

Curating contemporary art and the critique to lusophonie¹

Inês Costa Dias

Curating Contemporary Art Department, Royal College of Art, London
ines.costa-dias@network.rca.ac.uk

Introduction

Since the 1990s we have witnessed an increasing interest, from the Portuguese humanities and social sciences, in postcolonial Portuguese issues². Can we find a similar movement in Portuguese contemporary art practices and curating? Do we see a comparable interest from the art world in Portuguese postcolonial context? Are we in the presence of a questioning of the ideas of nation and its history? Or in the process of considering other narratives from subaltern and marginal subjects of society, which could work as a starting point towards the reflection/reformulation of national identity?

I will try to answer to these questions by analysing some contemporary art exhibitions which focused on the lusophone geographical space, by curators who are Portuguese or based in Portugal, and who have built their curatorial discourse upon a reflection on the postcolonial. The exhibitions are *Trading Images* (1998), *Spanning an Entire Ocean* (2000) and *Replica and Rebellion: Artists from Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde and Mozambique* (2006).

The presence, in these exhibitions, of artists from Portugal, Brazil, and/or Lusophone Africa, brings into question the concept of lusophonie, understood as a community of language and culture, since this concept is apparently the primary justification for juxtaposing artists with such different national origins and cultural backgrounds. Of particular interest is that the inevitable presence of the idea of lusophonie in such a selection

¹This paper is part of my ongoing research at the Royal College of Art, Curating Contemporary Art Department, London, which is entitled “*Lusophone contemporary art – a postcolonial perspective*” and is funded by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia. This research follows my MA dissertation in Curatorial Studies at FBAUL/FCG, entitled “DIAS.POR.AQUI. Projecto para uma Exposição”, 2006.

² Of which some examples are: Alfredo Margarido, Eduardo Lourenço, Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Miguel Vale de Almeida.

of artists doesn't necessarily mean that lusophonie is being glorified in its official meaning, but that it may mean its opposite - the contra-glorification of that discourse. It is this contra-discourse, and its interrelation with a critique of the idea of nation and history, which I think is entangled in it, that forms the basic enquiry of this essay - a critical approach to lusophonie through curating contemporary art.

Though this perspective is insufficient to yield a complete critical overview of the lusophone concept, which is spread over and diluted through various discursive areas in the contemporary Portuguese world, it proposes an initial approach to an institutional and curatorial critique of the Portuguese postcolonial, and thus builds on the groundbreaking work of authors such as Alfredo Margarido³, Eduardo Lourenço⁴, Boaventura Sousa Santos⁵, Miguel Vale de Almeida⁶ and Manuela Ribeiro Sanches⁷.

³ Alfredo Margarido speaks about lusophonie as a racist and neo-colonialist project, that is based in myths and fictions. He analyses the Portuguese colonialist symbolical and cultural domination, to see how lusophonie is its continuation. Inheriting the colonialist understanding of society, lusophonie does not have into account the autonomy of postcolonial and globalised societies, and proposes/imposes an history and language (agents of domination), thus refusing the 'other' an autonomous identity (2000: 72). From Margarido's point of view, lusophonie is a project that should be revised and refused (2000: 15).

⁴ Eduardo Lourenço works on a "historical psycho-analyses" of the Portuguese politics of identity - through a critique to the Portuguese "imagologia" (1978: 14), which constitutes the unrealistic basis of the Portuguese national and cultural identity. Lusophonie is thus seen as a discourse based in fictions, which are not based in a historical understanding of the past. He finds that the only possible way for Portugal to meet its 'real' identity, would be through a confrontation with the other - exercise of decentralisation that has been declined for the glorification of a fictional historical hegemony (1978: 201).

⁵ Boaventura de Sousa Santos analyses the Portuguese official cultural/national identity, through modernity/colonialism and contemporaneity/Europeanisation. He defines Portugal as a semi-peripheral country and nation in the worldwide economical and political network. Portugal is in a frontier position between continents - Africa, Brazil/America and Europe -, between economical centres and peripheries of the world, thus evoking Portugal as having an hybrid/subaltern position.

⁶ Miguel Vale de Almeida works on an analytical understanding of the Portuguese national identity, which he basis on a postcolonial theoretical framework. For him the colonial history has a great impact on the present, and so it is a key factor to understand how today, in a postcolonial society, Portugal deals with multiculturalism. It is in this context that Vale de Almeida analyses/historicizes the concept of lusophonie, giving an immense emphasis on the concept of 'luso-tropicalismo' as the basis of the Portuguese national representation. Vale de Almeida pays also some attention to the ambiguities of Portugal's identity, which have to deal on one side with the lusophone/Atlantic politics and on the other with the European one. That is a fundamental characteristic of

Lusophonie

Lusophonie constitutes a post-colonial/contemporary Portuguese symbolic and geo-political construction⁸, in which the idea of empire is given continuity and glorification, through a privileged relationship between ex-colonies and ex-coloniser, on the basis of language, culture and history.

Its genealogy can be traced to the rather contested⁹ and complex idea of “luso-tropicalismo”, as defined by Gilberto Freyre¹⁰, and appropriated by the Portuguese Estado Novo in the 1950s. This idea defined Portugal as a pluricontinental and pluricultural nation, which was open to transcultural experiences and which had implemented a “positive colonialism” defined by humanitarianism and miscegenation.

Lusophonie’s conceptualisation as a symbolical and political enterprise was developed during the 1990s, following Portugal’s entry into the European Union (1986). The lusophonie discourse appeared in this context as a re-enactment of luso-tropicalismo (Vale de Almeida, 2000: 161-162), as a strategic and symbolic move to affirm Portugal’s specific position in Europe, as a mediator between continents (Africa and Europe, South America and Europe), and as a country in-between the Atlantic and Europe. We can accordingly define lusophonie as an identity conundrum - a conceptual context of contested discourses.

Portugal, to situate itself between the Atlantic and Europe; thus he proposes two operational concepts to a local theoretical postcolonial analyses of Portugal - “Atlântico Pardo” (2002: 33) and “Post-luso-tropicalismo” (2000: 163).

⁷ Manuela Ribeiro Sanches has been working on the understanding of the Portuguese postcolonial locality; through a study and revision of the postcolonial studies/concepts, its international academical landmarks and its practice in Portugal. She has also been developing an interesting analytic/interpretative intersection between art (literature, fine arts, music) as representation and cultural practice, and postcolonial studies.

⁸ In its official definition, lusophonie is a community of language represented by CPLP - Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa.

⁹ Luso-tropicalismo is still a key-concept on Brazilian and Portuguese debates about national and cultural identity. See Peter Fry (2005) and Michael Hanchard (1999) on the Brazilian context; and Miguel Vale de Almeida (2000, 2002) and Cláudia Castelo (1998) on the Portuguese context.

¹⁰ Luso-tropicalismo, a theory formulated by Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987), was already present in his work *Casa Grande & Senzala* (1933), but only in 1940 was formulated as a theory, in the book *O mundo que o português criou. Aspectos das relações sociais e de cultura com Portugal e as colónias portuguesas* (Rio de Janeiro, 1942). Between the late 1950s and the early 60s that theory became central to the colonial politics of the portuguese “Estado Novo” (1933-1974).

Although critical and contested, lusophonie shows itself today as an interesting concept in its wider significance, not only as a description of a community of language and shared colonial history, but as a concept that invokes the idea of Portugal as a nation, its identity and history as a country, and the imaginary that involves its relation with the world. It can be characterised as a neo-imperialistic project in its intentions and symbologies, as pursuing a “lusocentric”/eurocentric/linear understanding of history, culture and cultural contacts.

As a concept, lusophonie is today widespread in Portuguese society. It is used in a decontextualised way, and in a plurality of situations, thus becoming symbolically dangerous, as a producer of a multicultural imperialistic common national felling.

Its critique is thus urgent, and should be understood as a first step towards a renovation of Portuguese cultural and identity representation – thus a clear political process. It is important to consider the ramifications of this analytical exercise, which will also be addressing concepts such as nation, history, diaspora, representation, globalisation and multiculturalism¹¹. These conceptual ramifications clearly demonstrate the postcolonial theoretical significance of such a critique.

In conjunction with a critique/contestation of lusophonie, we should not forget the positive possibilities of lusophonie as an identity project. That positive side comes with a constant reflection on cultural diversity within a similar language; which is essential to decentralise the Portuguese idea of hegemonic culture, so negative to its overcoming of the colonial past and for the understanding of its contemporary postcolonial, globalised and European present. Only after that decentralisation, Eduardo Lourenço continues, can a positive lusophone community be built, out of originality and not out of any particular national ego. To achieve that decentralisation, lusophonie should leave its Portuguese nest, and find new paths and interpretations in other lusophone centres. (2004: 188-189)

¹¹Two facts can help to think about this urgent reflection on the linearity of lusophonie: Mozambique is both a member of the CPLP and the Commonwealth, and in Cape Verde there is a debate about turning the Cape Verde crioulo into its official language. These examples help us see multiple and transnational interrelations between each of the countries mentioned and histories other than the Portuguese and lusophone one. So they can be thought as a basis for a deconstruction of the linear structure of lusophonie, and for considering national identity as a dense/dynamic building, that finds no answer to its understanding on the lusophone idealisation.

The strategy of decentralising, as suggested by Lourenço, finds an echo in the exhibitions analysed here. The selection of artists, the venues chosen, and the curatorial concepts in these exhibitions, move along the direction proposed by Lourenço, of a discursive decentralisation (“deportugalisation”) of the lusophone postcolonial. In doing so, they envisage a double/causal exercise of both contra-glorification of lusophonie, and its redefinition as a “positive” dynamic and heterogeneous entity.

Exhibitions

Trading Images (1998), *Spanning an Entire Ocean* (2000) and *Replica and Rebellion: Artists from Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde and Mozambique* (2006) were contemporary art exhibitions based on a curatorial reflection on the interrelation between the postcolonial theory, the Portuguese/lusophone postcolonial and contemporary art. I believe them to be part of a group of curatorial experiences which have taken place with no regularity or intensity, since the 1990s in the lusophone context, with an interest in exploring the idea of the postcolonial through art and curating¹².

This group of exhibitions is also characterized by its presence in the local contemporary art systems, indicating its ‘acceptance’ and integration into an art world which is usually seen as more concerned with market integration and the internationalisation of local art practices. Nevertheless they have often had a bad reception from the public and specialised press and critics, which I interpret as signs of cultural conservatism and a lack of cultural and social self-critique of a postcolonial nature.

All three exhibitions were of an institutional nature, having been produced by Portuguese official and political institutions; and having spoken about, against, and in contrast or complement to, the official meaning of lusophonie, thus presenting a critique of it, and of the Portuguese postcolonial symbolic project. In two of the shows (2000 and 2006), we can find a curatorial context of a paradoxical nature, in which institutional exhibitions, built upon and about official paradigms of

¹² Other exhibitions are: *Além da Taprobana* (1995), *Mistura + Confronto* (2001), *Mais a Sul* (Culturgest, 2004), *Vista Parcial* (2005), *Travel* (2005), *Troca de Olhares* (2007), *Lisboa-Luanda-Maputo* (2007), São Tomé Biennial (since 1995) and Triennial of Luanda (2006). Some individual exhibitions of Portuguese, Brazilian and African artists, shown in Portuguese commercial galleries and art institutions, should also be considered.

identity and culture, end by building the critique of the discourse framework that gives them the possibility of being held – institutional critique.

It is my thought and hypothesis that these curatorial projects are critical approaches to lusophonie, in both direct and indirect ways. By privileging postcolonial concepts such as diaspora, migration, contact zone, global/local, identity, marginal communities, etc., these exhibitions, because they all have the specificity of being centred on Portugal (curator and/or artists and venue), achieve a critical perspective, and alternatives, to the official idea of lusophonie.

Though a detailed critique of these exhibitions is not the subject of this article, I am critical of some of the curatorial decisions that they present. This is an issue that I will develop at another opportunity, which will be based on the idea of a “multiculturalist model” of curating the postcolonial in contemporary art exhibitions. There is a generalised “multicultural” approach to the postcolonial in curating, where society is thought to be constituted by different and isolated ethnic/cultural groups; and where the postcolonial in contemporary art is measured by the ethnicity/national origin of the artists presented. As José António Fernandes Dias writes:

Art and theory from outside the euro-american axis are not necessarily postcolonial, as for the prefix “post-” is the sign, not of a chronological and historical division, but instead of a critique of the hierarchical structures of colonial power. That doesn't always happen. (Free translation, Fernandes Dias, 2006: 323)

If, as he suggests, not everything about the Other is postcolonial, so it is questionable to label all exhibitions around non-western art or thematic as curating the postcolonial.

I'm not interested, at this particular moment, in doing a profound analysis of the results of the shows, and their impact on the more general or specialised public; or even in doing a detailed critique of the curatorial ideas that I here present. My interest is on an analytical reading of the sources (catalogues of the exhibitions) and on their immediate impact on structures of thought, which are considered pillars of society – lusophonie, national and cultural identity.

Trading Images**Pavilhão Branco, Museu da Cidade, Lisbon, 1998**

In 1998 Lisbon hosted the *World Exhibition*, under the title “The Oceans, a Heritage for the Future”. At the same time, and also in Lisbon, the cycle of contemporary art exhibitions called *Trading Images* took place. It was a project curated by Isabel Carlos and produced by both the Institute for Contemporary Art and the Lisbon City Council.

The first was an international exhibition of industry, cultural and natural patrimonies, organized into national and thematic pavilions, and circumscribed by the idea of “Ocean”, referring to one of the main symbols upon which the Portuguese identity is built upon, the Discoveries. It was a mega event, presenting on a daily basis an immense and multidisciplinary cultural programme. This was a national, political and governmental project, the implicit goal of which was to enforce the idea of Portugal as a global and capable nation.

Trading Images appeared as an alternative way of debating the idea of nation and globalism, based on postcolonial and multicultural concepts. As Isabel Carlos pointed out in the catalogue for Adriana Varejão’s exhibition: “The questions we wish to raise have been associated with concepts such as multiculturalism, colonialism, post-colonialism, and decolonisation.” (Carlos, 1998: 10)

Under these concepts, four exhibitions were presented: “Adriana Varejão”, “Pinturas Aeropostais. Eugénio Dittborn”, “Memórias Íntimas Marcas” and “Narelle Jubelin. ECRU”. In a national context characterised by segregationist ways of dealing with cultural difference, accompanied by *amnesia* towards the colonial past, Carlos proposed a programme where colonialism would be thought through concepts such as identity, market and change/reciprocity (Carlos, 1998: 14).

Adriana Varejão

Images: © Direcção-Geral das Artes ¹³

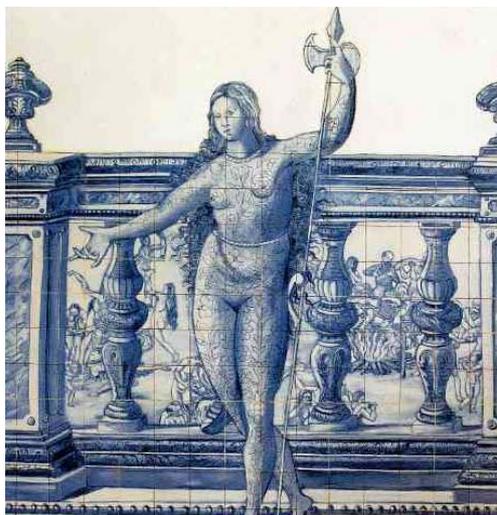


Figura de Convite, 1997
Oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm
Private collection, Miami



Irezumi com Padrão de Cerâmica, 1997
Oil on canvas and animal skin, 200 x 200 cm
Galeria Soledad Lorenzo, Madrid

¹³ Due to the inexistence of an official photographic record of this exhibition, I decided to scan images from the show's catalogue; the images here shown are thus reproductions of artworks presented in Lisbon, or views of the presentation of these works in other venues. The images that follow are not views from the show in Lisbon.

ARQUIVOS da MEMÓRIA

Antropologia, Arte e Imagem | N^os. 5-6 (Nova Série) | 2009
Centro de Estudos de Etnologia Portuguesa



Filho Bastardo II, 1997
Oil on wood, 100 x 140 x 10 cm
Francisco Capelo's collection, Lisbon

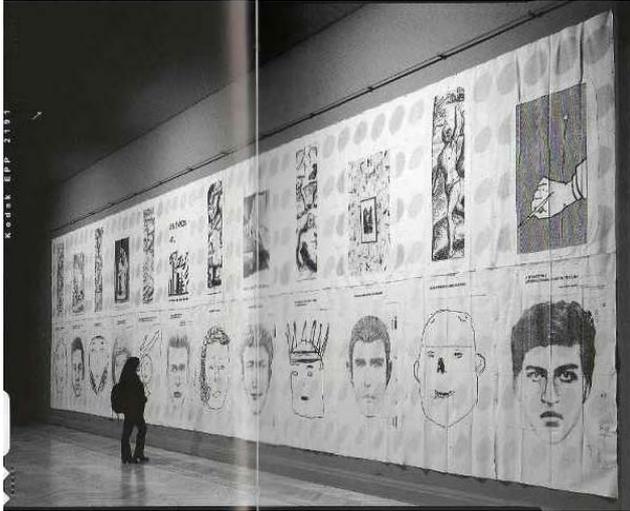


Testemunhas Oculares X, Y e Z, 1997
Oil on canvas, porcelain, photography, silver, crystal and iron, 85 x 70 cm (each canvas),
16 x 88 x 25 cm (each object)
Galeria Soledad Lorenzo, Madrid

Adriana Varejão is a Brazilian artist with an international career. Her work has been based on ideas of representation and mimesis. She is interested in the medium of painting, and also in the ‘symbolic density’ of images (Herkenhoff, 1998: 18). Some of the artworks shown in Lisbon, “Filho Bastardo II” (1997), “Testemunhas Oculares X, Y e Z” (1997) and “Figura de Convite” (1997) deal expressively with the Brazilian colonial experience, and propose a postcolonial interpretation and reading/critique of history and Brazilian identity. Isabel Carlos presents Varejão’s work as a portrait of civilization clash and trauma (1998: 16); and Paulo Herkenhoff mentions the synchronic construction upon which her work builds, full of different cultural, historical and artistic references that find, in her work's internal logic, a way to be unified (1998: 19). The appropriations of historical and cultural references (such as Portuguese white and blue tiles or the Japanese Ikezumi tattoos), end by subverting the original meanings of what has been appropriated, in a move that is very postcolonial. The proposal of revising histories and symbols is in itself a very political programme. Varejão’s work subverts the linearity of culture, by disrupting the representation model of history and national/subaltern identity, thus opening them to be rewritten from an Other’s/marginal point of view.

Pinturas Aeropostales. Eugenio Dittborn.

Imagens: © Direcção-Geral das Artes¹⁴



Pintura Aeropostal N.º 112, La Cocina y la Guerra, 1994

Pintura, Hilván y Fotoserigrafia sobre 12 Paños de Algodón, 210 x 1680 cm

Itinerario: Santiago de Chile 94 – Madrid 94/95 – Nueva York 97 – Santiago de Chile 98 – Lisboa 98



Pintura Aeropostal N.º 120, La XX Historia del Rostro (el Camino de Jope), 1997

Pintura, Bordado, Satén, Hilván y Fotoserigrafia sobre 6 Paños de Loneta Duck, 210 x 814 cm

Itinerario: Santiago de Chile 97 – México D.F. 97 – Santiago de Chile 98 – Lisboa 98

¹⁴ Due to the inexistence of an official photographic record of this exhibition, I decided to scan images from the show's catalogue; the images here shown are thus reproductions of artworks presented in Lisbon, or views of the presentation of these works in other venues. The images that follow are not views from the show in Lisbon.



Pintura Aeropostal N.º50, Historia de la Indumentaria, 1986
Algodón y Fotoserigrafía sobre Papel de Envolver, 210 x 154 cm
Itinerario: Santiago do Chile 86- Madrid 87 – Barcelona 87 –
Sydney 87 – Lima 88 – Rotterdam 93/94 – Santiago de
Chile 98 – Lisboa 98

Eugenio Dittborn, a Chilean artist, presented “Pinturas Aeropostales”, a project he has been working on since 1984. “Pinturas Aeropostales” are paintings that travel from venue to venue by regular postal mail. The compositions are made out of images and writings that are appropriated from diverse sources, and then sewed, printed or photocopied onto garment lining fabric. Painting, drawing, printing and writing might be added to those images and the final panel results from different size fabrics that are sewn together. The panel is then folded and put inside an envelope designed by the artist. On arriving at a venue the painting is unfolded and installed directly onto the wall. At the end of the show the

painting is repacked into its envelope, with the address of its next destination.

This project originated with the necessity to overcome the limitations of Chile's years of dictatorship. Dittborn found a way to bypass censorship, art system structures and national/geographical borders, but, as Guy Brett suggests, there is also a philosophical dimension associated with its more pragmatic origin (1998: 52). "Pinturas Aeropostales" is a 'possible model for memory' a tribute to anti-colonialism and anti-dictatorship, and suggestive of new interpretations of culture, history and visual culture. The project may also be seen as a 'space of passage', understood either as a work that subverts art categories, such as artwork, painting, art system or in the sense of global velocity, of transcultural and transgeographical presence, or transition of the artwork (1998: 56).

"Memórias Íntimas Marcas", a curatorial project by Fernando Alvim, was initiated in 1992, but it was only in 1997 that Fernando Alvim (Angolan), Carlos Garaicoa (Cuban) and Gavin Younge (South African) joined together in Cuito Cuanavale¹⁵. The idea was to have these artists, who had an indirect experience of war, working about that context. "They were creating projects and artworks linked to this idea of national guilt, really operating through the idea of a nation." (Alvim interviewed by Hanussek, 2004)

The project was presented in Luanda's Instituto Camões, in 1997, and then moved to South African venues, where its curatorial format changed. The exhibition was also presented in Lisbon, where it included African and European artists, was the result of Alvim's invitation to artists with memories and experiences of violence¹⁶.

It was an exhibition that worked around the ideas of *amnesia* and autopsy, which can be illustrated by the silence devoted to war or colonial experiences and histories. It played an active role in comprehending the social and transnational memory of war, and its impact on national and urban identities.

¹⁵ Cuito Cuanavale was a battlefield in the Angolan civil war, where Angolan, Cuban and South African forces battled against each other.

¹⁶ The participant artists: Kendell Geers, Gast Bouschet, Fernando Alvim, Jan van de Merwe, Aime Ntakiyica, Abrie Fourie, Carlos Garaicoa, Bill Bidjocka, Kay Hassan and Toma Muteba Luntumbue.

Narelle Jubelin. ECRU.

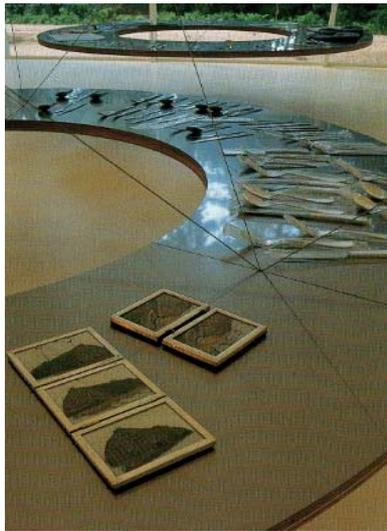
Images: © Direcção-Geral das Artes



Cotton and rubber cloth curtain with stainless steel armature, Madrid and Lisbon, 1998
Cloth curtain rendition of CONVENT OF NOSSA SENHORA DA CONCEIÇÃO window, Beja, Portugal

White permanent ink transcription of a Portuguese translation of the Preface text by Michele Turner from her book *TELLING EAST TIMOR: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*. Published by the University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1992; and of Fátima Gusmão's recounting published in the same book





CASE No: T961301, 1998, produced for the exhibition *ARTANSPENNINE98*, Tate Gallery Liverpool.

Two round tables after the suspended table by Albert Frey in his first house, Palm Springs, California, 1947, Spain and England, 1998

TABLE 1 Stainless steel cutlery: ARNE JACOBSEN, Denmark, 1957; *HOFFMAN* by DAVID MELLOR, England, 1985; *ETTORE SOTTASS*, Germany, 1986; C. HUGO POTT, Germany (date unknown); silver cutlery, *ENGLISH SILVER* by DAVID MELLOR, England, 1995

Silver photograph frame (triptych) with 3 embroideries of the TATE & LYLE No 8 HUSKISSON SILO, LIVERPOOL (repeated exterior views); & other frame (dyptych) with 2 embroideries (repeated interior views) -silk & cotton; Madrid, 1998

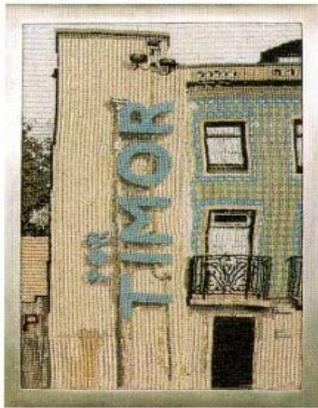
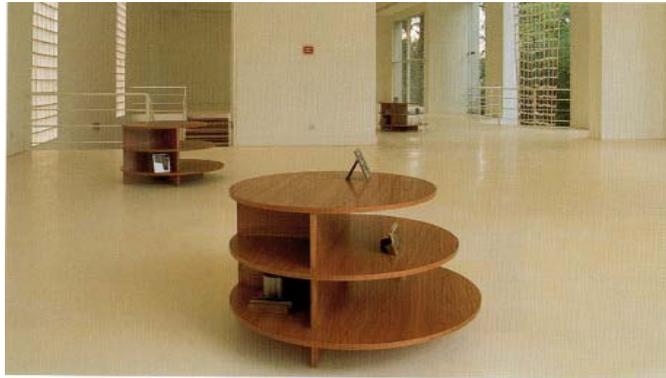
16" x 20" silver gelatin photograph of *FLATWARE*: commissioned by the Ministry of Public works for use in British Embassies; designed and produced by DAVID MELLOR, England, 1963

66 page transcription of the 4th day of proceedings, Monday, 29 June, 1996, of the Crown Court of Liverpool CASE No: T961301, PLOUGHSHARES FOUR: JOANNA WILSON, ENGLA KRONLID, ANGELA ZELTER & ANDREA NEEDHAM – four women accused of destroying a Hawk Jet fabricated by British Aerospace, for sale to Indonesia; the same aircraft used in acts of repression in East Timor – ink on vegetal paper; Madrid, 1998

TABLE 2 Stainless steel cutlery: ARNE JACOBSEN, Denmark, 1957; *PRISM* by ARNE JACOBSEN, Denmark; fabricated by GEORG JENSEN (date unknown); *SPLAYDS* (designer unknown), Australia, c. 1960; *HANDWERKS* by HANS SCHWIPPERT, Germany, 1975; *EDO SUSHI SET* by BIBS HOSAK-ROBB, fabricated by ROBBE & BERKING (date unknown); fruit peeler by ARNE PEDERSEN fabricated by GEORG JENSEN, Denmark (date unknown); stunt knife from the film *MORTAL COMBAT* by GIL HIBBON, Australia, 1982

Silver photograph frame (triptych) with 2 embroideries of the TATE & LYLE No 8 HUSKISSON SILO, LIVERPOOL (interior and exterior view monochromes with one part left vacant) – silk & cotton; Madrid, 1998

33 page transcription of the Summation and Verdict, Wednesday, 30 June, 1996, of the Crown Court of Liverpool CASE No: T961301, PLOUGHSHARES FOUR: JOANNA WILSON, ENGLA KRONLID, ANGELA ZELTER & ANDREA NEEDHAM – the four women declared innocent of criminal damage – ink on vegetal paper; Madrid, 1998



Three GIUSEPPE TERRAGNI cherry tree wood, side tables designed for the FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE, NOVOCOMUM, Como, 1929, with: ARNE JACOBSEN: *CYLYNDA LINE* ashtray, Denmark, 1967; WILLIAM LESCAZE: Salt & Pepper Shakers (date unknown); ÁLVARO SIZA VIEIRA doorhandle, Oporto, Portugal, 1970's, designed to Quinta da Malagueira, Évora, 1977, fabricated by Carvalho Baptista & C^a Lda.; PEDRO SAMPAIO: ice container and tongs, Lisbon (date unknown); and with silver framed, silk & cotton petit point renditions of – ROSE SEIDLER HOUSE by HARRY SEIDLER, Turramurra, Sydney, 1951 (interior view); LAKEHOUSE FOR AN ARTIST by GIUSEPPE TERRAGNI – in collaboration with P. Lingeri, M. Cereghini, G. Giussani, G. Mantero, O. Ortelli, A. Dell'Acqua, C. Ponci – Milan V Trienal, 1933 (interior with the artists' studio viewed from the movable passageway); CASE STUDY HOUSE NO 8 (Eames House) by CHARLES AND RAY EAMES, Pacific Palisades, California, 1945-49 (reflections on interior glass walls); VILLA MAIREA by Alvar Aalto, Noormakku, Finland, 1937-39 (interior, main, staircase); UNIVERSAL CINEMA by ERICH MENDELSON, in conjunction with residence, Woga, Berlin, 1928 (interior view); FARNSWORTH HOUSE by LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE, Plano, Illinois, 1950-51 (in flood conditions); PROJECT FOR JOSEPHINE BAKER HOUSE by ADOLF LOOS 1928 (model); POR TIMOR Library & Community Centre, renovation by TEOTÓNIO PEREIRA, Lisbon, 1992 (facade)

“ECRU” was the title of the exhibition by Narelle Jubelin¹⁷. She presented three projects: transcriptions of the Preface by Michele Turner¹⁸, and of Fátima Gusmão’s recounting of her experience of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, both published in *Telling East Timor: personal Testimonies 1942-1992*; “Case No: T961301”; and a cloth curtain rendition of the Convent of Nossa Senhora da Conceição window, Beja, Portugal.

In the windows of the two-floor pavilion the memories of Fátima Gusmão, survivor of the Indonesian East-Timor occupation and genocide (1975-1999), and Michele Turner’s words about her relationship with Gusmão and East Timor’s history, were painted in white ink. Inside the pavilion two sets of tables were installed, one on each floor. On the ground floor, on the top of two tables lay some literature about “Case No: T961301”, designed cutlery, promotion or advertisement photographs of designed cutlery, and some images of Tate & Lyle No 8 Huskisson Silo, Liverpool, that were embroidered and framed, in frames similar to the ones used for family portraits.

East Timor was a Portuguese colony until 1975, when Indonesia occupied the region militarily, declaring it its province. From 1975 until 1999 Timor was the target of a genocide promoted by the Indonesian dictatorship.

When Michele Turner understood that Australia was complicit in the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, she began to search for the hidden real voices, for the subaltern and invisible people and their memories. That was a way to deal with collective guilt and with an official (fake) history of the political powers. Turner followed the path of the lost memories, of the individuals and their horrendous experiences of being in a “situation of constant resistance”.

By choosing to work from this book, which speaks about a subaltern history and postcolonial context, Narelle Jubelin explored the idea of official history, which she recognises whilst exposing its gaps of meaning (“the fault lines in official linear history”). In those gaps, we are invited to experience a “dizzying sensation of intuitive and intellectual free-fall which may deliver to a new landing point.” (Enberg, 1998: 42). That is

¹⁷ Narelle Jubelin is an Australian artist that lives in Madrid.

¹⁸ Michel Turner is an Australian writer. She undertook a big project of rescuing East Timor voices of the invisibility. She collected that material in (1992), *Telling East Timor: personal Testimonies 1942-1992*.

also what happens in her work “Case No: T 961301”. In 1996, four women used all their means to stop Britain from selling more Harrier Jump Jets to Indonesia, who would use them in acts of repression in East Timor. The women illegally entered a plant in Lancashire, and destroyed the equipment needed to produce those planes. They were not convicted of any crime, because it was proved that they were trying, through all their efforts, to stop a crime from happening. In her work about this situation, Jubelin underlines this loophole in the legal system, and the possibility of exploring it as a rebellion against the present. Thus she is testing the limit of political activism in art.

Jubelin's work is the result of long processes of research in areas normally marked by colonial history. She tries to unravel the invisibility of subaltern histories and stories into a visibility that is also a criticism of modernism, and mainstream narratives. Her projects become an “embroidery” on the relationship between art and ethics, and between history and ethics.

Trading Images was composed of four exhibitions, three of which were related to lusophone contexts – “Adriana Varejão” with Brazil, “Memórias Íntimas Marcas” with Angola and “Narelle Jubelin. ECRU” with East Timor. All of them proposed a postcolonial reflection about each context's history. When shown in Portugal, these exhibitions questioned Portugal's role in those histories. It is what Isabel Carlos refers to as the transversal way by which these exhibitions related contemporary art and a postcolonial reading of Portugal's history and present.

Eugenio Dittborn's exhibition seems to me to be key in thinking about the transnational networks of art and their significance today. His work also presents an alternative to the regular system of market and art, full of poetics of disruption to the prevailing order. I can also see a postcolonial character in it, which comes from my belief that dictatorships are also forms of colonialism, which are structured by unequal hierarchies of society, based on the will of the individual and the market, and which have at the centre of their functioning a systematisation of violence and censorship as a way to maintain power and control the people.

Trading Images displayed art from outside the western axis, which dealt with themes such as the postcolonial, politics, history and war. Simultaneously the artworks presented displayed a level of conceptual

sophistication that is normally only attributed to western contemporary art. Though I recognize that this programme did not directly reflect on lusophonie or the idea of Portuguese nation, it nonetheless was the result of a curatorial process that had as a starting point the recognition of a lack of visibility, in the Portuguese cultural and art worlds, of the transnational and transcultural possibilities and understandings of contemporary art. Thus *Trading Images* can be understood as a “model” of action – as an intellectual framework of possibilities for contemporary art.

Spanning an Entire Ocean

Culturgest, Lisbon, 2000. Images: © Culturgest, Caixa Geral de Depósitos¹⁹



Paula Rego

A Primeira Missa no Brasil, 1993

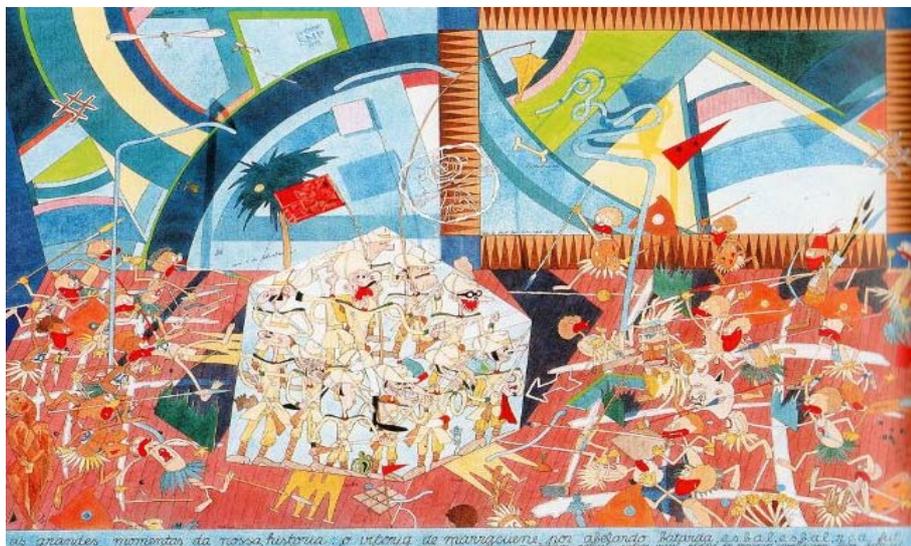
Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 180 cm

Jonathan and Natalie Points' collection, London

¹⁹ Due to the inexistence of an official photographic record of this exhibition, I decided to scan images from the show's catalogue; the images here shown are thus reproductions of artworks presented in Lisbon, or views of the presentation of these works in other venues. The images that follow are not views from the show in Lisbon.



Nelson Leirner
Terra à vista (A Primeira Missa), 1983/2000
Mixed media (aprox. 2000 objects), Variable dimensions
Collection Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Prefeitura de Niterói, Niterói



Eduardo Batarda
O Vitória de Marracuene, 1973
Watercolor and Indian ink on paper, 69 x 100 cm
Collection Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian/CAMJAP, Lisbon



Ângela Ferreira

Amnésia, 1997

Installation – Video

1 rustic Dutch-style table, 140 x 100 x 70 cm (wood from Mozambique); 6 rustic Dutch-style chairs (wood from Mozambique); Logs and supports, 180 x 400 x 130 cm (wood from Mozambique); Video “Mozambique – No outro lado do tempo”, Ed. Consom, Produções Beja Filmes, 1996 (58 min.); Bottle “Gungunhana Before” (1), Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, 1902, height 25 cm; Bottle “Gungunhana After” (2), Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, 1902, height 19,5 cm; Bottle “Long Live Portugal” (3), Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, 1896, height 26,6 cm; 1 acrylic shelf; 1 wood shelf; 1 black metal shelf

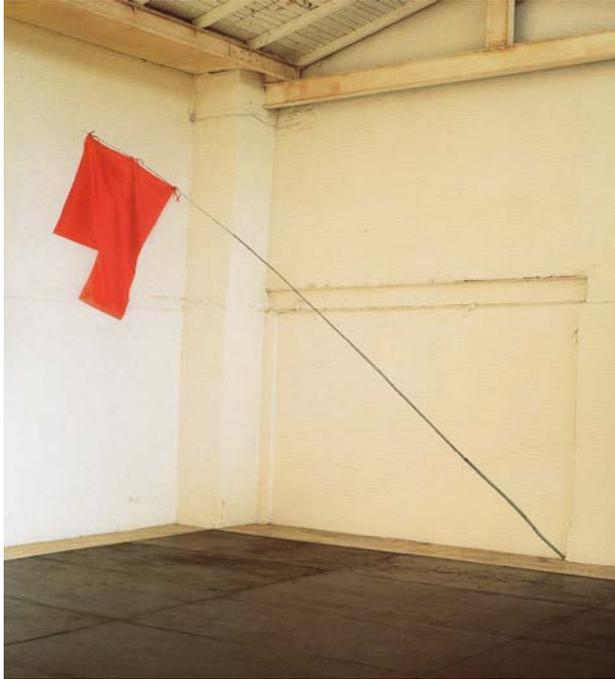
Collection Instituto de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon



Lygia Pape

Caixa Brasil, 1968

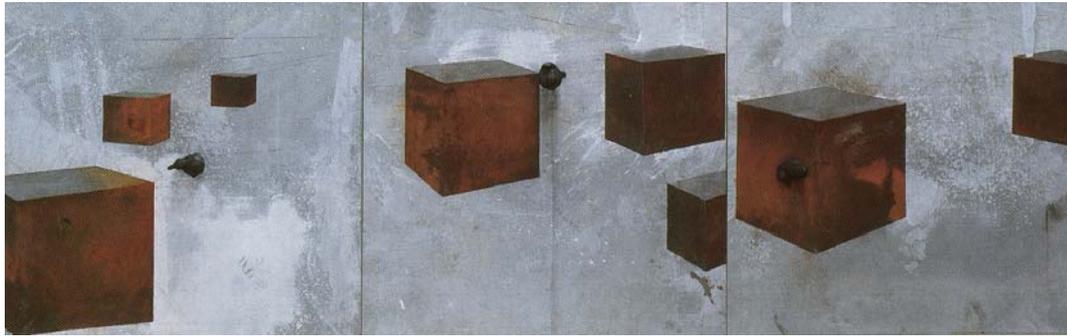
Velvet-lined wooden box and hair, 30 x 36 x 5 cm. Artist's collection



António Dias
O País Inventado, 1976
Satin and bronze with patine, 500 cm (length)
Artist's collection



Pedro Cabrita Reis
H Suite XII, 1993
Installation
Wood, plaster, glass, cloths, rubber and plastic, 150 x 140 x 700 cm
Collection Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Lisbon



Daniel Senise

Lápide de mim (triptych), 1999

Acrylic and synthetic enamel on canvas an voile, 110 x 110 x 5 cm (each)

Artist's collection

*Spanning an Entire Ocean*²⁰ was curated by Ruth Rosengarten²¹ and Paulo Reis²², and was part of the celebration programme marking 500 years since Portugal's discovery of Brazil, by Pedro Álvares Cabral²³. The show presented contemporary artists from Brazil and Portugal, and took place in 2000 in Culturgest²⁴, Lisbon. The exhibition's challenge and premise was “to forge a new form of knowledge excluding dogma, cliché and the smugness of secure, achieved knowledge” (Rosengarten and Reis, 2000: 9) about the postcolonial relationship between Portugal and Brazil.

The catalogue of the exhibition present us with excerpts of the dialogue between Rosengarten and Reis on the definition of the curatorial concept, the selection of artists, and first thoughts on the exhibition's

²⁰ The participating artists: Helena Almeida, Efrain Almeida, Artur Barrio, Eduardo Batarda, José Bechara, Pedro Cabrita Reis, José Damasceno, António Dias, Eloane Duarte, Armanda Duarte, Nelson Felix, Ângela Ferreira, Fernanda Fragateiro, Anna Bella Geiger, Ana Jotta, Nelson Leirner, Leonilson, Ivens Machado, Vicente de Mello, Ernesto Neto, Lygia Page, João Queiroz, Paula Rego, Rosângela Rennó, Joaquim Rodrigo, Maurício Ruiz, Julião Sarmiento, Daniel Senise, Courtney Smith, Susanne Thémilitz, Afonso Tostes, Tunga, Manuel Valente Alves, Adriana Varejão, Angelo Venosa, Júlia Ventura and Ana Vidigal.

²¹ Ruth Rosengarten is an independent curator and art historian. She was invited by Culturgest to be the curator for Portugal in this show.

²² Paulo Reis is a Brazilian independent curator. He was invited to be the curator for the Brazilian art in this show.

²³ The exhibition was the result of the collaboration between Culturgest and the National Committee for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries.

²⁴ Culturgest is the cultural centre of Caixa Geral de Depósitos. Between 1992-2004, under the art direction of António Pinto Ribeiro, Culturgest was the only art institution in Portugal with a programme on non-western contemporary art. Culturgest is also the only institution with a collection of lusophone contemporary art.

installation. My interest in it lies mainly in the discussion around the way Portuguese and Brazilian art can be shown together today, in the context of celebration of a cultural and colonial encounter. Rosengarten and Reis have different curatorial ideas of this project, and the debate generated by those differences is one about identity, stereotypes, art history, and postcolonial perspectives. Of interest is not only the concept of this particular exhibition, but also the reflection about the limits and possibilities of curating as a (contra-) discourse and conceptual programme, where ideas, artworks, text and space are the elements to articulate.

Rosengarten's questions and worries about the project are presented in the following way:

I continue to consider somewhat random – although certainly challenging – the confrontation between Portuguese and Brazilian art. What would be the reasons for such an articulation? A common historic past? In its role as coloniser, Portugal has revealed little spirit of self-criticism – in comparison, as, with England in its relation to India. Suffice it to observe the euphoria, which, to this day, filters through the discourse of the 'discoveries'. (Rosengarten and Reis, 2000: 35)

Rosengarten is worried about the discursive context wherein the exhibition appears, one of celebration of the past, by which identities are thought through simplistic binaries. She wants the exhibition to stand against a reproduction of stereotypical cultural and national ideas of Portugal and Brazil, and also of their interrelation. Her interest is to be distant from any kind of cultural or national celebration, “mythification or mystification”.

For that end she suggests some strategic curatorial moves, as a selection of artists that “affirm an anti-hegemonic position”, meaning “works which, in their very facture, renounce any notion of monumentality, or even stylistic continuity. (...) The emphasis, in these works, is on the fragile, the tenuous, the ephemeral. They are works which deal with discontinuities, impermanence (...)” (idem, ibidem: 36) In a very explicit way Rosengarten is interested in a postcolonial approach, articulated with the questioning of imperial power and patriarchal hegemony. This theoretical framework, applied to curating, is very sensitive in the context of the Portuguese postcoloniality, which has been hitherto characterised by the erasure of any reflection about its colonial history and past, which Rosengarten refers to as *amnesia*. This postcolonial interest is also pertinent in the context of the Brazilian reality and the relationship between Portugal and Brazil.

In terms of the exhibition's installation Rosengarten proposes an articulation of Brazilian and Portuguese artworks, that should envisage “organic comparisons” and “conjectural oppositions” between them, “say between territoriality and nomadism, house and world, self and other.” (idem, *ibidem*: 43).

When we take into account that the construction of a Portuguese nationality was based since the beginning of the twentieth century on the equivalence between Nation and (lost) Empire, we get a closer understanding of Rosengarten's fears in this curatorial project. *Spanning an Entire Ocean* is both the outcome of a celebration of nationality, and an attempt to hold a curatorial contra-imperial discourse, thus a deconstruction of existent national identities.

Paulo Reis had a different perspective about what the exhibition should be. His first proposal was to present a chronological approach of Brazilian art, focusing on its historical and cultural key moments, in a movement of affirmation of Brazilian art and its historical autonomy. Although differing from Rosengarten's proposal, Reis's approach may also be seen as having a postcolonial intention, if understood as an exercise of delimitation and reinforcement of a historical and cultural non-western national context, in a moment of its presentation to a more westernised public. Reis is interested in showing the “specificity of the Brazilian art” (idem, *ibidem*: 33), as if knowing in advance that there is a previous idea and stereotype in Portugal (and the western art world) about Brazilian art. In the same line of thought, Reis expresses the will to show a “political perspective of thinking about Brazil” (idem, *ibidem*: 38), through artists such as Cildo Meireles (who ended up not taking part in the show).

Paradoxically, accompanying this curatorial suggestion, Reis seems to advance in the opposite direction, when he underlines the existence of an original and necessary relationship of similitude between Brazilian and Portuguese art and culture. Overlapping possible historical and political comparisons between modernisms (in Brazil and Portugal) and dictatorships, Reis finds a cultural proximity between contemporary arts from Brazil and Portugal, which he defines by more abstract and “emotional” arguments, as we can read in the following excerpt:

The more closely I look at colonial Brazil the more clearly I understand the extent to which our history is filled with comings and goings. It seems curious that some contemporary academics insist on pointing out the differences – corresponding to the extent of the Atlantic –

separating Brazil from Portugal. It seems to me that our gaze, the Brazilian gaze, is still imbued with the hazy Lusitanian filter, the combination of historic interest and the joie de vivre of hot climes." (idem, ibidem: 39)

Rosengarten criticizes this idea, characterising it as deterministic in the way it reads inter-cultural/national relationships as only having as a referent a shared colonial past. This critique may be understood in terms of the logic of an exclusive relation of cause-effect, by which we always look to the postcolonial present having as its sole cause the colonial past. Rosengarten then suggests a rupture to that determinism by evoking contemporary globalisation as a reality that comes to produce cultural similitude in different locals of the globe, and thus an element to take into account when comparing nations and cultures. For Rosengarten the idea of a shared cultural spirit in Portugal and Brazil, as suggested by Reis, can be explained by a shared past and colonial history, but also by contemporary globalisation (2000: 36). This seems to me to be a move against simplistic and ethnocentric ways of thinking about geo-political and cultural interrelations

Though Rosengarten and Reis disagree about the way Portugal and Brazil are connected, they seem to share a need to distinguish the Portuguese art from the Brazilian art. At one specific moment, Rosengarten speaks about Portugal and Brazil as corresponding to two different art worlds, marked by their past colonial power positions of ex-colonizer (Portugal) on one side, and of ex-colonized (Brazil) on the other. If in the first case it makes no sense to have an art that reflects on the topic of 'identity', because we are in a no-"contact zone", and in a zone which was not colonized; in the second case there is a cultural context where "identity" is an elected topic of reflection, given that we are now in a post-independence and post-colonial "contact zone" (idem, ibidem: 41). Rosengarten is thus trying to deconstruct the idea of a communal lusophone culture, illustrated in this case by the Portuguese and Brazilian cultures, and defended by Reis. In doing so, she is paradoxically defining these art worlds as closed cultural groups, which are focused on specific philosophical concepts and art practices, and which follow their colonial history and power positions in it. This dual move can be seen as paradoxical, because the demolition of the lusophone idea of community, based in multicultural beliefs and in the idea of Portugal as hybrid, finds its alternative in the definition of two different and limited postcolonial worlds, and thus in two possible categories and stereotypes that will most probably be sharing the same nature as the idea they are trying to overcome.

Also following a need to define and confine types of (national) art, Paulo Reis goes on to characterize contemporary art from Brazil as one of “exuberance”, wherein appropriations of popular culture are motors for both a “playful plasticity” and the questioning of Art, History, Culture and Humanity. By contrast Rosengarten refers to Portuguese contemporary art as lacking “energy”, adding:

I do not lament this at all, but I do, at the same time, sometimes think that something was lost in all the urgency of that scramble for 'globalisation'. Sometimes it is preferable to maintain something of a dialectic instead of opting for the official language. (idem, ibidem: 42)

Key artworks to this curatorial proposal were Paula Rego's “A Primeira Missa no Brasil” (1993), Julião Sarmento's “Amazónia” (1992), Eduardo Batarda's “O Vitória de Marracuene” (1973), Adriana Varejão's “Açougue Song” (1999/2000), Ângela Ferreira's “Amnésia” (1997), António Dias' “O País Inventado” (1976), and Nelson Leirner's “Terra à vista (A Primeira Missa)” (1983/2000). These artworks assume different centres of discourse and historical points of view, and in that way, when shown together, they work on the deconstruction of the idea of sole culture, history, nation and community (of language or/and culture). This selection of artists must be understood as a curatorial strategy to envisage a contra-discourse to the celebratory context of this show.

In the end we find a consensus between different curatorial perspectives: on one side a postcolonial revisionist approach to the relationship between Brazil and Portugal, which is also a critique of Portuguese nationalism, still based on the idea of empire; on the other side an exercise on the construction of Brazilian cultural autonomy that is related to issues of cultural originality and specificity (myths of origin such as the idea of cultural synchronism). Rosengarten and Reis conclude their process of curatorial definition in this way:

In the present period of historical revisions Brazil and Portugal need to articulate and debate not only their respective raison d'être but also the frequently ambivalent cultural and effective ties that link them. What do these two nations have in common, other than the historical fact of one having been colonizer and the other colonized? Although colonialism must be regarded as nefarious in humanistic terms, it may benefit our understanding of the cultures to recognize the residues of the colonizing process in both cultures today. (Rosengarten and Reis, in Exhibition's Journal, 2000: 5)

Replica and Rebellion:

***Artists from Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde and Mozambique
Instituto Camões, 2006-2007***

MUSARTE – Museu Nacional de Arte, Maputo, April 2006 (images of the exhibition's installation). Images: © Muvart – Movimento de Arte Contemporânea de Moçambique



1st plan:

Jorge Dias

Cocoons (Metamorphoses), 2003/2005

Sisal rope, newspaper and pair of shoes

Artist's collection

2nd plan (left to right):

Ronaldo Rêgo

(2nd artwork), *Elegbá com Oxé de Xangô*, 1993

Polychrome wood, 142 x 72 x 15,5 cm

Artist's collection

Paulo Capela

Untitled, 2005

Mixed technique, 40 x 40,2 cm

Sindika Dokolo Collection of Contemporary Art



1st plan (left to right):

Jorge Dias

Casulos (Metamorfoses), 2003/2005

Sisal rope, newspaper and pair of shoes

Artist's collection

Bento Oliveira

T. Lírica, 2005/2006

Wood-engraving and three pieces; 105 x 188 cm; 187 x 53 x 7 cm; 190 x 66,5 x 8 cm;

179 x 47 x 6 cm

Artist's collection

2nd plan (left to right):

Marepe

Marinha, 2003

Installation; Sunshades, polyester sheets, tyre-rubber buckets and painted clay fruits

Andréa and José Olympio Pereira's collection

Celestino Mudaulane

Vidas em Maputo, 2005

India ink on paper, Panel of six drawings (83 x 61 cm)

Artist's collection

Antônio Sérgio Moreira

Invólucro I – Todo o Tempo do Mundo para Dizer, 2003

Mixed technique on canvas, 170 x 54 x 54

Artist's collection

Fernando Alvim

Cultural Wireless, 2005

Painting and collage on canvas, 190 x 190 cm

Collection ESCOM-Espírito Santo Commerce



Pinto

(from left to right)

1st image: *Amor de Galinha Mãe*, 2005

Straw and charcoal on paper, 81 x 77 cm

Artist's collection

4th image: *Mulher com criança* (diptych), 2005

Charcoal on watercolor paper, 100 x 70 cm

Artist's collection

5th image: *Mãe esperando com trigêmeos*, 2005

Charcoal on paper, 50,5 x 50,5 cm

Artist's collection

Instituto Camões – Centro Cultural Português, Luanda, July 2006

Images: © Instituto Camões



1st plan (front to back; left to right):

Marepe

Mariinha, 2003

Installation

Sunshades, polyester sheets, tyre-rubber buckets and painted clay fruits

Andréa and José Olympio Pereira's collection

Yonamine

CCCP, 2005

Oil on canvas, 190 x 190 cm

António Nascimento's collection

Gemuce

Deixa Andar, 2005

Video installation, Variable dimensions

Artist's collection

Jorge Dias

Casulos (Metamorfoses), 2003/2005

Sisal rope, newspaper and pair of shoes

Artist's collection



1st plan (front to back; left to right):

Gemuce

Deixa Andar, 2005

Video installation, Variable dimensions

Artist's collection

Jorge Dias

Casulos (Metamorfoses), 2003/2005

Sisal rope, newspaper and pair of shoes

Artist's collection

Yonamine

CCCP, 2005

Oil on canvas, 190 x 190 cm

António Nascimento's collection

Marepe

Mariinha, 2003

Installation

Sunshades, polyester sheets, tyre-rubber buckets and painted clay fruits

Andréa and José Olympio Pereira's collection

Victor Sousa

Mulher no Banheiro, 2005

Screens, wood, reeds and metal, 185 x 120 cm

Artist's collection

SIEXPO – Museu de História Natural, Luanda, July 2006

Images: © Instituto Camões



(left to right):

Tchalê Figueira

Untitled, 2005

Pencil on paper, 60 x 40 cm

Artist's collection

Tchalê Figueira

Untitled, 2005

Pencil on paper, 60 x 40 cm

Artist's collection

Fernando Alvim

Cultural Wireless, 2005

Painting and collage on canvas, 190 x 190 cm

Collection ESCOM-Espírito Santo Commerce

Ricardo Rangel

Sanitários. Onde só o negro podia ser servente e só o branco era homem, 1957

Silver halide print, 30,4 x 40,4 cm

Artist's collection

António Ole

Untitled, 2005

Diptych (2 x 10 pieces)

Drawing and collage on paper, 167 x 232 cm

Artist's collection

António Pinto Ribeiro was the curator of *Replica and Rebellion*, an exhibition that was produced by Instituto Camões²⁵, and presented in Maputo, Luanda, Salvador da Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília and Praia during 2006 and 2007. The show was co-curated by António Sérgio Moreira in Brazil and Gemuce in Mozambique.

Pinto Ribeiro's work has, since 1994, been dedicated to the presentation of non-western art practices. He was the art director of Culturgest from 1994 to 2004, where along with the presentation of art from outside the axis Europe-United States of America, he opened the Culturgest's art collection to lusophone contemporary arts. Pinto Ribeiro also worked, amongst other things, on the *Arte Lisboa. Contemporary Art Fair* (2004); he curated *Replica and Rebellion*; and was the programmer of two festivals at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, *The state of the World* (2007) and *Distance and Proximity* (2008).

Though hypothetical, I think it is appropriate to draw a genealogy for this exhibition, that finds its precedents in the show curated by Pinto Ribeiro at Culturgest, *Mais a Sul – Obras de Artistas de África na Coleção da Caixa Geral de Depósitos* (2004), and the curatorial project developed by Pinto Ribeiro for *Arte Lisboa. Contemporary Art Fair* (2004), where he was responsible for opening the programme to dealers and artists' collectives from the lusophone and South American countries, in a move to legitimise their art and open it to the international art market. Following *Replica and Rebellion* (2006) we find *Exchanging Visions* (2007), an itinerary exhibition curated by Isabel Carlos, and produced by Instituto Camões. This show presented work from four Portuguese artists²⁶ that directly reflected on postcolonial issues. Apparently *Exchanging Visions* was a complimentary curatorial approach to *Replica and Rebellion* that only presented African and Afro-Brazilian artists.

*Mais a Sul*²⁷ was an exhibition of artworks by lusophone African artists from Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique from the Caixa Geral de Depósitos' collection. The exhibition was the outcome of the purchase

²⁵ Instituto Camões operates under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, and its purpose is to promote Portuguese culture and language abroad.

²⁶ Ângela Ferreira, Francisco Vidal, Maria Lusitano and Vasco Araújo.

²⁷ Artists: Alex, Fernando Alvim, Rui Assubuji, José Cabral, Paulo Kapela, Joel Chiziane, João Costa (Funcho), Martinho Fernando, Tchalê Figueira, Gongga, Márcia Matonse, Miro, Estêvão Mucavele, Malangatana Valente Ngwenya, António Ole, Alfredo Paco, Miguel Petchkovsky, Ricardo Rangel, Reinata Sadimba, Shikhani and Viteix.

politics of the collection, which from 1999 until 2004 included lusophone art from Brazil and the lusophone African countries.

In the catalogue, Pinto Ribeiro presents this exhibition as both a legitimiser of African art and artists in Portugal, and as a representation of African lusophone contemporary arts. Taking into account the lack of historical construction, cultural and art theories in those countries, this exhibition was an attempt to initiate a work of historicizing and reflecting upon their cultural and art practices. The exhibition was also the first attempt from a Portuguese contemporary art institution to present art from the lusophone African countries; a variety of art scenes, contexts and histories that until today are still almost unnoticed²⁸. This lack of interest is part of a Portuguese postcolonial *amnesia*, and a process of “anaesthetisation”, concerning the colonial past and the post-colonial cultures of the formerly colonized countries (Pinto Ribeiro, 2004: 5).

In the catalogue Pinto Ribeiro discusses how the African art finds its legitimisation as contemporary in the art theory and history of the western world. He also questions “who legitimises” that same contemporaneity (idem, *ibidem*: 5), which is a question that he maintains in *Replica and Rebellion*, in this case also regarding the marginal art scene of the Afro-Brazilian artists (idem, 2006: 9)²⁹.

Both *Replica and Rebellion* and *Mais a Sul* presented marginal art (from the point of view of its integration on the international and western art

²⁸ The ArtAfrica Project’s research (www.artafrica.info) was contemporary to this exhibition. It was a research held in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on the contemporary art of the lusophone African countries, under supervision of José António Fernandes Dias. Today it is lodged at the Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, under coordination of Manuela Ribeiro Sanches. The website presents a database on artists from the lusophone African countries and their diasporas. It also presents general information on each country; and, on a trimester basis, a theoretical text, a virtual exhibition, and a list of events. From 2002 until 2005 I worked as a Researcher for this project.

²⁹ The legitimacy to represent and present the lusophone contemporary art needs to be accompanied by a theorization and reflection upon that same reality. In the catalogues of *Mais a Sul* and *Replica and Rebellion*, we can find a theoretical production was done. *Mais a Sul*’s catalogue presents a synthesis on the history of exhibitions of African art in the western world, and an historical overlook on the modern and contemporary art from Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique. In *Replica and Rebellion*’s catalogue we find five texts that give us different perspectives on the Afro and Afro-Brazilian art. I want to underline Ruy Duarte de Carvalho’s text, which makes a caricature of the African art system, by describing a vernissage at a luxury hotel in Cape Town; and Alda Costas’ text, which is a historical overview on the art of Mozambique from the 1930s until today.

scene), and overlapped by showing art from the lusophone African countries Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique. *Mais a Sul* included artists from the diaspora, which I read as an interpretation of the African diaspora as an intrinsic part of the art practice and cultural life of the African countries, thus of their identity. *Replica and Rebellion* did not include artists from the diaspora, but instead approached the Afro-Brazilian experience, which is in itself based on one of the major diaspora movements of history, that of the 16th-19th century slave trade. We may consider that in different ways, both these curatorial projects made a reflection on the diaspora phenomenon.

I will now concentrate on the way *Replica and Rebellion* puts into debate the idea of lusophonie, nation and post-colonial lusophone identities.

Replica and Rebellion presented artists³⁰ from some lusophone countries, Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Brazil. Their selection was based on the idea of a common African cultural heritage, and a shared colonial past. Some other criteria for the artists' selection were speaking Portuguese, using a contemporary and international language in their art practices, and having only a local visibility (which is seen as the result of an ethnocentric international art scene).

Concerning the exclusion of Portuguese artists from the exhibition, Pinto Ribeiro says:

It would therefore make no sense to include works by Portuguese artists – not even black ones - since it would be the same as whitewashing the colonial memory. Fortunately, we are involved in a process of recognising the identity of the Other rather than rubbing it out or eliminating it in favour of a return to imperialism, even if it were a merely symbolic one. (idem, ibidem: 124)

The exhibition's title suggests a common colonial narrative with consequences for the art produced in those contexts. First there was a process of copying and replicating the western and colonizer's models; and then there was the rebellion which accompanied the independence and liberation movements, which in turn lead to the construction of a

³⁰ The artists presented: Fernando Alvim, Sidney Amaral, Jorge dos Anjos, Maurino Araújo, Luís Basto, Tiago Borges, Paulo Kapela, Tomás Cumbana, Jorge Dias, Mestre Didi, Fábio Domingues, Manuel Figueira, Tchalê Figueira, Gemuce, Marepe, António Sérgio Moreira, Celestino Mudaulane, António Ole, Bento Oliveira, Rosana Paulino, Pinto, Mauro Pinto, Ricardo Rangel, Ronaldo Rêgo, Bauer Sá, Alexandre Santos, Victor Sousa, Chico Tabibuia, Viteix, Yonamine.

new country and cultural and national identity. This narrative works to create a linearity and complicity of cultural and artistic histories between such distinct countries as the ones presented here. Lusophone Africa and Brazil are very different contexts in terms of their colonial history, culture and political, social and cultural actuality. This diversity is understated in *Replica and Rebellion*, to privilege a history of connections and similitudes of cultural and marginal experiences based on African culture and the diaspora in the 'Black Atlantic'.

Replica and Rebellion presented art from ex-Portuguese countries on the basis, not of their lusophonie or portugality, but of their africanity. Thus lusophonie was being theoretically questioned, at the same time that africanity was being “glorified”, in what can be read as a theoretical context of postcolonial redefinition of histories and cultures.

A contra-lusophone concept and debate was visible in the selection of artists and venues of the exhibition. Though the curator and Instituto Camões are Portuguese, no Portuguese artists were shown, and the exhibition was not presented in any Portuguese venue. The exhibition proposed a relationship between Africa and Brazil that, in an innovative way, was established outside the realm of the black Atlantic triangle. The exclusion of Portugal from the exhibition was, from my point of view, a way to question the idea of lusophonie and of Portugal's authority in the lusophone space, and thus its national identity.

Conclusion

In this paper I present, in an interpretative form, three curatorial works. My main interest in them lies in the ways and processes by which lusophonie, the idea of Portuguese nation, history and identity, are reflected upon. This is a specific interest within a wider one, which is the way curating and contemporary art might be considered spaces of postcolonial discourse, to which reflections on the relations between art/public and art/politic are attached.

Trading Images, Spanning and Entire Ocean and *Replica and Rebellion* are fruitful examples of this kind. They are also milestones (though marginal) in the history of the Portuguese curating of contemporary art, as exhibitions that focused on the postcolonial thematic, the lusophone Other's contemporary art, and a more political side of art and its power of speaking about our world in a critical way. If I call them “marginal” it is because there has been only a sporadic interest, from the Portuguese art world, in the Portuguese postcolonial context as a thematic and interpretative framework; and these shows themselves have received only

limited attention. Eventually this reality is going to give room to a more systematic and regular interest in these issues. It is my feeling that we already find a context for its possibility, determined by the existence of curators interested in these topics³¹, the transdisciplinarity of some of the exhibitions³², and an openness in the academic world to the debates about art and its interrelation with postcolonial discourses³³.

These three exhibitions must also be seen as more than postcolonial discursive or contra-lusophonie exercises. They are foremost art exhibitions with a primordial concern for showing and mediating artists' practices to the public; and linked to other theoretical/political frameworks. Nonetheless they are susceptible to plural interpretations and readings, just as art works are. That proves to be a sign of the authorial nature of both art and curatorial practices. This idea of plurality of meanings associated to curating is key to understanding this essay, and the (again) plurality of proposals analysed.

Trading Images presented non-western art/artists who work through a postcolonial and local reflection on reality. The place of the venue, Portugal, and the Portuguese postcolonial context, had an immediate influence on the interpretation of these four exhibitions. In a transversal way, the programme reflected the Portuguese situation - its art, political and historical systems.

Spanning an Entire Ocean explored the relationship between Brazil and Portugal through contemporary art. In the context of official celebration of their first moment of contact, the curatorial approach tried to stimulate a renewed idea of the cultural interrelationship between the nations. In this curatorial experience, both postcolonial and globalisation frameworks were used as theoretical and reflective tools to think about cultural contact, and art, today.

António Pinto Ribeiro's *Replica and Rebellion* presented only Afro and Afro-Brazilian contemporary art, in venues in lusophone Africa and

³¹ Some examples are: José António Fernandes Dias, António Pinto Ribeiro, Victor Pinto da Fonseca and Lúcia Marques.

³² Such as *Local Worlds*, 2008 (curated by Lúcia Marques and Paula Roush, Centro Cultural de Lagos, part of the *Allgarve* programme); and *State of the World*, 2007 (curated by António Pinto Ribeiro, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian).

³³ Some examples are: MA in Curatorial Studies, Faculdade de Belas Artes de Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian; Conference *Europe in Black and White*, Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, Universidade de Letras de Lisboa, 2008; Artafrica Project at the same Centre.

Brazil. The show was inserted into the history of legitimisation and internationalisation of marginal art practices, from subaltern communities of the world, and in this case of lusophonie. By doing so, the show provoked a debate about the lusophone community's history, and the western organisation of society and art.

It is my belief that these specific shows were exercises of intellectual responsibility for the history of cultural encounters and its present actuality. The exhibitions proposed new interpretations and narratives of international contemporary art; of art from Portugal, lusophone Africa and/or Brazil. Thus they built alternative “narratives” to the existent ones, which are characterised by being, if we think about historical responsibility, irresponsible and uninterested in colonial history and the postcolonialities of the present. Simultaneously they were alternatives to the westernised and market-regulated “international” art world.

In general, these exhibitions proposed a decentralised lusophone discourse of transnational and transcultural dimensions; together with a postcolonial perspective on curating, they defined a global political reflection upon the local.

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