

CAROLINE PAGÈS GALLERY // PRESS RELEASE



Miguel Palma, *Black Cotton*, 2012, Iron scale, pin, ceramic doll, cotton,
72 x 48 x 23 cm

Desviar do Olhar

Conceição Abreu, Catarina Botelho,
Driss Ouadahi, Luís Palma, Miguel Palma,
Pedro Valdez Cardoso

Opening Thursday, May 24 at 10 pm

May 24 – September 1, 2012

Caroline Pagès Gallery

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Opening hours: From 3 - 8 pm every day except Sundays, and by appointment.

With the exhibition *Desviar do Olhar*, Caroline Pagès assembles a series of works which approach questions of identity deriving from the processes of colonization, post-colonization and globalization. In particular, the challenge of a group of artists and the positioning of their gaze, on a specific geographical reference point – North Africa.

Cartas do Meu Magrebe (2011) brings together chronicles of a journey undertaken by Ernesto de Sousa, who, with the intention of screening «Dom Roberto» at a film festival in Mannheim, Germany, made a long detour through the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). It was 1962 and people were experiencing the political transformations resulting from their recent independence. However, in these chronicles, we get a purely journalistic perspective; the author interweaves the personal discovery of the importance of culture in North Africa with our own Portuguese culture.

The book is an example of approaches to this troubled history, which by way of literature, cinema or the visual arts, is beginning to be published, exhibited, discussed and *looked at*. The truth is that our relationship with Africa is difficult to digest not only when we go back in time, but also in the present day. Perhaps if the past were more located within a country/continent relationship and, today included in a broader approach, we would register it within a Europe/Africa duality. But an interpretation of the impressions of Ernesto de Sousa reminds us that we are part of a map that combines various ancient cultures (which inform each other) derived from the same Sea. *Mediterranean Breviary: A Cultural Landscape*, by Bosnian Predrag Matvejevitich, initiates us into this vocabulary with a series of paragraphs which end in affirmations/axioms. *The Mediterranean is not just a geography. Europe was born in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean and its discourse are inseparable.*

This geographical condition of which we Portuguese are a part, this history, culture and discourse has become fragmented, and this Sea which unites seems only to separate; instead of binding, it encourages distance. We speak of borders which through politics and economics only become more highlighted and attempt to banish cultural miscegenation between Europe and North Africa. In the documentary *Bab Sebta* (2008), which means in Arabic "The Gate of Ceuta", the name of the border crossing between Morocco and Ceuta, someone mentions a piece of graffiti in the streets of the city which bring together people from various parts of Africa, hoping to get to Europe: *We don't cross borders, borders cross between us*. It is undoubtedly this transgression, this fuzziness, this voluntary indistinctiveness between places that artistic practice and searching undertakes with *diverted gaze*.

This gaze, even if it has a common reference point is invoked in the deployment of memory which mixes the generic with the specific, but which is assumed in a distinctive and polysemic way. The most distant moment in time is invoked by the piece *Black Cotton* (2012) by **Miguel Palma** (PT, 1964), where factual memory is subverted in the triangle formed by the idea of power, the child's universe and the obsession with the machine. Diametrically opposed to collective memory is what **Conceição Abreu** (PT, 1961) offers in her installation *Apontamentos* (2012) composed of drawings and photogrammes which emerge from a personal memory. Between fact and emotion is the far horizon, which continually *creates* the desire to open it up and at the same time the impossibility of so doing. *Anatomia de um Sonho* (2009-2012) by **Luís Palma** (PT, 1960) documents the abstract memory of frontiers. Migrations and exchanges have long occurred in the Mediterranean. In her series *entre nós e as palavras* (2011), **Catarina Botelho** (PT, 1981) moving against the current from North to South, seeks in the memory of experience a different time where her gaze is a participant. *Objectos contraditórios* produced by **Pedro Valdez Cardoso** (PT, 1974) is based on the constructed memory resulting from incorporating representations: local/global, vernacular/exotic, colonized/colonizer. From these pairs-intension, but starting from experienced memory, comes the work of **Driss Ouadahi** (DZ/DE, 1959), who by evoking his biographical journey (born in Casablanca, raised in Algeria and today living in Dusseldorf) maps, on a single painted plane, various movements of people between countries, ideologies and intentions.

Lisbon, May 2012
Maria do Mar Fazenda

For more information and visuals please contact the gallery.