

Rui Mourão
Videoarbeiten | 2005 - 2010

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RUI MOURÃO (b. 1977 in Lisbon, Portugal) lives and works in Lisbon.

He has studied photography and contemporary art at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and acting / cinema at Centre d'Estudis Cinematogràfics de Catalunya, Barcelona. He has studied visual arts at Maumaus - Escola de Artes Visuais / Visual Arts School, Lisbon, and at Konsthögskolan i Malmö / Malmö Art Academy, Sweden.

He was selected to the Portuguese national show of *Young Creators / Jovens Criadores*, video section (2006 and 2007), to *LOOP – The Video Art Festival*, Barcelona (2007 and 2008) and to *Anteciparte – A Selection of Portuguese Up Coming Artists* (2009).

He made artistic collaborations for Coco Fusco (2002) and Erwin Wurm (2008).

Selected solo exhibitions: *Rui Mourão / Videoarbeiten / 2005 – 2010*, rosalux, Berlin (2010); *Por Bem*, National Palace of Sintra, Sintra (2009); *Coup d'Art*, CAPC – Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra / Visual Arts Circle of Coimbra, Coimbra (2009); *A Vida Segue a Um*, Sala do Veado, National Museum of Natural History, Lisbon (2008).

Selected group exhibitions: *Anteciparte*, Orient Museum, Lisbon (2009); *Looking For Some Small Marks / Waiting For The Right Moment*, Voyeur Project View, Lisbon (2009); *At/By/For/Into/Around The House*, Pavilhão 28, Hosp. Júlio de Matos, Lisbon and Koh-i-noor, Copenhagen (2008); *Liquid Room*, NCCA – National Center for Contemporary Arts, Moscow (2008); *Private Office*, Espaço Avenida, Lisbon (2007); *After Urban*, Monkey Town, New York (2007); *Tudo Menos a Palavra?... / Everything But The Word?...*, Instituto Camões, Lisbon (2007); *LOOP*, distritoQuinto, Barcelona (2007).

In my artistic practice, I isolate everyday, real situations and I give them new meanings. I am particularly interested in channeling in familiar situations that are drawn from my personal experience. The processes of reflection, representation and construction beyond the actual situation begin with the record and the appropriation by me of the reality close at hand. Such records are translated into metaphor through personal or collective processes in given contemporary contexts (at levels social, economic, political, cultural, historical, etc). These are processes of search for identity (*Por bem*, 2009), for power (*S / Título*, 2005), for knowledge (*Do outro lado do vidro (Os Pássaros)*, 2009) and for meaning (*Quando lembro há ali outra coisa quando me calo*, 2007).

While recording situations of resistance, withdrawal or adaptation, I am particularly interested in showing the connections and the tensions such that arise between the individual and the collective (*No dia em que um homem morreu*, 2006), the exception and the system (*Looking for some small marks*, 2008), the transient and the permanent (*Do outro lado do quadro (o pó da História)*, 2009), the linear and the non-linear (*Do outro lado da cortina (transição)*, 2007/2008), the private and the public (*Acesso condicionado*, 2007), looking and being looked at (*Tróia (call center)*, 2007), and between the self and the Other (*Luís e António*, 2008). In dealing with these questions, my practice towards reality is mostly contemplative and I give much care to framing (*Fulguração*, 2006/2007). Frequently, my video work takes a performance quality based on minimal, ordinary, non-fictional action (*S / Título*, 2010). The pre-existing scene acts as a stimulus for the action (*Reflexos*, 2007). The editing of the images introduces a choreographic dimension to the action and its movements (*Waiting for the right moment*, 2009).

In the end, having undergone this work of appropriation and subversion, everything in otherwise ordinary situations will shift from its original context. The original situations are not natural anymore and the way is open to reinterpreting it all.

Rui Mourão

UNTITLED | 2005

(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 4'22", colour, sound)

This video is the outcome of a challenge issued by the *Instituto franco-português* to the Maumaus Visual Arts School, as part of its activities in celebration of the 30th anniversary of Michel Foucault's book "Discipline and Punish".

Foucault's analyses had become an important benchmark in the political thinking of the artist, especially as regards power relations in a social context. Such reflections made it necessary for the artist to react to the conditions imposed by society and, particularly, to those originating from the public institutions and their officials who have authority to discipline and supervise. In pursuit of a space for liberty, the artist makes use in this video of the power that the camera can give in a world fascinated by images.

First, several interviews were conducted with officers of the civil (PSP) and military police (GNR), of both sexes, of different ages and positions in the hierarchy of their institutions. Subsequently, in the stage of editing the interviews, everything but the preliminary shots was discarded. The selected shots show police officers in uniform moving around while trying to follow the artist's instructions. The final outcome is a kind of choreography performed in front of the camera by various officers representing public authority, and this strange dance is directed by the artist's voice. We participate here in a humorous subversion – and inversion – of the usual direction of power.

These images also capture the peculiarities of each individual police officer, like personal portraits do, and this exposure of their frailty, behind the institutional uniform, makes them in turn more human.

NO DIA EM QUE UM HOMEM MORREU | *The day a man died* | 2006

(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 7'50", colour, sound)

This video focuses on the collective in order to get to the individual, and reflects on the permanence or absence of an individual in a given place.

The title initially implies a subjective narrative in the video that is denied in every shot and in the end is never given. We can perfectly imagine that the viewer would forget the "man" referred to in the title while watching the succession of long shots.

Subsequently, we see images of everyday life in peripheral suburban space, with its congested highways, the non-stop daily traffic, alienating housing blocks, soulless, shut up balconies, repetitive suburban patches of green and endless uniform streetlights. In these images, people are either absent or reduced to a lesser scale in the city system. Throughout the video, the soundtrack is standardized down to a continuous noise produced by the traffic.

The video resorts to contemplative language in order to trigger a reflection on the denial of the individual by the collective, the exception by the system, the emotional by the rational, the primitive by the civilized, the transient by the permanent.

The day a man died nothing really changed, everything went on unaltered and unalterable.

FULGURAÇÃO | *Fulguration* | 2006 / 2007

(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 14'18", colour, sound)

Fulguração s.f. Heat lightning. A flash of lightning produced by electricity in the atmosphere where thunder is

too distant to be audible. / Flash, shine, quick twinkling / Med. The destruction of living tissue by electric sparks generated by a high-frequency current or by lightning.

Translation of the entry in the Dicionário enciclopédico Koogan Larousse.

In this video, several images of neon signs and light boxes of commercial brands combine and interact – but not necessarily coincide – with real audio recordings of crashed airplanes' black boxes.

The conceptual process is based on the idea of a desire to rise (conveyed by images) and the subsequent fall (conveyed by sound). From this point forward, the artist brings into play longings, fears and collective imagination. The trashy way in which the video is installed is a consequence of the call to consume more illustrated in its contents.

The images were captured in the late afternoon and at dusk, while the sound records the moments just before the crash. The frames are mostly low angle views, directed towards the top of neighbouring buildings (a hint to a series of aspirations, power relations and identity constructions). A multifarious roofscape is made visible consisting of metallic structures, scaffolding, TV antennas (standard and parabolic), mobile phone network antennas, video surveillance cameras, decorative architectural elements, chimneys and birds.

The soundtrack was downloaded from the internet. Intentionally, the lighted signs correspond to 9 foreign international brands and 1 important local firm. The total number of 10 alludes to the fingers with which we humans touch, secure and handle things and also organize our numerical thinking. The signs belong to different categories of consumer goods and services that characterize a certain way of life, and a set of real or imaginary needs.

This video installation works as a metaphor for contemporary economical, social, cultural and political systems.

REFLEXOS | *Reflexes and reflections* | 2007

(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 6', colour, no sound)

The action in this video takes place in a school where the artist used to teach. Children are asked questions and the video shows them as they put up their hands for permission to speak in accordance with school's rules. Since the video has no sound, questions and answers remain unknown. The contents are desire/eagerness (raising arms) and frustration/disenchantment (lowering arms). Hanna Arendt's book "The human condition" had a great influence on this video's conceptual process.

The title was chosen because of its double meaning. "Reflexo", like the reflex motor reaction, and "Reflexo", like the reflected - or mirror - image. This video is to be accompanied by the following text:

"REFLEXOS"

In 3 different ways: from the teacher to the children, and how it reflects, in turn, on the teacher; from the children to the teacher, and how it reflects, in turn, on the children; from the chosen child towards the class and how it reflects, in turn, on the chosen child.

In the teacher-children direction, the children's bodies spring up in reaction to the questions of the artist-teacher, a choreographic and metaphorical reflection of his doubts and worries.

In the children-teacher direction, the latter embodies the authority whose attention the children try to capture. When choosing a child that will be permitted to answer, the teacher gives the class the chance to express their individuality beyond the uniformity of the group, and the chosen child receives a reflection that somehow confirms her existence.

In the chosen child-class direction, each pupil tries to stand out from the group of pairs, and aims at receiving

from the group, in return, an image of the status conferred to him by the fact that she has been chosen by the teacher, and that she is the one who gives the answer.

The reflection of the anxiety of the self shows through, beyond the children's eagerness to answer, as well as the need to be reflected in the glance of the Other as a factor of identification of the reflected self: the world reflects me. The short-lived experience of the reflection, or its absence, makes the children drop their arms in revolt, withdrawal or frustration, but only to put their hands up again the next moment.

TRÓIA (CALL - CENTER) | *Troy (call-center)* | 2007
(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 5'53", colour, sound)

In this video, the action – or lack of action – takes place in a call-centre.

First, you see an apparently uninhabited open working space, with panoptical qualities. Gradually, you realize there are people there – staff that is sleeping at its workplace.

Such inactivity offers two levels of reading. It can be understood in a subversive way as an act of passive resistance – and thus bringing into question the purpose of social power structure, functionality, norms, efficiency, promptness and competitiveness – or it can be interpreted in a broader social ambit, as a metaphor for a questioning vision of the course of things – apathetic, submissive, "asleep" – as regarding the power relations in the existing systems of social organization.

Via the title, this video also refers to the mythical episode of the conquest of Troy, a cultural benchmark of the western imagination. The artist's intention is to establish a parallel between the images and the fate of that gullible and unwary city that slept while its foe, the enemy that was to destroy it, was already concealing at its very heart. Alternatively, it is possible to imagine a Troy that has already been stormed, and those lying bodies can be corpses that connect our imaginary with death itself – and death itself, according to an ancient Greek moral lesson, is the state of ultimate deliverance, where the body ceases to be dependent on necessity, its most important cause of enslavement. Or else, we can think that the workspace itself is bound to devour its inhabitants in the end.

The images show an increasing psychasthenic undifferentiation between individuals and place, as resistance processes of a neurasthenic nature are launched. Minimal action in the video is the means chosen by the artist to foster multiple readings.

The roots of this video can be found in the influence of Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt and Hal Foster's political and philosophical thinking on the artist's mind, together with the fact that the artist was working at the time in a call-centre.

ACESSO CONDICIONADO | *Controlled access* | 2007
(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 22', colour, no sound)

This video was shot in an apartment building, dating back to the first years of the 20th century and presently uninhabited, located at Avenida da Liberdade, in Lisbon. It records the backstairs of the building that were originally intended for the exclusive use of servants and suppliers. The specialized use of the front- and the backstairs corresponds to functional and class segregation that was thought natural in those days, a reflection of a social organization that fostered visual separation between the menial activities and the world of the masters, the private and the public. The images were filmed *in situ* and show the perspective of someone going up and down the backstairs, trying unsuccessfully a key in every locked door he comes upon,

and work as a metaphor of multiple readings.

QUANDO LEMBRO HÁ ALI OUTRA COISA

QUANDO ME CALO |

When I remember there is something else

When I keep silent | 2007

(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 13'13", colour, sound)

In every school playground it is possible to hear certain words and expressions that the children use and that are not to be found in dictionaries. Words that are entirely made up or words that evolve from existing ones, or have been given new meanings (in games, in bullying, in rhymes and rigmaroles). Most of these words and expressions fall out of use with time because of their transient nature (they are the craze of a moment, or will last for a school term - disappearing the next, or are never to be used again as their speakers grow up).

Some of these words are restrained to a small community, in a particular school, class or group, while others are adopted from television and are more commonly used. Nevertheless, very seldom, there are some of these words and expressions that accompany the children in their journey into adolescence and become the mark of entire generations in adult life, eventually making their way into the Portuguese language.

This video is the outcome of research that the artist conducted in this field while he was working as a teacher of extracurricular activities in grade school. After school, when pupils, teachers and staff had left the premises, the artist recorded on video the school buildings, the classrooms, the corridors, the windows, stairways, playgrounds and the sports field. The contemplative shots record uninhabited space, and yet the presence of the daytime occupants and their everyday activities pervades everything.

The artist seems to recall experiences from his distant past, that overlap with more recent ones. From a space recognizable to everyone, and from language games that everyone has experienced in a similar context, we are taken back to memories that are simultaneously personal and collective. Relations are established between language, memory, childhood, architecture, the artist's personal experience and a given social, historical and cultural context.

The title refers directly to these issues and was suggested by a poem by Herberto Helder.

LOOKING FOR SOME SMALL MARKS | 2008

(video | mini-DV transferred to 2 DVDs, 7'30", colour, no sound)

This video is the result of a combination of 2 videos. The "Looking for" video is shown on the left side whereas the "some small marks" video is shown on the right side. Both videos combine and establish aesthetic, spatial and conceptual connections between them.

The action takes place in a big bicycle park built over water, at the side of a train and bus interface station in Sweden. In such a place, it is usual to see people looking for their bikes among hundreds and thousands of them.

As is recurrent in his practice, the artist has produced artistic work out of his personal experience. He has himself spent many hours there looking for his bicycle. At some point, he started to record things on video and to interview other users of the bicycle park with a view on investigating their strategies resulting from local know-how. The title comes from one of these interviews. It came out that the users of the bicycle park label or make marks on their bicycles that they can later recognize and remember. In that way, what seems at a first

glance to be a large mass of parked vehicles is in reality permeated by many small individual distinctive features. It is such small features that people look for in order to find their bike and leave the place to resume their everyday activities and to get back to their lives.

As the video goes on, the shots focus more and more on the behaviours and movements of people in their quest. The edition of the video turns it to a kind of choreography created out of everyday life. The action in the video – people at times lost, confused, vulnerable, looking for something that really matters in that moment - is a metaphor that works in many different ways.

The artist uses those “small marks” and a simple practical situation as the starting point for a reflection on identities and the relations between the individual and the collective, the private and the public, the self and the Other.

DO OUTRO LADO DA CORTINA (TRANSIÇÃO) | *The other side of the curtains (transition)* | 2007 | 2008
(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 3' 35", colour, no sound)

This video was filmed in the wings of the São Carlos National Theatre in Lisbon. Lisbon's Opera house is clearly inspired by the San Carlo theatre in Naples and the Scala in Milan. Both theatres have long since been rebuilt after having suffered great damage in fires and bombings, turning the São Carlos, their scaled-down and elegant replica, into something unique and original.

The artist resorts to his temporary job and to his personal life experience to develop an artistic project, in a search for a space of liberty in his circumstance. This work interferes with the pragmatic level of his duties, reflecting it as much as reflecting on it. It is as though the basic situation was experienced in a mirror-image, observed from a significant distance. The video is accompanied by a light box showing an enlargement of the tax income receipt corresponding to the artist's pay as an Opera house service provider.

The artist used to work regularly at the time as an extra in the productions of the Opera house. His perspective of the show was always from the stage, where he played a very minor role, being just another element placed there to help compose the scene – and enabling him to watch the events of the plot as they developed between the actors while he stands on stage or waits behind curtains for his turn to step in.

The video consists of a sequence where a group of dancers perform choreography from behind the drop cloth. Through editing, a second – inverted - choreography is created. The transition of both groups from one end of the cloth (start) to the other end (finish) produces a visual play of overlapping bodies. There is no music or text, not the slightest hint to what could be the story going on in this show.

Choreographies are usually meant to be seen from the audience's side of the drop cloth, but what we see here is a multiplicity of bodies gesticulating on the hidden side of the curtains – the dark side, if seen from the normal perspective. For a moment, their hands, heads, parts of bodies and accessories disappear into the cloth but we cannot see what they do on the other side – the front side. Thus, we find ourselves looking at images of a transition we can't really see, nor quite really understand, a show that is clearly intended for some unknown viewer who is off-camera.

From the conception of this video to its conclusion, the artist's own life underwent deep change, having lived, between 2007 and 2008, first in Lisbon, then in Malmö (Sweden), then back in Sintra, all this resulting in a big personal transition.

LUÍS E ANTÓNIO | *Luís and António* | 2008
(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 10'44", colour, sound)

This video was possible thanks to the gracious cooperation of two gardeners of the National Palace of Queluz, Luís and António - their real names. They agreed to be filmed as they performed their daily tasks (pruning and cleaning the hedges, cutting out the deadwood, pulling out weeds).

The artist seeks to connect the viewer with the concept of gardening, in order to open the way to a reflection on the human need for setting up either oppositions or connections between civilization and nature, reason and emotion, the self and the Other.

The artist himself sporadically works at the National Palace of Queluz, and is paid under the fixed-term contract scheme. It has become a constant in his artistic practice to conceive art work out of the temporary jobs with which he earns his living. At a conceptual level, it is relevant that these creations not only should be produced at the workplace, but also in the working hours. By subverting basic situations that are utilitarian, functional and necessary in origin and producing artistic work out of it, the artist is also creating a utopian alternative, conquering a space of liberty.

This work offers two levels of readings. First, in a more immediate social and political dimension, it fosters a reflection on the labour market situation resulting of the prevailing neo liberal economic practices, conveyed by a small narrative originating in a plain workplace relationship established between two people. There is also an emotional perspective. The real provides the material for a narrative set somewhere in between this reality and a fiction originating in the artist's own personal reality. It becomes impossible to tell the recorded real from the fiction produced by the autobiographical real.

This opens the way to a crossing of experiences, questions, and memories that are at the same time personal and collective. It also makes possible metaphorical allusions to other possible readings, namely those related to identity and sexual minorities.

WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT | 2009

(video | mini-DV transferred to DVD, 3'15" + 4'32" + 3'07", colour, no sound)

This video has a close connection with "Looking for some small marks" and pursues its conceptual line with a new everyday, real situation, set in a different space and in another context. This time, we see people waiting at the traffic lights for their turn to cross the street when the light turns green for them.

This video was filmed in Lisbon, in the vicinity of a railway station and bus stops, after the artist's return to Portugal. In that sense, it has a specific meaning in relation to his personal development, even though the situation of people waiting for the right moment to step forward works by itself. It has various metaphorical meanings.

The video presents a succession of individuals who refrain of moving forward so that other individuals can do so, in order. Everyone complies to a system of social organization since this is the only way things can work as a whole and individuals can have their turn to move forward safely.

The artist is especially interested in the reactions, attitudes, emotions, behaviours, pauses and gestures caused by restraint at the borderline of the individual and the collective, of the self and the Other.

DO OUTRO LADO DO VIDRO (OS PÁSSAROS) | *On the other side of the glass pane (the birds)* | 2009

(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 12' 51", colour, no sound)

This video is related to services provided by the artist to the Portuguese Cinémathèque. An experience tied to

utility and functionality induces the artist to produce artistic work at the workplace and in the working hours. In this way, he enters the field of pragmatism, reflecting it as much as reflecting on it, as he endeavours to conquer a space of liberty.

The video alternates prose texts with image recordings of a projectionist in his cabin that have an almost documentary quality. The sentences are cut out in unusual ways so as to suggest poetry. In doing so the text actually becomes poetry. The mimicry of the form takes us to the essence of the model.

Some of the texts are short descriptions of scenes of Hitchcock's "The Birds" motion picture which alternate with other short and curious narratives where it is difficult to discern the fictional from the autobiographical. These two levels have in common, at some point, the vision of a bird that is associated with an emotional state, a thought or a situation. The texts are also sprinkled with terms borrowed from the jargon of film making (e.g. "fade in - fade out", "low angle view"). In different ways, these terms refer to a particular episode in the narratives or to what is going on in the images. As the video proceeds, it becomes less and less clear what is real and what is fictional, what is a personal memory of the artist and what is a scene from "The Birds", which memories belong to the projectionist, and which belong to the artist. All this happens in a space that is conspicuously devoted to memory: a cinémathèque.

DO OUTRO LADO DO QUADRO (O PÓ DA HISTÓRIA) | *On the other side of the picture (the dust of history)* | 2009
(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 4' 08", colour, no sound)

This work is related to the artist's work experience as an assistant at the Sintra National Palace, under a fixed-term contract issued by the referred Institute. An experience tied to utility and functionality induces the artist to produce artistic work at the workplace and in the working hours. In this way, he enters the field of pragmatism, reflecting it as much as reflecting on it, as he endeavours to conquer a space of liberty.

As is recurrent in his practice, an everyday situation was identified and framed out of its original context to be reinterpreted and given new meanings. In this occasion it was an episode of the cleaning week at the palace. The artist filmed himself at dusting the back of a picture. The chosen picture is not just any picture, but a rather special one, conspicuously pretending to represent King Sebastian, a romantic icon of the Portuguese national identity. However, this picture is now believed to be a copy made by Alonso Sánchez Coello of an original painted in Spain by Sofonisba Anguissola portraying the ill-fated Carlos, Prince of Asturias (1545-1568), the eldest son of Philip II by his first wife, Maria of Portugal, and who is said to have born a resemblance to his cousin King Dom Sebastian. This picture is therefore a copy, but a copy that was changed into an original when it was at a later date modified by the addition of the Portuguese royal arms and the following inscription: Portrait of King Dom Sebastian I, sixteenth of Portugal, made in the era of 1671.

By taking down the picture, turning it over, dusting it and finally hanging it back on the wall, the artist seeks to promote reflection and critical thinking on such questions as national identity, its myths, and on historical legitimizations based on fictional constructs.

POR BEM | *Por Bem* | 2009
(video | mini-dv transferred to DVD, 6'43", colour, no sound)

As is recurrent in the artist's practice, both the conceptual process and the realization of this work take as a pretext the tasks performed at the workplace and in working hours. In this case, the artist's double condition of a visual artist working as an assistant at the National Palace of Sintra enables him to use his income-

earning activities as the raw material for his art. In doing so, the artist creates a distance between himself, his artistic practice, and the remunerated work. Such distance allows for perspective, reflection and critical thinking as the artist forays into the field of pragmatism, reflecting it as much as reflecting on it in the process.

The title – *Por Bem* – is a motto of King Dom João I that is repeatedly painted on the ceiling of one of the rooms of National Palace of Sintra and to which are associated various legends and stories (similar to those connected with the English “Honni soit qui mal y pense” motto and King Edward III).

In this video, the artist records himself carrying around a portrait allegedly of King Dom Sebastian, a romantic icon of Portuguese national identity. This portrait is the same one that the artist had dusted in the video *On the other side of the picture (the dust of history)*. Nowadays, the referred portrait presents conspicuously a series of clues leading to its interpretation as a portrait of King Sebastian. However, it is now believed to be a copy made by Alonso Sánchez Coello of an original painted in Spain by Sofonisba Anguissola portraying the ill-fated Carlos, Prince of Asturias (1545-1568), the eldest son of Philip II by his first wife, Maria of Portugal, and who is said to have born a resemblance to his cousin King Dom Sebastian. The picture was modified at a later date by the addition of elements carefully chosen to identify the sitter with the Portuguese King whose body disappeared at the Alcácer-Quibir battle in Morocco. Those elements are the Portuguese royal arms and the following inscription: Portrait of King Dom Sebastian I, sixteenth of Portugal, made in the era of 1671.

Recent radiologic examination of the painting showed that additional changes had been made to the picture. In particular, it was discovered that the badge hanging from the King's collar was originally that of the Spanish Order of the Golden Fleece. It had been repainted with the cross-shaped badge of the Portuguese Order of Christ, a symbol deeply linked to the most glorious feats of the Portuguese navigations of the Discoveries Age, as well as with a series of modern political and military institutions and organizations.

The artist carries the picture of King Sebastian along the rooms of the palace that are associated with legends and historical anecdotes (the Swan room, the Magpie room, the Coats of arms room, King Sebastian's chamber, King Afonso VI's chamber). By doing so, he implicitly affirms the icon's threefold transitoriness: as a fragile object whose identification has suffered a heavy blow and because the national consciousness it represents, steadily constructed after the independence of 1640 and claimed ever since to various ends, is everything but eternal, or mythical, or beyond historical questioning. The picture and the actions performed upon it by the artist are used to trigger a reflection on questions related to national identity, its myths, and to historical legitimizations based on fictional constructs.

Nevertheless, this reflection is not only about demythologizing Portuguese identity, associated to an image that happens to be a fake. The video also shows the palace, the imposing settings of a place that was once the residence of kings and is now a museum, a place where history crystallizes and is vertiginously exhibited as a consumer item. The artist considers the museum as a living entity, inhabited by the bodies of those who work there and the crowds of visitors. An archive full of life, the museum is also, paradoxically, the reliquary that enshrines history. King Sebastian's presence is to be felt in the museum. His picture might be a forgery, but the artist keeps coming back to it; this time, to define his own individual identity.