



# WAIT

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Curated by Orlando Franco

**Temporary exhibition**  
Floor -1

**English**

31/01 – 14/04/2019

 **Museu  
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# WAIT: LITTLE ORLANDO FRANCO LEFT TO TELL

“Nothing is left to tell.

[Pause. R makes to close book.

Knock. Book half closed.]

Nothing is left to tell.

[Pause. R closes book. Knock.]”

Samuel Beckett, *Ohio Impromptu* (1980)

To wait is an everyday action that, consciously or not, constantly intersects with various moments in our lives. While what I just wrote is a pragmatic finding about human existence, it also is an absolute commonplace, a conclusion we reach with little effort. Every day, we encounter situations that involve waiting, occurring either at intervals or at the same time, with different degrees of importance in our agendas. Sometimes, waiting predicates an action; at other times, it happens in immobility. Prevailing over all circumstances of life, it becomes clearly visible in certain contexts; in others, it manifests itself subtly. Depending on the way it affects us, in our hierarchy of priorities, waiting can make a subtle appearance, or can be assertively present, in an almost totalitarian manner. For example, in a situation of minor importance, as when one waits for the bus, one’s expectations correspond to the logistic function that the bus serves. However, when one anxiously awaits the birth of a child, the feeling of expectancy can envelop all one’s actions and movements, feelings and emotions. Such a state, which is especially meaningful to human life, is frequently surrounded by other allies, which belong to the category of feelings and sensations and test the subject’s limits: failure, error, frustration, guilt, desire, and need, for example.

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The problem of representation in art arose as a symptom of the post-war era, and it comprised most of the artistic and intellectual community in Europe. Samuel Beckett dealt with this matter: the hardship—perhaps the impossibility—of regarding art as a representative element in the aftermath of Nazi Germany<sup>11</sup>. In fact, the relevance of the Irish playwright’s work comes precisely from the permanent questioning of the limits of representation, the body, language, and space as widely present elements in art.

Thus, in Beckett’s work, we encounter a cluster of conditions that act on the subject’s life and completely expose the predominance of the everyday actions of waiting, expectation, the absurd, repetition, control, and frustration. In *En attendant Godot* (1952) and *Happy Days* (1961), life is reduced to a small number of activities that directly depend on operations of a waiting enwrapped in expectation—or on certain limits and existential conditions imposed upon the individual.

The more aware we are of the passing of time in a prolonged wait, the more we face a premature fatigue that will eventually lead us to a state of exhaustion. Regarding this matter, Gilles Deleuze notes that Beckett’s characters are generally and eminently marked by weariness or exhaustion. Curiously, such a state is where everything begins. When the characters are introduced, one assumes the existence of a preceding narrative; this narrative, perhaps long and strenuous (as implied), to the extent of driving them to such condition, is often a starting point. In a loop, this moment precisely defines the connection between the end and the beginning. Frequently we know nothing about that “before,”

but everything unfolds from the moment when exhaustion has provoked disinterest in the individual. As Deleuze asserts: “Only the exhausted person is sufficiently disinterested, sufficiently scrupulous.”<sup>III</sup>

At this point, the characters of *Ohio Impromptu*<sup>IV</sup>, enwrapped in a text full of memories and images from the past, could remind us of the notion of “authentic image.”<sup>V</sup> In this play, there is a dialogue between a reader, who reads the book he is holding, and a listener, who utters no words. The latter listens and reacts through gestures and expressions: The fist hits the table, requesting a pause or a step back; the facial expressions evince empathy or aversion towards what the reader says. These two characters embody two subjects—or a subject and his double: his reflection; his conscience; his memory.

With this play in mind, I am interested in making an analogy between the artist and the work. In such a relationship, we witness a dialogue that appears from the darkness, that occurs between silences, pauses, and interruptions. The artwork always presents a latent dialogue between itself and the artist.

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Naturally, we are heirs to this hardship of representation in the post-war era, addressed in an exemplary, exciting way in Beckett’s work. Thus, *WAIT* attempts to signal a time for reflecting on the adjacent themes and understanding where we currently stand. To this end, for this publication, a questionnaire was created and presented to all the artists who participated in the exhibition, with the intent of grasping their thoughts and opinions on matters such

as the role of artists today, the way they relate to the world, their commitment to their work, and the importance of waiting in their practice.

More than creating a fatalistic view on the matter of waiting, this exhibition attempts to indicate ways that allow for a recovery of possibilities as diverse as the specifics of each piece—in media such as painting, photography, sculpture, installation or video—while also paying attention to their potential connections. *WAIT* proposes a journey with a scenic aura, intending to involve the spectators in an experience where they directly or indirectly become aware of the perception of time: the condition that acts on waiting and defines all its relational possibilities. The works suggest us several subject matters, such as desire, the tension between body and space, photography and death, memory, the confrontation with the impossible, and life in suspension.

I Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber, 2003).

II This subject is dealt with in depth in Tomás Maia’s *O recomeço da pintura, segundo Beckett* (2014).

III G. Deleuze and A. Uhlmann, “The Exhausted,” in *SubStance* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 3–28.

IV From the television play directed by Charles Sturridge in 2000, with Jeremy Irons as the leading actor. This piece is part of the project *Beckett on Film* (2000–2002), which consists of 19 plays adapted for television. It was produced under the guidance of Michael Colgan, at the time the artistic director of the Gate Theatre, in Dublin.

V The image that, in the moment it becomes recognisable, casts a glimpse that will not be seen again, both revealed and hidden by the essence that brings life to it: light. This idea is proposed by Walter Benjamin with regard to the concept of “dialectic image” in “On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress,” *Arcades Project* (1927–1940).



**Cover:** Andres Serrano, *The Morgue (Infectious Pneumonia)*, 1992. Cibachrome print within artist's frame. Museu Coleção Berardo

**Back:** Samuel Beckett, *Not I*, 1972 (1977). Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 11' 52". MACBA Collection, MACBA Consortium. © Samuel Beckett, 2018

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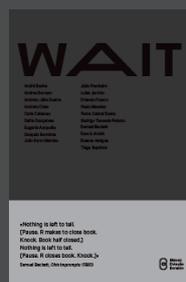
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