

**Exhibition**

**09.12.2017 – 13.05.2018**

# **COSMO/POLITICS #1**

# **THE SIXTH**

# **PART OF**

# **THE WORLD**

**Contemporary Art Cycle**  
**2017 - 2020**

**André Guedes**  
**Maria Trabulo**  
**Marcelo Felix**  
**Nikolai Nekh**



**Câmara Municipal**  
**de Vila Franca de Xira**  
[www.cm-vfxira.pt](http://www.cm-vfxira.pt)

**m neorealismo**  
museu do neo-realismo

## **On the new cycle of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Neo-Realism**

The so-called "interwar period" is characterized by a very strong ideological and political polarization, whose structuring axis is a sense of definitive crisis of the solutions generated by the demoliberalist world, which are ultimately the multiple, direct or indirect, legacies of the French Revolution.

The geopolitical, social, and economic consequences of the so-called World War I, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the crisis of 1929 and the rise of Fascist and Nazi movements converged on the initially diffuse and progressively more conscious expansion of the idea of living in a time of transition.

The awareness of oneself and of one's historical situation is, therefore, deeply linked to this idea of the present as a transition: as a civilizational transition, i.e., not as a mere political change, but as a subversion of the social infrastructures themselves and of the relationship between men and society.

In Portugal, Bento de Jesus Caraça's work, as a whole, is the result of this simultaneously individual and historical experience - in line with the thoughts of some of the other intellectuals who, throughout the world, were captured by the capacity to mobilize what was yet to come. In fact, the influence of Caraça's civic scholarliness conforms, to a large extent, to the opening of this new horizon of intervention for a new intelligentsia.

Indeed, it is in a direct relationship with that new horizon (perceivable in that present experienced as a transition) that we should look at the emergence of neo-realism. In its "cultural" dimension: considering that, in this case, "culture" is understood as an all-encompassing historical view of the world in which present and past refer to a future that, in a way, is progressively becoming a reality throughout the entire historical evolution process. And in its strictly "artistic"

dimension: accepting that art is an unassailable dimension of society as a whole, the key issue was identifying how the various artistic practices could take part, on a basis of aesthetic fairness, in that civilizational transformation.

The cycle that the Museum of Neo-Realism is now proposing to all types of public is an aesthetic revisitation of those circumstances and of that experience. It is not a history of them. It is, by no means, an update of mythified proposals. It is the auscultation of the more or less visible track of emotions. It is the resonance of cries, glances, practices, decisions. It is the attempt to establish flash points for forgotten but enduring realities, seeking to discern the labyrinths of our own historicity.

### **Scientific Director of the Museum of Neo-Realism**

António Pedro Pita

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### **COSMO/POLITICS #1:**

#### **The Sixth Part of the World**

The Museum of Neo-Realism presents a new cycle of contemporary art exhibitions, which includes six collective exhibits, running from 2017 to 2020. Each project, dedicated to a key theme of the neorealist movement, calls on artists to establish a dialogue with the Museum's collection.

The title of the cycle – COSMO/POLITICS – comes from a collection of books known as Biblioteca Cosmos, directed in 1941 by Bento de Jesus Caraça, which was an emancipatory cultural project that played a decisive role in the generalised dissemination of information concerning various areas of knowledge in Portugal, in the first half of the 20th century. The name is also associated with the concept of cosmopoli-

tics as a proposal to extend the scope of politics to other considerations, different views, cultures and ways of inhabiting the world. The enigmatic dimension of the word calls on the understanding of a common world, not the existing one, but the one that is yet to be built. Without the premises of modern universalism and scientific rationality, our attention is drawn to known or unknown, alternative and divergent worlds.

Within the scope of the centennial of the Russian Revolution (1917-2017), the first exhibit of the cycle, *The Sixth Part of the World*, explores revolutionary situations and processes using as starting point the title of the 1926 film, *Chestaia tchast mira* [The Sixth Part of the World] by Dziga Vertov, in which the director analyses the developments of and perspectives on the event that marked modernity and changed the course of the social, political and cultural history of the 20th century.

The exhibition brings together original projects by four artists – André Guedes, Marcelo Felix, Maria Trabulo and Nikolai Nekh – who, based on the present, challenge the concept and idea of revolution under different historical, ideological, economic, ecological and cultural perspectives and scopes. The issues addressed in the works focus on the revolution, but also on revolutions, in the broad sense of the word, on a global culture of circulation of ideas, hopes, images and utopias.

In addition to the exhibit, the cycle includes a complementary program of activities related to the contents of the project, which includes conferences, talks, guided tours, readings and workshops.

### **Curators**

Sandra Vieira Jürgens

Paula Loura Batista

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### **ANDRÉ GUEDES**

In the Contemporary Art Room, the installation *New Day*, by André Guedes, reflects on the sense of utopia and change. It is the result of a research on references associated with the museum's collection, the history of the past and the present, and the real places, situations and contexts of the cultural, social and economic landscape of Vila Franca de Xira. Produced specifically for the MNR, the work consists of a semi-cenographic structure that, despite suggesting an imagined architecture with coloured geometric forms of a constructivist nature at the formal level, is actually evoking the mural design of the CIMPOR headquarters building in Alhandra, bringing it symbolically into the exhibition space. In addition to this evocation, André Guedes brings in Soeiro Pereira Gomes, a neo-realist author and also a former CIMPOR employee, by gathering in a notebook made available to the public a series of texts written by the latter in secrecy. During the course of the exhibition, this work will be activated in moments of shared reading of the texts, by people who were born or live in the region. In this context, both the notebook and the readings reveal the performative dimension of the work, working as devices to make the written and spoken word present, offering a different way of using, discovering and circulating documentary records.

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### **NIKOLAI NEKH**

While in the first area of the exhibit André Guedes places his intervention within the scope of an approach to the local context, Nikolai Nekh aims his reflection on the film *The Sixth Part of the World*, by Dziga Vertov (1926) at global issues, presenting a series of photographs that evoke both the historical relations between Man and Nature and issues related to the history and influence of the Soviet Union,

formerly known as the "sixth part of the world." Using the composition of objects and images from National Geographic magazines published in the 1980s and 1990s, the work refers to latent regional and global problems, from nuclear disasters to climate change. We find references to the Aral Sea, in Uzbekistan, which became a desert due to cotton monoculture, to the city of Pripyat, in northern Ukraine, evacuated after the nuclear accident at Chernobyl, or to the connection between Ethiopia and the Soviet Union, in the image of an African woman with a view master, published in the National Geographic article, "Ethiopia: Revolution in an Ancient Empire", in May 1983. From this set, we should also highlight the work in which the typography and title of the poster of the film *October (1928)*, by Serguei Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov, are applied on a bottle of Lacoste perfume.

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## MARIA TRABULO

The artist presents two works at this exhibit, both related to the possibilities of oblivion and memory. In the Literature Room, we find *On what we wish to remember and what we long to forget (2017)*, a video installation composed of two projections that work as narrative essays on the desire of man to perpetuate memories, through the construction of a portrait based on the memory of a soldier and on the representation of sculptural creation and extraction processes. In *Truce. Though white can always be painted over (2017)*, a work installed at the entrance of the museum, a white flag, without any inscription, refers to the universality of ideals and activates the spectator's mental projections on the political potential of the object and its possible content. In an indirect dialogue with this work by Maria Trabulo, the exhibit includes, in the Literature Room, the painting *Demonstration (1975)* by Rui Filipe, a work where the common ideal inspires a united crowd.

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## MARCELO FELIX

The memory of what the October Revolution could have been runs across *In the Latitudes of the Future (2017)*, a film in which Marcelo Felix evokes the simultaneously apprehensive and enthusiastic atmosphere that surrounded the early times of the new era. For many of its supporters, the Revolution was the time of all hopes that, before being consumed by the contradictions that drove them, were able to inspire a body of ideas and works whose boldness does not cease to reverberate and challenge our incomplete perception of History. The fast-paced transformation that the Revolution imposed on society is also the product of the intimate fragility of its protagonists, motivated by a dream that was greater than life, but incapable of protecting it against its self-destructive vortex. *In the Latitudes of the Future* is an ending to the poem *The Island*, where Marina Tsvetaieva describes utopia in a virgin state – distant but perhaps possible. The film, shown in the Literature Room, recalls the lost dreams of the men and women who responded daily to the creative appeal of the Revolution, and it is also a reflection on the drive for change and its limits, in a world of cyclical issues that are always postponed, always unresolved.

The exhibit also includes copies of monographs and various documents by neo-realist authors featured in the Collection of the Museum of Neo-Realism, which reflect a relation with the theme of the exhibition.