

PETER MEEKER COLLECTION

WORKS FROM 1982 – 2023

IGNÁCIO ABALLI
PAWEŁ ALTHAMER
AUGUSTO ALVES DA SILVA
MIROSŁAW BAŁKA
GERARDO BURMESTER
CABRITA
PEDRO CALAPEZ
PEDRO CASQUEIRO
RUI CHAFES
JOSÉ PEDRO CROFT
PEPE ESPALIÚ
ANGELA FERREIRA
ANA JOTTA
JORGE MOLDER
JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE
PAULO NOZOLINO
RUI SANCHES
JULIÃO SARMENTO
WILHELM SASNAL
SUSANA SOLANO
MONIKA SOSNOWSKA
FRANCISCO TROPA
FRANZ WEST

Curated by Barbara Piwowska and João Silvério

"When in doubt, go nomad", says Ana Jotta in one of the twelve drawings made over twelve months from 2019–2020. These were displayed in an outdoor vitrine (a noticeboard looking like a monitor) by the entrance to Ampersand space in Lisbon. Each drawing represents the 13th day of every month, and in turn, the sequence of twelve became one work of art: *Peau d'Ana*. Jotta's solo show *Inventória* (curated by Barbara Piwowska), which occupied both the house and the garage, inaugurated Casa São Roque – Centro de Arte in 2019. Today, marking the center's 5th anniversary, *Peau d'Ana* appears in the former garage alongside the artist's new site-specific intervention.

The history of Peter Meeker's (Pedro Álvares Ribeiro's) collection dates back to the 1980's and is still ongoing. Thus exhibition *Peter Meeker Collection: Works from 1982 – 2023* celebrates the 5th anniversary of Casa São Roque, as well as most recent acquisitions of the works by Jean-Luc Moulène, Pedro Casqueiro, and Ana Jotta.

It presents selection from international art collection, which includes 40 artists and over 600 artworks. Based on the long term friendships and dedication to the collected artists, in many cases it attained extensive representations of their oeuvres and artistic series, which nowadays have become canonical. Works of Portuguese, Polish and Spanish artists are an important nucleus, which reflects collector's long term stays and life shared between three countries, as well as close relationships developed within the four cities: Porto, Warsaw, Lisbon, Madrid.

This is the third group presentation of Peter Meeker's collection, after 2022 site-specific *Sala de Jogos* in historical ballroom of the Club "O'Elvas" as part of the *15 Anos de MACE* in Elvas (curated by Barbara Piwowska), and the more recent *Arte em São Bento* programme at the Prime Minister's Residence in Palacete São Bento in Lisbon (curated by João Silverio). *Peter Meeker Collection: Works from 1982 – 2023* at Casa São Roque, Porto derives from these two exhibitions and was prepared jointly by Barbara Piwowska and João Silverio. It focuses on generations of artists who grew up in countries which regained freedom after repressive political regimes, and who share existential positions: Polish ones reflecting transformation after 1989, and Portuguese reflecting modernization after 1974 revolution.

Paweł Althamer's *Fairy Tale* (1994–2004) features figures-puppets of parents dressed in second hand clothes, dancing in a circle holding their wire hands, while waiting for their children to be picked up from the art class in Warsaw. This installation – remodeled, destroyed and recreated several times – addresses the action and the video *Dancers* in which Althamer, known from his "social sculptures", practices of the "open form" and art courses for marginalized groups, invited collaborators met in a homeless shelter to practice circular ritual dance.

It is juxtaposed with a 1998 choreographic video by **Ângela Ferreira** filmed at the Estádio Nacional de Portugal – a public commission of the Estado Novo inaugurated in 1944 by António de Oliveira Salazar, in which female figure dressed in a military uniform is doing exercise similar to a dance, reminiscent of the major events dedicated to sport, especially gymnastics, an educational discipline chosen by the regime's propaganda. The uniform is a "memory holder" of the Colonial War (Angolan, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambican War of Independence) – a central theme interrogated in Ferreira's work.

The choreography of serving was studied by **Jorge Molder** in his photographic series *Waiters* (1986) in which he captured figures of waiters' and their movements in café Nicola in Lisbon. Blurred into surrealistic compositions and unreadable gestures, these photographs are also rare examples in his oeuvre: they do not depict author's self-representations, Molder's own face and body, but through the mirrors and the distortion of the image they reveal his bodily voyeuristic method.

Body is also present in a leather relief by **Gerardo Burmester** from the series *Maria* (1989), "frame-objects" he has been working on at that time. Emerging from his performative and painterly practices, examination of the condition of the painting and its subject, they resulted transition into three-dimensional pictorial spaces, into objectual that incorporated the wooden frame of the work.

The matters of the skin and body are crucial for the small, haptic and "manipulative" series of the perverse leather sculptures *Santos* (1988) by **Pepe Espaliu**, but also for the nearby displayed brittle white-gray object by **Franz West**. Made of plaster, cardboard and gauze, it is possibly one of the 1980s *Adaptives* (*Paßstücke*) – interactive object of the peculiar status between an artwork and prosthesis. Standing on a shelf of the neoprene fireplace, on which originally Napoleon Bonaparte's bust was placed – it looks like a bandaged limb.

Espaliu's historical *Carrying* series (1992) is derived from his workshops and public actions in San Sebastian and Madrid, conceived by him as a "social sculpture", in which people were carrying him sitting on their arms, manifesting the fragility of his body infected by AIDS. Sculptural versions of "carrying" were opposite: just one year before he passed away in 1993, they were cast and forged in iron as strong constructions: solid sticks-handles connected with the imaginary parts of the corpus or a sedan-chair.

Early works of **Miroslaw Bałka**, Polish artist having strong ties with Spain, are displayed in dialogue with *Carrying. Duerme bien, Luis* (2001) is an installation-homage to Bałka's friend, a Catalan painter Lluís Claramunt. They consist of typical, modest and commemorative materials used by Bałka. A plywood shroud is covered with a soap, evidence of washing the body and an absence of the figure. It is matched with a toy-bed from the times of artist's childhood, too small to accommodate the body – it addresses the discomfort of the dreams after death. *Buen Libro Vacio* (1999) is an iron plate mounted on construction poles. It looks like an open book which collects an absent liquid (or knowledge) in the attached can, like notches are cut into trees to channel the resin into a container.

The eschatological view is shared by **Rui Chafes**, who treats life as a burning process. Many of his sculptures represent missing people, absent body and discomfort with life, including series *Incêndio (Burning)* from 2016. They are analogical to the earlier serial works such as *Lessons of Darkness (Lições de Trevas)* from 2002, which are of human measures, and initially existed in bigger groups in the first installations, resembling an army of soldiers or group of believers.

Paulo Nozolino, known from his existential series of photographs reflecting his long serial travels around the world, capturing changing societies (especially in 1989–1996) is present through two different ways of looking into the past. *Regard sur le Musée Fenaille / avant travaux* (1993) is series made in the historical-archeological museum located in a private mansion of the collector Maurice Fenaille in Rodez. It depicts the museum before its renovation, in which display units, paintings and sculptures have a second unofficial quiet life, are put aside, not being yet "exhibited". One of the *Suspiros de chumbo* (1997) depicts tombstones crosses in a Venetian cemetery and references *Venice Preserv'd (A Salvação de Veneza)* by Thomas Otway, a political play from the period of the British Restoration.

Francisco Tropa uses a wide index of references to the collective imagination. His viewer is subject to a disruptive movement of perception that triggers a network of connections, between the enigma and the apparently fictional narrative. *O olho vigilante* (2001) references directly Jacques Callot's 1628 etching *The Vigilant Eye* from the *Lux claustrii* series. It is an interesting redaction of the biblical iconography of a Good Shepard, depicting one stick with a watching eye in a bucolic landscape with some animals and no human. Instead of one stick, Tropa made two in bronze and juxtaposed them with a tautological photography. The most recent object is *Maça* from 2019, a sculptural *trompe l'oeil* made in bronze and painted, and playfully kept hanging, suspending fall down from the tree or being picked up from it, thus suspending the sin of Adam and Eve. It is paired with the very little hanging object *Lead* (2008) by Monika Sosnowska, a door handle with the imprint of the feast and fingers, made of iron and lead.

Two untitled wooden sculptures by **Rui Sanches** (2000) establish multiple spatial relationships: one between the scale and proportion, the second between the two works, and the third one resulting in experience of corporeality of the spectator's body and time. The last element is present when we are observing the stratified construction of the sculptures that consist of overlapping wooden sheets, defining the shape of each of the works. In this sense, the idea of time approaches the practice of drawing, as a method, which allows us to think about the almost tactile corporeality of each of the sculptures, incorporating the body and surrounding architecture.

Susana Solano, a Catalan sculptor, has remained in close dialogue with Spanish and Portuguese artists for many years. At Casa São Roque, her solid bronze object of the reduced size is displayed, unusual in comparison to the large scale of her work. By positioning the body (or its absence), it corresponds with sculptures of Bałka, Espaliu, West and Sanches. It resembles a container that reveals itself between what is inside and what is outside, like the body that symbolizes its presence precisely by revealing its "interior", apparently empty.

Monika Sosnowska's works are presented in dialogue with José Pedro Croft and the constructivist legacy. An early sketch for a sculpture and an analogical model for the large-scale installation *Bon Voyage* (2000) resemble Katarzyna Kobro's spatial compositions or De Stijl's architectural models. Prepared in Sosnowska's studio at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, the prototype was designed to be placed inside the large final structure, on the floor, to introduce the aspect of scale. The large-scale work was a hybrid composition inviting immersion in the colourful, "spatial painting".

Selection of works by **José Pedro Croft** focuses on the notion of scale and revisits several periods of his work, including group of important sculptures made of different materials: painted bronze, wood, metal, mirror, plaster (1988–1997), architectural-abstract prints of different formats (1999), or constructivist-architectonic relief from 2004. The 1997 Untitled sculpture stays on tin "limbs" and challenges our body in the space as it is installed, causing a feeling of imbalance, in the relationship of tension with the architecture, which is essential vocabulary of Croft.

El rojo en el Periodico and *El Verde en el Periodico* (2012) by **Ignasi Aballi** are good examples of his artistic process, in this case, consisting of fragments of inkjet prints on photographic paper. Aballi works with different media such as painting, objects, artists' books, photography, film and video, and sometimes in large-format installations. Time, memory, or its absence, and thus the perception of a possible presence, comes from a practice of collecting different elements of everyday life, organized in an atlas of inventories and classifications – from the fictional narrative to the evocative presence of the material.

Pedro Casqueiro's untitled paintings from 1985 mark the beginning of the collection. In these acrylics, compositions are fragmented and reveal several other compositions within the paintings, as if other layers of images, foreground and background, figurative and abstract, were continually accumulated, exceeding the flat surfaces of the canvases through the collages of other small paintings. In the same room, addressed is also a very recent painting (and recent acquisition) of Casqueiro: *Mauer* from 2023. Its composition is equally fragmented, but the geometric patterns and grid elements denote a very particular attention to drawing – almost illusionistic, flat surface. This set of three works is an anthological note on the Casqueiro's oeuvre.

In **Pedro Calapez's** drawings from the same period (1984 and 1985) we can recognize fictional architecture with a classical matrix, which simultaneously look like houses, monuments or tumulus. Made with very fast, expressionistic and physical gesture of hundreds of oil pastels lines, they correspond with palette of his paintings, and are typical of his work from that decade.

Arroios, 25 Março 82 by **Julião Sarmento** (1982) is the earliest work in the collection. It is a painting-collage that belongs to the artists' vast repertoire of personal and autobiographical references. It commemorates his (adopted) grandfather's death and depicts defragmentation of such an experience, composed of four painted image-fragments. The large central one on the upper part of the work shows body in a Wake (on Viewing) with surrounding prayers, a traditional ritual before the funeral. Beneath the image is an inscription, a practice that Sarmento developed throughout his entire work. At the bottom, drawings appear as fragments of the memory of those close to him, as data for the further narratives that must be developed and continued by the viewer.

It is paired with **Wilhelm Sasnal's** untitled oil painting, typical of the 2000s – a mysterious snapshot of the everyday life, a Polish landscape with blocks of flats, plowed fields, or smoke. His language derived from storyboards, comic books and photographic images, and remains important voice of the generation of the 1970s, growing up during the transformation of the political system after 1989. This synthetical city view depicts his hometown Tarnów and was painted after photograph from the 1970s depicting building site of a new residential area near his parents' house. Sasnal's practice includes also filming, and was always socially engaged, criticizing manifestations of mass culture, using a pastiche as its way of depicting.

Selection of the early works of **Pedro Cabrita Reis** from the 1980s and 1990s converses with Mirosław Bałka, Francisco Tropa and Julião Sarmento. It includes *Pinturas Negras* (1986 and 1998), as well as sculptures and installations: *Agnus Dei* (1989), *Um quarto dentro da parede* (1989), *A casa do Céu* (1990). These sculptures, from small scale to the scale of the human body, are strongly symbolic and almost religious, residing between memory and oblivion, between the archetype and the word. They are like sublimated environments, which are revealed by the materials and manufacturing process.

Augusto Alves da Silva is well known from his documentary language and sociological series in which he pokes stereotypes of both: the photography and the society. The photograph from *CNB* series (2001) corresponds with his documentary gestures of close up – taking focus on a detail: the mysterious abstract red cross, which appears to be a mark taped on the stage for a dancer of the *Companhia Nacional de Bailado*, a mark of the absent body.

Small objects by **Ana Jotta** are displayed as footnotes to the collection's display. Included is also her self-referential trademark *J.*, made in polished bronze as a replica of a walking cane. Also, here the authorship is to be questioned, thus the letter "J" constitutes a derisory work, transgressing models and modes of representation displaced from its context. *Mother (A mãe)* in shape of the catholic cross made of the boxes of face creams "La Mer" wrapped into black gaffer tape, and *Father (O pai)* resembling white feast made of cardboard and garbage bags – are back to the same wall, referencing first inaugural exhibition at Casa São Roque: Jotta's *Inventória*.

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