



Temporary exhibition
Level -1

João Miguel Barros
Photo-Scripts
22/02 — 03/06/2018

Photo-Scripts

PHOTO-SCRIPTS, ed. 2018, comprises fourteen short stories, all independent from each other, and can be read like a book of short stories. They are fourteen exercises based on a certain roaming of our gaze, but also of our writing fictionalised from reality, seeking meaning in moments that could easily go unnoticed.

PHOTO-SCRIPTS, ed. 2018, is an exhibition of loose ends, based on narratives that are more or less consistent, but capable of showing a world of small complexities. It is part of a pre-conceived itinerary, intended to reveal simple stories from almost nothing, at times just a little something, following a logic that contradicts the clichéd idea that only decisive moments are worthy of being retold.

PHOTO-SCRIPTS, ed. 2018, is essentially the start of an ambitious project intended to give visibility to some of the multiple invisibilities and insignificances that constantly rush before our eyes.

Biography

João Miguel Barros

João Miguel Barros was born in 1958. He is a lawyer by profession, in Lisbon and Macau. He was co-director of the SEMA culture and visual arts magazine (1979-1982). He recently began to exhibit his work, having also published the photography book *Between Gaze and Hallucination*. He is a freelance curator in the area of contemporary photography. In recent years, he has studied the main contemporary Chinese artists.

01

One Direction

He came from the right, certain of the path to follow, but was forced to stop. He was undoubtedly at a crossroads and required to make a choice. Just when he had come out of a painful process that requires him to make the choices faced by those who have no choice. Where to go? Go back? How to change level? How to face the north? Or is it the south? Where to change direction? What is the colour of the night with so many dazzling lights? Where to find the sea? And the tree of his childhood? Where did the light of the full moon come from? How to watch the smile of the driver alongside? Turn right again? Maybe left? How to get out of there? Between the unknown and anguish, he opted for the unknown, closing his eyes: using the limited space in front of him, he moved forward, straight ahead, in a continuous line, as if his existence was destined to be travelled along just as a one-way road.



Photo #01.14 (Shangai, R.P. China, 2017)
Photography

02

Trees

During his childhood, when fate had placed him in distant lands, he would gaze at trees for hours, enchanted by their shapes, imagining how much they had lived.

He knew almost all of them by name. He never understood the reason that led him to give boys' names to some and girls' names to others. Perhaps their size, their delicacy, the number of branches or their foliage.

Life led him to other parts. He lost the immensity of that open spaces, but he managed to earn the right to have half a dozen olive trees in his garden, admiring them for their eternal youth. Sometimes, at night, he would talk to them. A habit from his childhood that he never lost. He considered them confidants, who heard him tell stories of a large tree in front of the house where he was born that was so big that not even two men together, with their long arms, could embrace it.

03

Precipice

How to keep one's balance on a risky path, crossing an abyss of many paces?

He had always dreamed about that adventure that challenged limits and human resistance. One day he decided that he just had to.

It was essential to test his capacity to face the laws of nature and the imponderables of fear, without a divine hand to protect him from the risks of a fall and without any help other than his desire to overcome the unpredictable.

He chose a cloudy day so that the sun would not get in his eyes. He stretched a new cord firmly attached to the precipice at each end and started to cross it, beginning the walk that would bring him recognition.

He took his first steps forward, without hesitation or ambiguity. And thus he continued straight ahead, advancing several metres.

He woke up suddenly, with a nervous start, unable to understand why he had decided to interrupt his steps and to jump halfway.

04

Tribute

When he was still a boy, he used cloth wrapped round his fists to hit flour bags. It strengthened muscles, he had heard people say. He wanted to grow with a muscular body, above all to attract the prettiest girls in the neighbourhood. These were the routines of his free, too free, time.

When he was older, he began to use his body in real fights. He was powered by the urge to crush his opponent, to show his fierce and implacable side, but no longer to fulfil the dream of going out with the prettiest girl in the neighbourhood. Just to hit. And to win.

At the same time, his body thickened and he had no time to nurture a fluid mind. Yes, he knew how to hit. He was known for hitting hard, implacably. He would win. Sometimes he lost. But, generally he won.

Over time, and without any time, he began to live confined within the ropes of the ring. Hitting. Being hit. Crying. Gritting his protected teeth. And occasionally smiling with rage. Yes, smiling.

In his last fight, he lost his life's dreams. But he left the ring unharmed, on his own two feet, still smiling.



Photo #02.01 (Shangai, R.P. China, 2014)
Photography

05

Between Gaze and Hallucination

The promenade was huge, full of people, sometimes intolerably crowded, sometimes not quite so crowded, but almost always full of people. They could clearly hear the sea, especially on rainless winter days. The waves relentlessly crashing a short distance away caused sounds with different intonations. Romantics would say that they were untuned harps that urged people to go home. Others felt that these were signs that encouraged them to take long walks that were frequently tough due to the cold arriving from distant and hidden horizons.

There were also animals on the promenade. Some were pets. Others were strays, without leash or master, unable even in the winter to find any shelter more welcoming than gaps between the rocks or in the ruins of some of the abandoned houses in the vicinity. One of these stray dogs was well known to regular walkers. He would gaze at the night, trying to guess the sounds coming from the movement of the sea. Night after night. Always at the same spot. Indifferent to those passing by. To those who watched him.

06

Night Visions III

At night everything is permitted. A barking dog, a secret relationship, embarrassed laughter, a catcall, a ripping of clothing, revenge postponed, a show with no audience, a car on the wrong side of the road, an intentional drinking spree, a stag night, an agitated writer, a bitter walk, a successful suicide, a scientist in production, an inspired drunk, shrill music, an uncreative painter, a bar open late, a desperate cry, a lively argument, a flaming volcano, a deserted street, a fused lamp, an empty house, a first quarter moon. At night everything is permitted. Until daybreak, to end the night.



Photo #05.03 (Costa da Caparica, Portugal, 2016)
Photography



Photo #06.01 (Lisboa, Portugal, 2014)
Photography

07

Representation of Love

Once upon a time...

When they were children, they already had the comfort of closeness. They sought each other. Sometimes they touched. Normally they walked together as if there were no purpose in the world other than those moments together. They didn't speak. They would watch the sea, always close. Sometimes, they would enter the forest. One day they casually kissed.

And time went by. They grew. They didn't speak. They couldn't. And in the time that followed time, intimacy grew. An intimacy ashamed at times, but which left no room for anything else or anyone else. They were times of great submission and seduction. Of gifts...

"Stop, stop", said a resounding voice at the back of the amphitheatre, interrupting the ritual of seduction and conquest. "What dance is that? How is it possible that you don't yet know what love is in modern times?!"

They looked at each other again, suspending the gestures that imitated those that they repeated so many times over the years. And at that moment, even without speaking, they understood that the stage of life was far more than any form of representation of love.



Photo #07.03 (Bangkok, Thailand, 2017)
Photography

08

Salgados II

Sunrise, on the heels of dawn, is the right time for a walk along Salgados beach. The sea at that time isn't rough. Indeed, to tell the truth, it's rarely rough. The sand remains smooth, with just a few scattered footprints of seagulls and other birds accompanying her.

These moments have a special feel when the mist is still rolling along the ground, as if it were too lazy to move away.

She used to be one of the first to step on these virgin night sands and to take a long walk along the water, pursued by bands of noisy seagulls, perhaps protesting at the invasion of a space that they considered only theirs. However, that was the time when she could speak her secrets out aloud, so that they could never again torment her soul.

After sunrise, creeping out of its secret hiding place beyond the horizon, that place would be transformed and lose its charm, invaded by hordes of people who did not know how to respect the sea or its mysteries.



Photo #08.03 (Salgados, Portugal, 2016)
Photography

09

Spring Tides

The open sea beat violently against the rocks. Backwards and forwards. It curved over itself in irregular movements. It was almost always heavy in that area, wild. When he was still a child, he would ask Grandfather, in the midst of countless stories of brave sailors and sea giants yet to be discovered, "how many tides fit in this sea?". And he would recall that his grandfather invariably answered "as many as you can count". Sometimes he went alone to the sea wall in front of his house. And he would add up the movements of the turbulent waters that came and went. But he always concluded that the task was too much for his limited capacity to associate all the numbers he knew. And then he would lose himself, because there were never two identical tides. Years later he had heard that "there is sea and sea ..." and he would try to guess where it was beyond the line of the horizon. Whenever he looked at infinity, from the height of that huge sea wall, he would remember that he could never count the tides of that sea. The fact is that he also never knew where so much sea went. But he knew that it always came. However much it had to leave again.



Photo #09.09 (Sintra, Portugal, 2013)
Photography

10

Night Visions I

Yes, there are places where night is more night, with shadows confused with bodies and objects. All things moving around there appear to be projections of a hidden reality. In those lanes, for example. In those inner lanes that great blocks of buildings create and compress, there is a hidden, imperceptible life. It is necessary to enter through the dark to feel that pulse. Behind these lanes, the streets are wide, well-lit, with light calculated to project the exuberance of the large shops and give the neons and appearances room to breathe. The city lives on these contrasts. Without ceremony, it accommodates the freedom of the powerful and, at the same time, the slavery of the men tied to work that slowly consumes them. Disfiguring them. Until they become invisible to others.

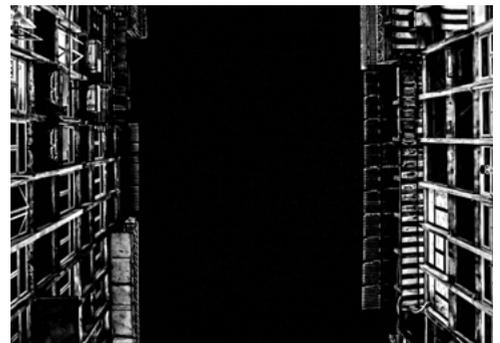


Photo #10.09 (Hong Kong, R.P. China, 2016)
Photography

11

Empty Theatre

The stage was deserted. Or rather, it appeared to be deserted, without the bustle of big days, with only the muffled sound of dragging feet in the distance, causing an undefined and dismal echo in the room.

Perhaps it was that, the lack of people, of applause and booing, of nerves before the scene, of the whispering of the orchestra, of embarrassed coughs, of the announcement before the start of each show, of great exhibited glories, of the failures that history has already forgotten, of aspirants to stardom, of the perfumed passage of eternal divas and heaven knows what else.

And there she was, staring like those who see everything, with a disturbing carousel rocking her imaginings of so many days. Maybe it was...

She stood up slowly, knowing full well that the room was deserted. The small groan of a slender and obedient Alsatian dog indicated the time. With her stick sweeping a path ahead of her, walking supporting by the continuous line of the edges of the aisle seats, she left, leaving that place where she had so often been happy, but where she always returned in moments in which she wanted to disturb the punishing silence.

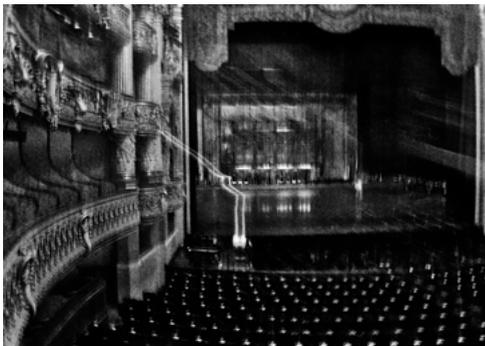


Photo #11.02 (Paris, França, 2013)
Photography

12

Magic Bridge

On that day, a white mist fell on the city, hiding the river bank from all eyes.

On that day, the bridge had something magic about it.

Nobody ever really understood, but everybody thought that its long structure, barely above the water near the banks but steep in this middle and creating a perfect cone, as if it were pulled up by divine hands to make room for boats to sail under it, gave it a strange sense, difficult to explain through normal understanding. It appeared to be the construction of a sorcerer. And for this reason it appeared to be magic.

On that day when the white mist fell over the city, all the distances that the bridge helped to shorten could not be travelled, their beginning and end impossible to guess.

That is the fate of all bridges enveloped in white mist!



Photo #13.01 (Shangai, R.P. China, 2017)
Photography

13

The Path on the Other Side

It was a concrete structure that was so large that it almost acted as a wall between the city and the neighbouring lands. Nobody understood why anyone would build that mass, whose roughness and inelegance could only be hidden on dark nights. Somebody told him that it wasn't beauty that mattered, provided there was a superior purpose. It didn't have to be attractive. But the truth is that it was very high and ended in a place invisible to the eye.

People speculated in whispers about what it was for. But one day they realised why. There was an ancient belief that only prayers said aloud were heard.

Those who believed this also said that they needed to be spoken in a very loud voice. And it was proven that on the earth this was almost impossible.

That was why the city's new ruler, seeking peace with the gods, ordered that gigantic highway to be built, to allow him to whisper his desire for eternal life at the divine gates.

14

Most Excellent Personae

Personae. Personae. What does it matter whether they are also princesses or princes! Actually they are undoubtedly people like us, attached to the land and to other places, taken from their routine and distant everyday lives. People with strange languages, often incapable of understanding each other. And us, here, inevitably accomplices to their destinies.

But what do these distances matter if they are only records of gazes? Gazes, some coming from the bottom of the soul. Others occasional or inattentive. All, after all, ways of witnessing a time. Ours. And a place. This, here.

Personae, therefore. But also Most Excellent.

Text: João Miguel Barros

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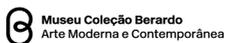
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