

PAVILHÃO BRANCO

23.03–11.06.2023

Mater.

curated by
João Rolaça – Oficinas do Convento

Maja Escher
Marta Castelo
Virgínia Fróis



Mater is an exhibition co-produced by Galerias Municipais/ EGEAC and the cultural association Oficinas do Convento, based in Montemor-o-Novo. It features new works by Virgínia Fróis, Marta Castelo and Maja Escher – three artists closely linked to the association, which has been in existence for over 26 years.

During this time, Oficinas do Convento has nurtured a profound relationship with the surrounding landscape and its community and has developed its own (plural) aesthetic based on research, sometimes physical and telluric, related to workshops, and poetic or scientific approaches that complement one another in eclectic and experimental projects, some by a single artist, others collaborative.

The works of Virgínia Fróis, Marta Castelo and Maja Escher have in common the intimate and profound relationship they establish with natural elements, which they use as a medium and as content for continuous conceptual research.

In the case of Virgínia Fróis, clay, water, beeswax, salt and branches are used in a practice about the sensitive experience of nature, through hands that reveal and translate the inner and outer world. Her materials connect ancient geological time to the eternal and fleeting present and the future that accompanies the world's incessant change. Hollow spaces – body, pot and urn – are filled by the gaze, by the matter softened by the void or by the other that completes it. Drops of water trickle through clay or irrigation – that circulatory system – *vanitas* of transience and impermanence. Threads link bodies and create connections between substances, spaces and entities, within the referential, sensitive and symbolic frame of reference of the artist.

Marta Castelo works with the impermanence and mutability of the earth, through research about its latent states, sometimes liquid, plastic or solid. Between raw and fired clay there is a permeable place between natural and cultural matter, which manifests in the transition from the organic to the geometric. Bricks construct spaces of existence, of building

and being built, and demonstrate both solidity and vulnerability to nature. The hand marks the surface of the clay, like writing, agriculture and cities instil the capacity to conceive and construct the world we inhabit. Her drawings are intuitive, concentric, searching gestures, painted with clay, so they complement the rigorous or other more expressive geometries that speak of the earth as origin, home or the place that shelters and accommodates.

The practice of Maja Escher is a continuum between work in the field and in the studio, experimenting with forms and materials that connect in the act of installation. The artist allows herself to be permeated by stories, objects offered and elements found during her investigations, in a search for the vernacular and spiritual meaning linked to the natural cycles and knowledges we inherit. She interconnects scientific learning and a shamanic dimension to remind us that we are part of a biodynamic ecosystem in which everything and everyone coexists and partakes. She constructs ritualistic systems in the form of a manifesto, protest and communal mobilisation to work with what is common and vital in the Baixo Alentejo – her homeland – highlighting the urgency of an ecological regeneration, of the development of local, solidarity and cooperative communities and economies and their importance for life and the permanence of people in the region.

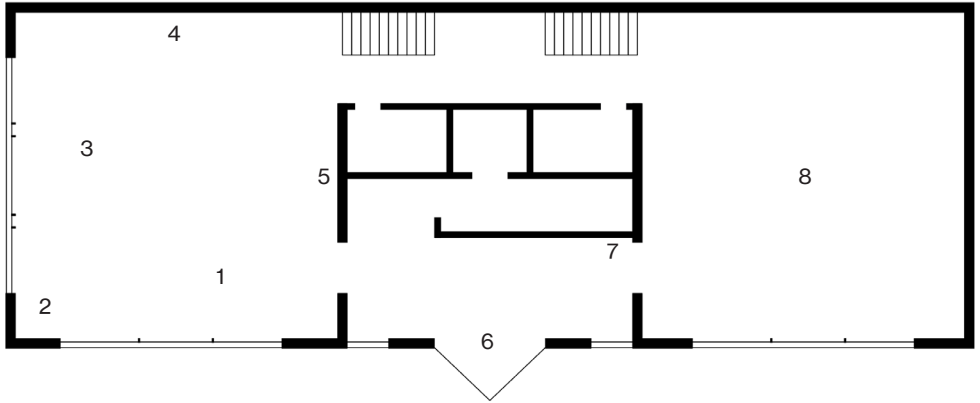
Mater is the Latin expression from which the words ‘mother’ and ‘matter’ originate, and connects to a subtle but present dimension in the work of the three artists, that the earth gives rise to and shapes everything that is, either on the physical and material or poetic and symbolic plane. *Mater* is the creator; it is earth, water, uterus and shelter. It is a transmissive, cultural and caring being, that joins and does together.

In different ways, the artists conceive the legacy and heritage of the past as a strategy to think about and construct the present and the future. The beauty of their processes is in their pertinence in the social and environmental context in which we live, by reconnecting artistic construction and creation with the place they happen, establishing a symbiotic relationship between artist, matter, process, territory and life.

The exhibition is accompanied by three audio tracks written by the artists, which can be accessed using the QR code



ground floor



1
VIRGÍNIA FRÓIS
abrigo, 2023
Bramble twigs, tying wire and kaolin, Ø 164 cm
Courtesy of the artist

2
VIRGÍNIA FRÓIS
pião, 2023
Ceramic, red ochre, Ø 50 cm
Courtesy of the artist

3
VIRGÍNIA FRÓIS
o chão que pisamos, 2023
Earth, terracotta tiles, irrigation system,
190 x 380 cm
Courtesy of the artist

4
VIRGÍNIA FRÓIS
alinhamento, 2023
Mixed media, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

5
VIRGÍNIA FRÓIS
o poço é o espelho do céu, 2023
Photograph, inkjet print on baryta paper
Triptych, 40 x 60 cm (each)
Courtesy of the artist

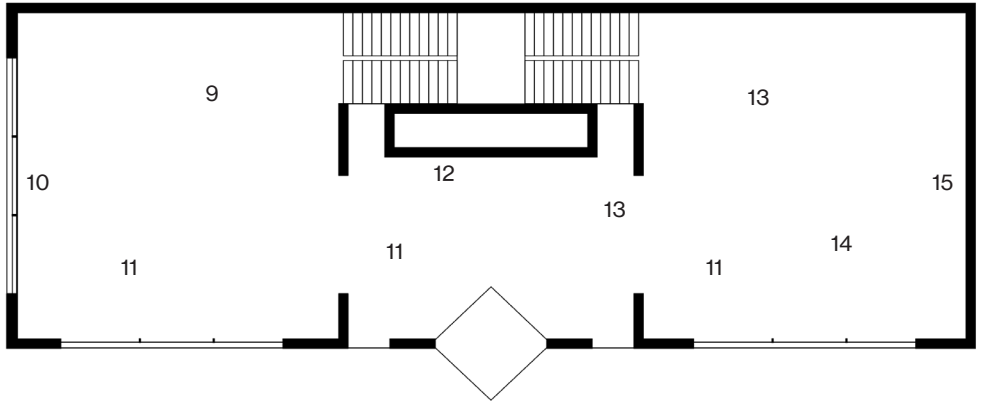
6
VIRGÍNIA FRÓIS
pêndulo, 2023
Earth, ceramics, water, steel and silk threads,
gold and lead, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

7
MARTA CASTELO
tabuinha de escrita, 2022
Raw earth, 7 x 31 x 1.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

8
MARTA CASTELO
escrita da cidade, 2023
Ceramic and clay, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

9
MAJA ESCHER
barragem / três xistos a montante, 2023
Slate stones from the Santa Clara dam, milky
quartz, clay, adobe bricks, terracotta bricks,
unfired bricks, beeswax, ceramic, cement,
rock-rose, unbleached cotton fabric, variable
dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

1st floor



- 10
MAJA ESCHER
submerso / percolação da água, 2023
Unbleached cotton fabric, beeswax, earth and clay from the Santa Clara dam, ceramic, reeds, hazelnut tree twigs, eucalyptus twigs, cotton and linen rope, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist
- 11
MAJA ESCHER
coroamento / chuva_sol, 2023
Eucalyptus twigs, ceramic, cement, beeswax, unbleached cotton fabric, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist
- 12
MAJA ESCHER
árvores-pássaro que dão frutos-pessoa-bicho, 2023
Ceramics, mixed media, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist
- 13
MAJA ESCHER
três arcos a jusante, 2023
Ceramic, beeswax, unbleached cotton fabric, iron, earth, thread, rope, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist
- 14
VIRGÍNIA FRÓIS
dor mentes, 2023
Sgraffito on wax, Ø 164 cm
Courtesy of the artist
- 15
MARTA CASTELO
incandescência, 2020/21
105 drawings with clay on paper, glass, wood, 27.5 x 25.5 cm (each)
Courtesy of the artist

GALERIAS MUNICIPAIS – PAVILHÃO BRANCO

Jardim do Palácio Pimenta, Campo Grande

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Tuesday to Sunday 10h-13h and 14h-18h

Free entrance

Guided tours by appointment

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Apoio

