom it is said that "for yesterday, to-day, and tomorrow they have only one word, and they express the variety of meaning by pointing backward for yesterday, forward for to-morrow, and overhead for the passing day." This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting. A man must find his occasions in himself, it is true. The natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove his indolence."
(Thoreau, 1854: 122)

Thoreau, Henry David (1854), *Walden or Life in the Woods*, Boston: Beacon Press.



Forest 2
147 x 101 cm
Ink on paper
2019



REFLECTIONS

WILL TECH FOR COVID AFFECT DEMOCRATIC REASONING? ISABEL CAPELOA GIL

Wherever you go, COVID follows. Students and teachers are bracing to go back to school under a whole new normal. Many have already raised the alarm about the rise of technology and the risks of freedom-tracing, commonly known as surveillance. In other words, how corporate and state are coming together technologically to limit movement for a better health in a pandemic stricken society.

Our schools and campi can undoubtedly benefit from greater geolocation for personal safety especially as the community emerges from real fear and the threat of contamination. Tech giants have already teamed up to make our itineraries COVID free when possible, or so they argue. In other places, cities are looking at digital permits for a safer and authorized circulation. Pre-COVID, smart campus programs hailed movement analytics as boosting the institution's efficiency strategy. Through geopositioning placed on the university's app, crowds could be managed during rush hour in the cafeteria, traffic jams could be diverted and even small disfunctions in the management of facilities optimized. It's all for the greater good folks!

However, technology's recent gains in the face of democracy should remain clear — and limited.

How much of the new affordances of this brave new world are likely to endanger our basic right as citizens to move, speak and decide freely? Whilst it may be comforting for some, others will argue these transformations are happening strictly under exceptional circumstances and by constitutional decree. In most cases, the latter are to cease when COVID exception comes to term.

Will they?

As we prepare to curb the physical and psychological effects of the pandemic, our students and staff will struggle with fear and distress, as we move on and attempt to embrace normality again — at whichever speed nations and Big Tech may decide to make it

happen. Freedom to choose how and where should also be part of that journey.

At Catolica, we side with the great liberal tradition of safety and constitutional freedom. Our students can rest assured the university's unfailing infrastructure will protect them with a strong sense of commitment to public health whether they wish to remain remote or come-back to campus. Catolica will protect all students equally regardless of the varying social degree of technology they may have access to.

But going back to school will mean things have changed — whether students choose or not to remain remote. Universities will be redesigned, classes will too. Space will matter and teaching apart will go to new depths.

Every single step of the education layout will need to adjust.

Another question is whether technology and tracing Apps need inevitably to be part of this new landscape destined to make us safer at home, in school and at work. Perhaps out on the App-street, freedom to choose to turn these off must remain an essential principle.

In the end, just like technology should make us safer, education must remain an essential tool for democracy. Tracing devices will provide people and organizations with a map for a virus free world. But the real challenge is how the borders of democratic rule will coincide with the limits of technology, empowering us all to learn and access knowledge in a safer way.

ISABEL CAPELOA GIL

Full Professor and Rector of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa
Scientific Coordinator of the 4Cs: From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture

FROM CONFLICT TO CONFLICT VIA CHANGE: A REPLY ANA MARGARIDA ABRANTES

Amidst the global spread of the coronavirus, the impressive rise of infection and death tolls, and the vertiginous spiral of news, comments and posts, we find ourselves in an uncomfortable position: we try to make sense of a situation that developed too fast, even for our fast-paced societies and changed fundamentally both our individual lives and the existence of our communities as we have always known them. What is the meaning and what are the implications of this pandemic? Much has been already written about this and much more will flow. But from where we stand today, on March 22, 2020, a few impressions can already help us draw a provisional balance.

This is not a war

It is not uncommon for politics and the media to refer to crises as wars. It helps frame the situation and concentrate efforts on fighting a cause, the more so as this cause is a living organism with an identity: Sars-CoV 2. This rhetoric however may be as misleading as when it was used in the aftermath of September 11, when war on terrorism was declared. Although the enemy has better contours now — a virus —, when President Macron says we are at war he does so to justify measures to control citizens' social behaviour, rather than to fight the virus. Politics can do just that: make hard decisions to ensure the common good. The virus is up to doctors and scientists to fight: doctors fight for their patients, scientists search for ways to fight the virus. The powerful metaphor entailed in "this is a war" may also fuel reactions such as hoarding (notoriously of toilet paper and pasta) in Europe or stocking up guns in the US. Neither are good means to kill a virus, but both lay bare fundamental differences in the way these two societies are built. In Europe, the collective experience of war clashes with the consumption and hedonistic economic models of the post-war period, but in both, we may find a justification for the impulse, the reflex to stockpile. In the US, citizens are buying guns out of fear of other citizens, who have always been chronically disadvantaged and who in a crisis mode might be tempted to claim what they feel is rightfully theirs. The two interpretations of the common

Western neoliberal organization are evidently different. This difference will ultimately decide who lives and who dies, but in different ways: in Europe because of shortage of resources (medical and human) in result of successive disinvestment in common infrastructure in favour of more appealing sectors of the economy; in the US because of unequal access to medical care.

In any case, the situation we are currently living is a pandemic, not a war. And if one should insist on the metaphor, it is useful to think of Syria, where the corona meets an actual war that has raged for 9 years, no end in sight.

Nature meets culture

Much of the fear this pandemic is causing results from the attempt to understand a natural phenomenon in cultural terms, or rather, the inability to accept nature for what is it, and rather insisting on controlling it by the means of culture. This has been the hallmark of civilization, intensified since the industrial revolution of the late 19th century and enhanced by more recent technical and technological advances and the intricate and fast connections of a globalized world. The wish to challenge and overcome nature has been more prevalent in the Western world, but it is common worldwide. Control means going beyond nature-imposed limitations, taming and surmounting them. Humanity has done this as it developed new agricultural techniques that allowed to move from nomadic to a settled existence; when it ingeniously created housing and production techniques that made life possible in extreme inhospitable corners of the planet; when it shrank distance by inventing faster means of displacement; when it discovered means to face plagues and epidemics. Nature succumbed to culture, but only so much. And in natural catastrophes (leaving out those caused by human action, such as Australian bush fires or Mozambican floods) we are powerless in observing their consequences: the earthquake and tsunami in Southeast Asia in 2004, or the ash cloud following the eruption of an Icelandic volcano in 2010. Such catastrophes cannot be prevented or accurately foreseen and they can have devastating consequences for cultural ways of life and

for life itself. In face of these catastrophes of nature, culture is left to manage their consequences and prevent the extent of their impact when they happen again. Because they will. A plague, epidemic or pandemic is one such natural catastrophe, whose dimensions are set by the ride a virus takes on civilizations' means: the swiftness in propagation owes to omnipresent travel.

Much of the helplessness we feel results from this illusion that culture has succeeded in taming nature. The sense of control we experience more and more, as we develop means to monitor every aspect of life, clashes with the sudden experience of being at the full mercy of a phenomenon we do not know well enough to overcome successfully. And the uncertainty that looms in the future is suddenly overwhelming.

From loneliness to solitude

Among the many images that circulate to illustrate the effects of isolation and confinement, two are particularly striking. One is the sight of an empty highway, a German Autobahn crossing forests and mountains, built-in times when progress was synonymous with fast mobility, now deserted and rendered to irrelevance. There is something absurd about an empty highway.

The other image circulated on the web and showed a version of Edward Hopper's Nighthawks in the age of the coronavirus. This image is striking, as it upgrades the loneliness in Hopper's painting to a heartbreaking abandonment. In this new version, there are not even persons, subjects to the experience of loneliness; the viewer is left with that experience himself. We are not invited to see how others feel lonely, we are forced into loneliness. But is this an accurate depiction of the isolation we are confined to or of the feeling it generates?

Much has been written about the consequences of forced isolation. Some say that people who have always been alone, who have had the feeling of not belonging or being left behind in the spiralling fast-paced society, will see this feeling enhanced: an older person living alone can no longer go out and talk to a neighbour or shopkeeper; a schoolchild from a poor neighbourhood has no computer let alone Wi-Fi at home to follow school activities; a single mother working shifts at a store feels left alone after losing a job she cannot do remotely and being left to care for and homeschool her child.

Others write that exactly such situations prompt neighbours, communities and local politicians to search for solutions, all relying on the capacity for solidarity. And others focus on the sudden standstill as occasion and opportunity to reconnect with family and friends, both out of concern for others or the need to know what they think and to make sense together of an entirely new situation.

Be as it may, we are definitely calling, skyping, e-mailing much more and much longer with family and friends, while work-related calls and messages are receding to what is actually essential. Suddenly, the same media that was doomed as the cause of all malaise in human relationships is the lifeline that ensures our connectedness. And in this forced physical distance we find other ways of proximity that make us shrug at the

corona version of Hopper's Nighthawks. Its loneliness contrasts with the feeling that exudes from Hopper's paintings, which are in fact not about loneliness but rather of solitude, that experience of learning to know and to cope with oneself so as to find our own stand vis à vis reality and to cherish conviviality, once we can practice it again. Never did we have this collective chance to be alone. We were never so alone together as we are these days.

A new chance?

In a matter of a few days the coronavirus has forced us to slow down in ways we didn't think possible at the pace society was going. A few weeks ago the scenario we are currently experiencing would be at most a good stage for a dystopian novel. And yet slowing down was probably a collective yearning that we didn't deem possible, out of fear of the severe disruption it could bring. Yet we are now slowing down as a society, together. There is no one unaffected by this situation. And while it finds its parallels in history and in literary imagination (cholera afflicting Venice in Thomas Mann's novella, or the pest in Albert Camus' novel) this fast-paced pandemic is entirely new in our experience, even in the recall of the elderly, who still remember the Asian flu of 1956-58 or heard in their lifetime direct reports of the Spanish flu of 1918. What is new about the corona pandemic is how societies and governments are prepared to face it, not willing to stand and watch, helpless as the virus swipes through the globe. Regardless of the criticism of various responses, all over the world, we are forced to slow down by decree. Suddenly politics makes decisions that it kept postponing, for instance in matters of the environment. Even if in Europe the collaboration failed as each country decided on its own, in the end, states are necessarily concerted in their action out of sheer need.

Trying to make sense of the current situation and its impact in the present is seconded by the question of what the consequences of this crisis will be in the future. The surge in measures to cushion the expected hard impact of the economic paralysis gives hope for a return to a well-known normalcy. At the same time, it warns of the ineptitude to take a unique chance to reinvent an economic system based on growth at the cost of accelerated dynamism, global dependence and perpetual availability. "Forced de-acceleration" is the term proposed by German sociologist Hartmut Rosa to describe the current situation. Without yet knowing what this slowing down will make of us and of life as we know it, it could at least be seen as a chance. To question the real need of permanent availability of people, of things, of experiences, to consider the possibility of living with less, proving that also in lifeless may, in the end, be more.

Perhaps the fifth of the four Cs is not yet change, but the chance to imagine it possible.

ANA MARGARIDA ABRANTES
Assistant Professor and member of the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Human Sciences of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa

DIGITAL COSMOS*

MICHAELA CRIMMIN

When Luísa Santos first contacted me to say she was developing an application for what was to become 4Cs, we were pre-Brexit here in the UK, and pre the Remain/ Brexit camps that since 2016 have divided many friends and families. This extended to rifts between the poorer North and the wealthier South; and the richer elders from the economically struggling young. I obviously realise that this is a first world problem, but a sign of the fragility of good relations. Since 2016, the so-called United Kingdom has become significantly less 'United', more insular, and it was horrifying that the encouragement from some quarters was to be less European. So here we are now in this limbo, this transition stage, where some of us dare to hope that coronavirus will alert the naysayers to the value of a cohesive Europe. Hope also that we learn lessons about the imperative to support each other as across the UK, Europe, and the world, we share the crisis of this pandemic. Indeed, there are signs of change. At last the importance of health workers, hospital cleaners, and food truck drivers, is being realised and they are becoming fully visible. There are also signs that the value of art, and the necessity to support our artists, is registering. Within the sector this is quickly manifesting in a range of ways.

Arts Council England is making over 17 million euros of emergency funding available for those organisations and individuals who will need it during this crisis. At the other end of the scale, an independent curator friend said she had been due to do some work for the very modestly sized, not-for-profit, Matt's Gallery and, without her appealing to them, the gallery notified her to say she would be paid in advance. Wonderful, and it reflects so well on the organisations concerned. Nevertheless, there are a scary number of artists and galleries that are not so fortunate so the organisation is pulling useful information and guidance together. Perhaps we should share examples of generosity and imaginative initiatives as an inspiration and a resource to encourage further support.

In an article in the Guardian this week, British art critic Adrian Searle recommends a number of online galleries. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's Castello di Rivoli is making a wonderful selection of videos of work available under the title Digital Cosmos*. This includes Francis Alÿs's extraordinary and beautiful film 'Sandlines', images from which I have taken to go with this blog.

The ICA in London is posting a daily newsletter, a mix of poems, films, and texts. Some of the commercial

galleries are replacing closed doors with open digital ones, including Hauser & Wirth who have introduced a new section of their site: an ongoing series of personal videos from their artists and friends, with the following welcome announcement: "In these unprecedented times, it's never felt more important to stay connected. This series aims to bring us all closer together as we navigate this new reality".

Four years ago, the very idea of 4Cs — working across eight different countries, with curators of different nationalities sharing their work for a common and constructive goal — seemed a wonderful ambition. It still does and it still is. The philosopher John Gray has long contested the idea of continual societal progress and this does seem to be the case. This view aligns with Professor Appadurai's suggestion that Luísa quotes. That the 4Cs' journey is from conflict to conflict rather than from conflict to conviviality, but via conviviality, creativity and culture. Perhaps Luísa is right to add 'change' to these words. We shall see but there are positive signs and, as ever, nature and art play a crucial role.

At the moment in the UK, we are permitted out once a day for exercise. The magnolia and the cherry trees are in full blossom, and there is the occasional waft of jasmine in the air. Perhaps I have a severe case of cognitive dissonance, but as we face climate change, international conflict, and now the coronavirus tsunami — in other words illness and death for so many — I am taking pleasure not only in the jasmine but also in the online art offerings, and in the conversations with colleagues that have made them feel increasingly like friends. Tomorrow I am Skyping Noor Abuarafeh in East Jerusalem. Noor did the 4Cs residency in 2018 and since then she has had a baby called Rawi. New life.

Now I am going to make a cup of tea and return to the Castello di Rivoli's Digital Cosmos films, and have a temporary reprieve from the latest horrors by sinking into art.

Wishing you and yours good health and here's to mutual support and to art and to our care workers.

MICHAELA CRIMMIN

4Cs: From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture (RCA, UK)

* Hiperlink

<https://www.castellodirivoli.org/en/mostra/cosmodigitale/>

REFLECTIONS ON A NEW GREAT CONFINEMENT

LUÍSA LEAL DE FARIA

When Luísa Santos suggested that I might write a brief reflection on the present moment of the coronavirus pandemic, particularly on what it might mean in the way we understand and live the notion of conviviality, I was immediately receptive. I found the invitation itself a gesture of conviviality, an opportunity to join a debate, started by Luísa and taken up already by Ana Margarida Abrantes and Michaela Crimmin, on the possibility of adding a fifth c to the familiar four: change.

Well, yes. I think that this is a time of change. But instead of trying to diagnose the nature of change in the present time and to prognose its future effects, I was stricken, from the beginning of the pandemic scare in Europe, by the similarity of the measures of containment enforced now, in the 21st century, and the measures taken throughout the 17th century to contain the plague when it appeared in English or in French towns. The nature of these measures was already clearly presented in an English text by Daniel Defoe, called *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1665). But Michel Foucault, in the chapter called "Panopticism" in the book *Discipline and Punish*, made us, students of "culture", not only aware of the existence of very detailed regulations, enforced throughout the seventeenth century and beyond to secure, as much as possible, urban populations from the risk of contagion, but also of the possible consequences of such measures. The only efficient means to contain the plague was confinement, or the quarantine. Then as now. And some sentences by Foucault chillingly recall contemporary experiences: "[The city] is a segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment." Or, this: "The registration of the pathological must be constantly centralized. The relation of each individual to his disease and to his death passes through the representatives of power, the registration they make of it, the decisions they take on it." The Foucaultian interpretation of the impact

of these measures concerns the idea of surveillance as the most efficient means of social control. The direct observations of Daniel Defoe refer also to strict means of control put in place in the city of London at the time of the plague, and to an entire hierarchy of people dedicated to examine, assess, treat, decide, on issues of life and death for the people and families struck by the disease: Watchmen, Searchers, Chirurgeons, Nurse-keepers. For Foucault, the 17th centuries measures put in place to contain the spread of the disease created a new model of disciplinary project, one which brings together confinement and strict organization and surveillance. This is the project metaphorically represented by Bentham's Panoptical prison and by post-Orwellian nightmares of totalitarian societies.

There is that, of course. But there is also this anguishing verification that, when faced with an epidemic for which no cure is on sight, we need to resort to the ancient pre-scientific means of containment: confinement, quarantine. That is: separation, isolation. The huge difference, in my view, is that we can now take the dystopian means of surveillance, used for behavioural control, as tools for conviviality. The mediatic culture we live in, supported by individual creativity, will certainly be one of the decisive instruments that will bring us out of this crisis of uncertainty and fear. Conviviality will, most probably, change through renewed uses of these means: at a very basic level, the pandemic has made us all "excluded". So, we need to reinvent ways of being in society. And I think we are already seeing signs of very creative ways of coming together without breaking the imposed separation.

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TESTS / TRIALS OF TIME AND NORMALCY

MONIKA KALINAUSKAITĖ

Things were supposed to happen. There were weeks and days ahead punctuated by deadlines and assignments, various processes which would have to be resolved in due time. Even when time became a strange notion, the “due” part seemed to stick around — remnants of normalcy contained in the notion of deadline.

My position at Nida Art Colony requires me to split my time between its actual location in Nida and the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, where Vilnius Academy of Arts, NAC’s “mother” institution is located. Our office there is housed in the historical building of the Academy, a former monastery, and navigating its vaulted corridors often feels like moving through a fortress. Although the Academy strives to maintain its positions in the current education and arts network, there is something inaccessible to time in its old corridors, something that makes you feel sheltered by walls that reality cannot penetrate.

I had been sick with a sudden but not Covid-related cold a week before the work from home order was issued and the country went into quarantine mode. It was a strange transition. The corridors and offices of the Academy emptied — the sudden influx of reality pushed the bodies out and plugged them into a different working interface. A strange aspect of an extreme situation is that things do not stop happening as they were supposed to, but seemingly impossible solutions are implemented on the spot. Like any public institution in the country, VAA has for years been governed by bureaucratic practices enforced strictly through paper: signatures, visas, stamps and other official touches. I believe many cultural workers

have experienced the paradox of working on projects and initiatives promoting fluidity, open-endedness and eco-consciousness while adhering to a rigid, slow and counterintuitive administrative system. The sudden streamlining of these seemingly monolithic operations provided a surprising amount of hope in an otherwise bleak period. Possibly because it came as definite proof: there is a need to rethink how we do things which need to be done.

There was also a hit of the financial reality catching up with the situation. Being reliant on bookings in a large part, the NAC instantly felt the weight of incoming cancellations. It was not, however, just the material aspect of such situations. Even though I was not in Nida for the quarantine period, I felt a brief pang of panic imagining our house suddenly emptied of its usual activities: shared dinners in communal kitchens, late night conversations with residents, guests and colleagues in which we could suddenly be connected in the weirdest and most unexpected ways, exhibitions, screenings and library talks, half of the rooms being off limits and abandoned. It felt peculiar to carry on as normal, processing invoices and managing projects which could have changed or collapsed at any moment. Eventually, as the situation subsided, the house filled up with remote workers and the expected changes proved to be more flexible rather than radical. I learned to appreciate the approach we took and my colleagues’ efforts to maintain it. I felt sincerely happy that we did not rush any programming or administrative decisions in an already

chaotic time, opting instead to explore what each of us can do on the spot and what options we have for an uninterrupted future.

With the risk of sounding sentimental, it was only during this difficult period that I, one of the newer members of the team, truly appreciated the extraordinary nature of the NAC. I was working in and observing an institution which was seemingly very vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic, but also very flexible and focused while navigating it. Remoteness and distance are notions which have very pronounced, yet very fluid meanings in Nida Art Colony and the Curonian Spit as a whole. They create durable paradoxes: such as that the institution, seemingly defined by and dependent on its residency schedule, can actually function well without the rapid turnover and intensive programming that would normally define such a platform; that slowness and concentration, which have been one of the key tenets of our functioning are the phenomena that withstand the tests of time and normalcy. It was not just that we did not stop working. We did not stop sheltering, imagining, planting and researching, and even had people who wanted to do that with us. I felt like the NAC provided me with assurance that even when radical change that kept our minds puzzled throughout this time was not to realistically happen now or in close future, there seems to be space for curious shifts that would leave us all affected — as long as there is enough effort and determination focused in one place.

However, reality still dwells in the empty halls and

corridors of VAA. Whether as individuals or as institutions, we still have a lot to absorb, a lot to reconsider once the compensations and stimulus packages run out. I believe we can only make room for genuine hope upon realistically assessing how powerful and capable we really are in the face of crisis — or how capable the current mechanisms of functioning allow us to be. Maybe we cannot actually contribute or change much? Maybe we face crises already weakened by the conditions for our existence, and can barely offer anything beyond words of support and compassion? And maybe our curious shifts are simply not enough in a time when radical change seems desperately needed?

Difficult questions do not have easy answers, but they also do not have due dates for resolution. I think one thing to take away from the pandemic and its lessons is that we do have time, in spite of how much of it we’ve been losing in our procedures, jet lags, commutes and ceremonies. Time is a privilege that we must use to plan and implement ways on how to be different or better than we were. Even if we have actually moved on — or maybe especially so — while we are still somewhat grieving for things that were supposed to happen.

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4 + 4 PROPOSALS FOR MAKING SENSE OF TODAY'S CONVIVIAL CULTURES

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www.4cs-conflict-conviviality.eu



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through Creativity and Culture

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