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O Colecionador de Belas Artes

Sara & André

Galerias Municipais – Galeria Quadrum
Rua Alberto Oliveira 52
Palácio dos Coruchéus, Lisboa

Tuesday to Sunday 10am-1pm and 2pm-6pm
Free entrance

Guided tours by appointment
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Supported by Câmara Municipal de Lisboa
Fundo de Emergência Social – Cultura



Galeria Quadrum

09.04 – 19.06.2022

Collecting

What are your criteria and policies for collecting?

The suspicion of eternal truth and beauty.¹

I.

In 2017 we curated three exhibitions for which we invited several dozen curators to contribute with objects or proposals in response to three specific challenges.² Three years earlier, we had organized an exhibition on the work of Julião Sarmento, producing, with his complicity, a fake retrospective in which we unashamedly put ourselves at the centre of his work, covering his production between the 1970s and the 2010s, with approximately thirty works of video, documentation, text, screen prints, photography, painting, etching and sculpture.³

The exhibition we are now presenting at Galerias Municipais - Galeria Quadrum derives from, and simultaneously intersects, these two projects. On the one hand we explicitly cite a set of 15 paintings – *O Coleccionador de Belas Artes* [The Fine Art Collector] – which António Areal exhibited in 1971⁴, referring technically and formally to this series. On the other hand, the works that appear on the paintings we present here come from private collections, that are based in Portugal and which were constituted during the last few decades. Thus, the set of works that appear in each composition is a result of a direct dialogue, sometimes continuous, with each of the collectors that responded to our challenge, agreeing to share with us a selection of works from their collection, of which they are particularly fond.

The order in which the paintings are presented at Quadrum gallery is arbitrary and does not form any kind of chronology or hierarchy, instead obeying the natural and spontaneous order of the evolution of the project, namely of the research, our communication with the collectors and, in particular, the process of painting, which was sometimes more intuitive, sometimes more considered. With regard to the selection of participants, we broadly sought to

1 Klaus Biesenbach interviewed by Cristina Bechtler and Dora Imhof, 'Museum of the Future', in Cristina Bechtler & Dora Imhof [eds.], *Museum of the Future*, JRP | Ringier: Zurich, 2014).

2 'Curated Curators' I, II and III at Zaratán Contemporary Art in Lisbon, which resulted in the book *Uma breve história da curadoria*, 2019 (Documenta, Lisbon).

3 'Exercício de Estilo' [Exercise of Style] at the MNAC – Museu do Chiado in Lisbon, 2014, curated by David Santos.

4 *Areal – Pinturas e Desenhos* [Areal – Paintings and Drawings] at Galeria São Mamede in Lisbon, May 1971.

invite collectors publicly acknowledged in, and by the Portuguese art scene in recent years. This is not a scientific or exhaustive survey, but nevertheless corresponds to an attempt to include as many active (or recently active) collectors as possible. It is important to mention here our collaboration with the specialist Adelaide Duarte⁵ for the identification of, selection and sometimes mediation with some of these collectors.

As a criterion for the identification and selection of participating collections and collectors, we adopted, relatively loosely, the colloquial definition 'once you have bought something that doesn't fit in your home, and has to be stored in an art depot, you're officially an art collector'.⁶ As in all collections, however, there are missing 'specimens' that spur us on, or rather, 'the incompleteness of a collection is a sign of its vitality'⁷ and, as in previous projects, the list could still grow over the course of the encounters and responses that occur in the meantime.

At this early stage of presenting the project, the following collections are represented: *Alberto Caetano Collection*, *CESAR (Espírito Santo Almeida Roque Collection)*, *ER Collection*, *Figueiredo Ribeiro Collection*, *Ivo Martins Collection*, *João Esteves de Oliveira Collection*, *José Carlos Santana Pinto Collection*, *José Costa Rodrigues Collection*, *Luísa and Manuel Pedroso de Lima Collection*, *Luís Ferreira Collection*, *MACAM – Museu de Arte Contemporânea Armando Martins Collection*, *Madalena and Gonçalo Reis Collection*, *Manuel de Brito Collection*, *Maria and Armando Cabral Collection*, *Marin Gaspar Collection*, *Módulo Collection*, *Norlinda and José Lima Collection*, *Nuno and Mercedes Félix da Costa Collection*, *Paulo Caetano Collection*, *Peter Meeker (Pedro Álvares Ribeiro) Collection*, *Rui Victorino Collection*, *Teixeira de Freitas Collection*, *The Godinho Collection*, *Vendo-as todas juntas*, having the remaining collectors preferred to remain anonymous.⁸

5 Historian, researcher and co-coordinator of the postgraduate programme in Art Market and Collecting at Universidade Nova de Lisboa/FCSH.

6 Charles Saatchi, *My name is Charles Saatchi and I Am an Artaholic* (Phaidon Press: London, 2009).

7 Ana Anacleto, 'The Sublime Issue of The Tiger's Eye' in *Olho do Tigre – Obras da Coleção Sarmento*, Appleton Square: Lisbon, 2014).

8 It is also worth signalling a collection regarding which we were asked to do two paintings – one according to each of its holders' preferences – being both presented in the exhibition.

II.

And if in 2017 we wrote, in the text accompanying the exhibition cycle 'Curated Curators', that we saw the exhibition as 'a journey, an opportunity to walk through an idea and bring it to life'⁹, and even as 'an object in itself and, consequently, capable of becoming an artistic medium in its own right'¹⁰, it is important to add here that we see 'collecting as an art form'¹¹, that 'the collector is a creator'¹², that 'a collection is a personal vision'¹³, and thus, 'I – like probably every other collector – like to think the collection is unique'.¹⁴

'Collectorship is not a profession but a hobby. Collectors are not subjected to pressure or influence by any part of the art world. Collectors perform their roles in an entirely free but not altogether disinterested manner; some do regard this activity as a professional sport and compete with other collectors.'¹⁵ 'Collecting is creating a rich web of relationships among artworks, whose connected totality of meaning is more complex than the simple sum of all single artworks of the collection'¹⁶, or, in other words, 'the collection is not constructed by its elements; rather, it comes to exist by means of its principle of organisation'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it is hard to tell 'whether collecting is a physical act of assembling objects, or rather, a conceptual one'.¹⁸

'The collector always retains some traces of the fetishist and, by owning the work of art, shares its ritual power.'¹⁹ 'The collector finds a life support in art'²⁰, 'is a scavenger or *bricoleur*, quoting out of context in order to break the spell of calcified traditions, mobilizing the past by bringing it blazing into the

9 Jens Hoffmann, (*Curating*) *From A to Z* (JRP | Ringier: Zurich, 2014).

10 Bruno Marchand, 'A experiência expositiva e a mecânica da sugestão – um itinerário' in *João Penalva – Pavlina e o Dr. Erlenmeyer*, Chiado 8: Lisbon, 2010).

11 Chris Dercon, *Afterword*, undated (in Cristina Bechtler & Dora Imhof [eds.], *The Private Museum of the Future*, JRP | Ringier: Zurich, 2018)

12 Noé Sendas cited by Ana Dias Cordeiro, 'O Coleccionador de Tempos' (in *Ípsilon – Público*: Lisbon, 2012).

13 Don Rubell cited by Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (W. W. Norton: New York, 2008).

14 Gil Bronner, 'Philara Collection' (in Cristina Bechtler & Dora Imhof [eds.], 2018, *op. cit.*).

15 Pablo Helguera, *Manual of contemporary art style* (Jorge Pinto Books Inc.: Washington D.C., 2007).

16 Dimitris Daskalopoulos, 'Neon' (in Cristina Bechtler & Dora Imhof [eds.], 2018, *op. cit.*).

17 Susan Stewart cited by Susan A. Crane, *Collecting and historical conscience in early nineteenth-century Germany* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 2000).

18 Ziba Ardalán, 'Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art', (in Cristina Bechtler & Dora Imhof [eds.], 2018, *op. cit.*).

19 Tony Godfrey quoting Walter Benjamin, *Conceptual Art* (Phaidon Press: London, 1998).

20 João Pinharanda, *80 aforismos sobre arte* (Associação 289: Faro, 2018).

present'.²¹ 'A friend of mine used to say that history isn't written by museums but by private collectors. (...) Collectors have also changed a lot in the last twenty years. It seems that they have also become brands, like artists and institutions...'²²

Thus, collecting can be 'buying respectability'²³ and 'an art collection (...) also serves as a smokescreen'.²⁴ 'The absolute artwork coincides with the absolute merchandise'²⁵, which is why 'the role of private collectors is essential in the relationship of art to the luxury market'.²⁶ In some cases 'people are putting the equivalent of a share certificate on their wall'.²⁷

Conversely, 'a collector from Boston who, ten years ago, bought two Renoir watercolours from one of the best galleries in New York, and now realises he is the owner of a pair of "Renoirs-by-Elmyr"', says: 'I would be a complete hypocrite if I bore the artist a lasting grudge. I don't buy paintings the way I buy stock in AT&T and Xerox. I've had ten years of pleasure from my Renoirs – or Renoirs-by-Elmyr, call them what you will – and I will have twenty more years if I'm lucky. Then I'll leave them to my two sons and tell them, "These are things of beauty. Enjoy them for what they are, not the signature they bear or what someone else tells you they are or aren't."'²⁸

And thus we assume that 'all works are the creation of one author'²⁹, and that 'to learn how to use forms, is above all to know how to make them one's own, to inhabit them'.³⁰ When 'Hunter S. Thomson typed, word for word, the novels of Hemingway and Fitzgerald (...) he added an original sentence: "I just want to know what it feels like to write these words"'.³¹ Thus 'all men who repeat a line

21 Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology* (Koenig Books: London, 2013).

22 Bartomeu Mari Ribas, 'Museum of the Future' (in Cristina Bechtler & Dora Imhof [eds.], 2014, *op. cit.*).

23 Grayson Perry, *Playing to the gallery* (Penguin Books: London, 2016).

24 Walter Grasskamp, 'Real Time: The Work of Hans Haacke' (in VV.AA., *Hans Haacke*, Phaidon Press: London, 2004).

25 Theodor Adorno quoted by Sven Lütticken, 'Actuar nas fronteiras omnipresentes da autonomia', (in Óscar Faria, João Fernandes, *Às artes, cidadãos!*, Fundação de Serralves: Porto, 2010).

26 Thierry Raspail, 'Museum of the Future' (in Cristina Bechtler & Dora Imhof [eds.], 2014, *op. cit.*).

27 Oliver Sears cited by Helen Chislett, 'These Irish eyes are beguiling', (in *Culture – The Sunday Times*: London, 2015).

28 Clifford Irving, *Fake!* (McGraw Hill Book Company: New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, 1976).

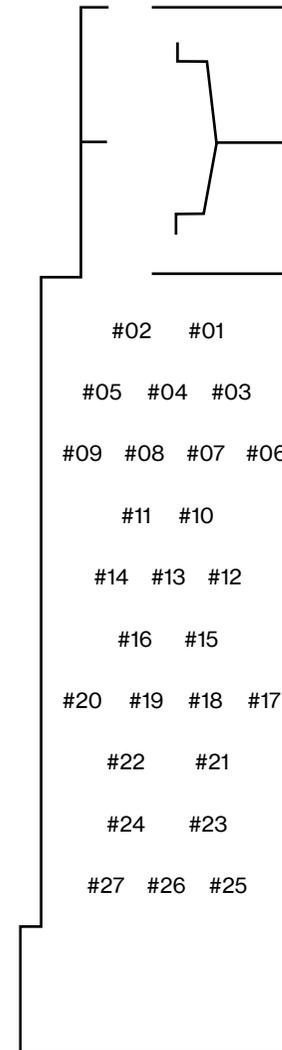
29 Jorge Luis Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', trans. James Irby, (in *Labyrinths*, New Directions Publishing: New York, 1962).

30 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction* (Les presses du réel: Dijon, 2003).

31 Sofia Gonçalves, *O graffiti de Rimbaud, e assim sucessivamente* (Old School: Lisbon, 2016).

from Shakespeare are William Shakespeare³², and it is 'so great, to be able to change styles.'³³

'I keep telling you, Papa, when you sell a fake masterpiece, that is a crime!'
*'But I don't sell them to poor people, only to millionaires.'*³⁴



O Colecionador #01 to #27, 2021/2022
Enamel, oil, graphite, Indian ink,
pigmented ink, watercolour, coloured
pencil, ballpoint pen, water-based marker
and alcohol-based marker on hardboard
mounted on wood
170 x 60 cm and 170 x 80 cm

³² Jorge Luis Borges, *op. cit.*

³³ Andy Warhol quoted by Peter Eleey, 'Dangerous Concealment – The Art of Sturtevant', (in *Sturtevant, Double Trouble*, MoMA: New York, 2014).

³⁴ Nicole Bonnet played by Audrey Hepburn and Charles Bonnet played by Hugh Griffith in William Wyler, *How to Steal a Million* (20th Century Fox: Los Angeles, 1966).

Sara & André would like to thank to Adelaide Duarte, Raquel Guerra, Adelaide Ginga, Carlos e Rosália Nunes, António Rasteiro, MNAC - Museu do Chiado, Luiza Teixeira de Freitas, Paulo Mendes, Xana, Luís Ferreira, João Luís Traça, Lúcia Franco, Vasco Futscher, Carolina Quintela, Wasted Rita, Rui Brito, Eduardo Rosa, Elsa Garcia, Bruno Marchand, João Terras, Ema Campos, Pedro Gomes, Catarina Marto, Rosário Sousa Machado, Paula Tavares dos Santos, Anísio Franco, Carolina Pimenta, Jorge das Neves, Jorge Viegas, Rui Chafes, Dinorah Lucas, Jorge Simões, Arlindo Silva, Andreia Páscoa, Lúcia Afonso, Vítor Pires Vieira, Pureza Fino, José Alberto, the participants and all those who have contributed in any way to the realization of this project.