

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Galeria 111, Gustavo Sumpta e Victoria Molder.

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TORREÃO NASCENTE DA CORDOARIA NACIONAL
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ADRIANA MOLDER

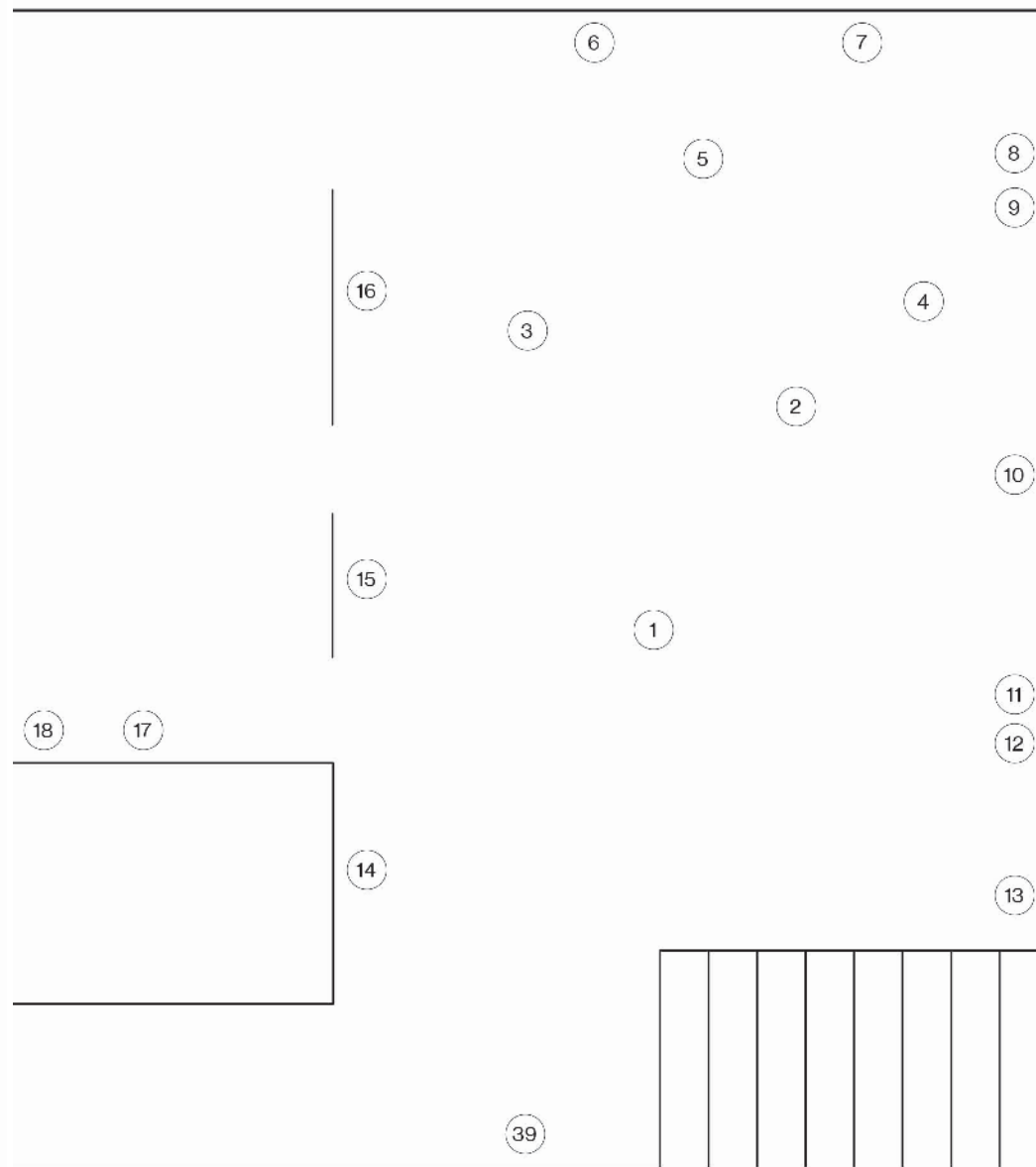
Torreão Nascente
da Cordoaria Nacional (1st floor)

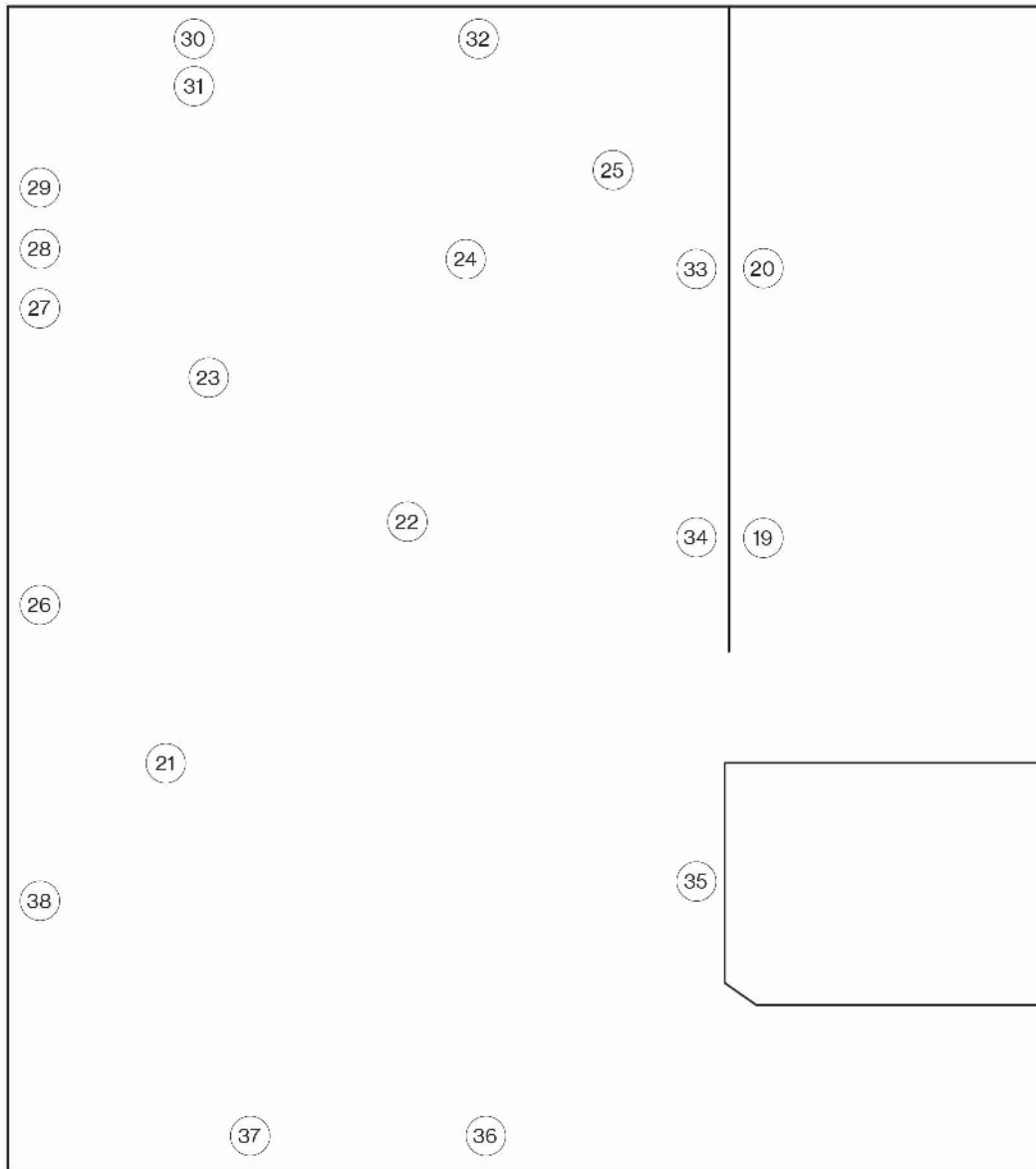
Curated by
Nuno Crespo

07.02–
04.05.2025

ANTARES

UNTITLED.
FACES,
BODIES AND
SHADOWS.





Seven hundred times larger and ten thousand times brighter than the sun, and located 550 light years from earth in the Scorpius constellation, Antares is one of the largest and brightest stars we know. In astrology, this superstar, with its intense, reddish glow, is associated with strength and courage, and for the ancient Egyptians it was the guardian of the sky.

Adriana Molder's exhibition is entitled *Antares* not because it contains pieces relating to stars, but because of the way this cosmological metaphor establishes relationships between the different beings that inhabit the five series of works brought together here.

Covering a broad timespan (the oldest works date from 1998) and with a wide range of references, this exhibition marks a transformation in the way this artist constructs the personae of her drawings and paintings. But it also reflects a change in her research process and an adoption of new configurations and formulations, for example, the way her drawings on paper give rise to the video performance *Serpentina* (Serpentine), or the painting-object-sculptures of *Antares*, in which the artist uses canvas and oil pastel rather than the usual tracing paper and Indian ink.

Although there are many echoes of other times to which the artist has returned to construct this exhibition, none of the series have been shown before: *Aleph*, *Antares*, *Serpentina* and *Sombras* (Shadows), groupings of independent works that establish intimate and familiar relationships between them.

In *Aleph*, the artist draws inspiration from figures such as Colette, Madonna and Marilyn, but also from her older drawings, bringing about a very eclectic meeting of figures, faces and bodies. But what is surprising in this group of six works is the way that the portraits are given three-dimensional volume by shaping and cutting out the paintings into irregular and organic forms. This technique of shaping and cutting the canvas after the application of oil pastel allows for an intense contrast with the flatness of drawings on paper. The figures previously drawn in two dimensions on paper are given another physical expression here, gaining volume and physical depth, and the fact that they are suspended and visible from multiple points of view allows these works to leave the plane of the wall to achieve an enhanced spatial expression. These suspended bodies and faces look at one another, but also at us, which intensifies their presence and transforms the space.

Giving body to and suspending these works does not just express the transformation of Adriana Molder's process and her research as a portrait artist, but also the way we understand the exhibition space: leaving the wall and suspending volumes in the gallery points to the development and transformation of the concept of installation that the artist has been

developing since early in her career (recalling of one of her initial exhibitions *Câmara de Gelo* (Ice Chamber), from 2001). While, in earlier works, she frequently created conditions so that each drawing was seen, experienced, perceived with the smallest possible number of interferences, now there is an idea of atmosphere that the artist seeks to build through a careful layout. This is not scenography or any kind of special effect, but instead accentuates the motion, organic quality, volume and corporeality, making explicit the ambience – the atmosphere – around each person Adriana Molder draws.

Everything happens as if through an intense and magical gesture, as if the artist has tried to remove the characters from her drawings so that they inhabit the same place as our bodies. The way her drawings roam and occupy the space allows not just that face-to-face with the people in them, but also the possibility of being seen from the reverse, allowing these painting-sculptures to show their shadows. The question of shadow, that substantial but incorporeal element that all bodies possess, is decisive in the way these drawings are presented. And it is interesting to perceive, in that relationship, a tension (decisive in Molder's work) between that which can be drawn, painted or shaped in a body and that which evades all those attempts at capture or fixing: shadow. Indeed, one of the series in this exhibition has that very title, *Sombras*: a collection of drawings that return to Indian ink on sketch paper and, through the interplay of shaded patches, suggest bodies not directly, but from their shadows.

While the series of works that give their name to this exhibition is particularly intense in the way it develops an installation-like feel and a relationship with the paintings (leaving the wall, abandoning the two-dimensional to emphasise the depth of each work, the installation-like gesture with which the artist creates a special atmosphere for her works, etc.) *Antares* is characterised by a dialogue between bodies. In this series, instead of isolated figures, we find beings that relate to one another, that force our attention away from the isolated body to the movement and energy created between two bodies.

Motion, energy and relationship are the key elements in the *Serpentina* series, through which the moving image, in its relationship, dialogue and mutual influence with the drawings and paintings, takes on particular importance. It is worth highlighting that this media allows the artist to make more visible and perceptible not only certain occurrences that were already present in the drawings (for example: wind moving hair), but also the way the artist herself jumps into the work and uses her body, her hair, her gestures and voice as visual elements.

Serpentina, developed during Adriana Molder's artistic residency at Escola das Artes da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, is a film

30

Two

from the series *ANTARES*, 2024
Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather cord, 139×194×25 cm

31

Shadow IV, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 152×192 cm

32

Shadow III, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 210×167 cm

33

Serpentine

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023
Indian ink on tracing paper, 198×258 cm

34

Shadow II, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 200×155 cm

35

Video

from the series *UNTITLED*, 1998–99
Indian ink and graphite on tracing paper, 150×200 cm

36

Gary

from the series *UNTITLED*, 1998–99
Indian ink and graphite on tracing paper, 150×100 cm

37

Vampire

from the series *UNTITLED*, 1998
Indian ink and graphite on tracing paper, 150×100 cm

38

Mask

from the series *UNTITLED*, 1998
Indian ink and graphite on tracing paper, 75×200 cm

39

He Moon

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023
Indian ink on tracing paper, 118×118 cm

All the works in the exhibition are courtesy of the artist.

16

Lady of the Unicorn

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023
 Indian ink on tracing paper, 333×243 cm

17

Cosmos

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023
 Indian ink on tracing paper, 293×198 cm

18

Lady of the Hat or Odd Couple

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023
 Indian ink on tracing paper, 167×130 cm

19

The Hat

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023
 Indian ink on tracing paper mounted on K-line
 and silk paper, 63×159 cm

20

Serpentine, 2023

HD video, sound, colour, 17'

21

Pina I

from the series *ANTARES*, 2024
 Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather
 cord, 196×136×17 cm

22

Star

from the series *ANTARES*, 2024
 Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather
 cord, 188×142×20 cm

23

The Turban

from the series *ANTARES*, 2024
 Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather
 cord, 190×140×25 cm

24

Shadow Man Shield

from the series *ANTARES*, 2024
 Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather
 cord, 187×132×24 cm

25

Pina II

from the series *ANTARES*, 2024
 Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather
 cord, 200×134×20 cm

26

Woman Knight

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023
 Indian ink on tracing paper, 292×198 cm

27

Shadow V, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 209×155 cm

28

Shadow VI, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 202×146 cm

29

Shadow I, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 186×150 cm

performance where the artist's works are simultaneously figures and characters, and also scenographic elements and props with which the artist interacts freely. The drawings in this series are inspired by images made by 15th-century engravers Master E.S. and Israhel van Meckenem, and music by Matteo da Perugia and Conan Osiris, with Cranach's Salome as the main character in the film. But these images also represent the cosmos of Hildegard von Bingen, Dürer, a story by Hoffman, images from engravings owned by the artist, and the artist's face actualized in almost all the drawings, etc. While these references move between the drawings and the film, in the film we find the Minoan Snake Goddess, Manet's painting *Boy Blowing Bubbles* (1867) and a strong presence of Louise Bourgeois and her iconic portrait taken by Robert Mapplethorpe in 1982. This photograph is a kind of mother-image to all the works in this group. It is an iconic and striking portrait in which the artist holds her sculpture *Fillette* (1968), a phallic object, as she smiles provocatively into the camera.

The choice of *Fillette* as a prop for her portrait illustrates the way Bourgeois explored themes such as sexuality, gender and family dynamics, in a work profoundly rooted in her troubled childhood, instigating a visual game through which she tries to subvert the traditional relationships of power between genders: the way she holds the phallic symbol invites us to revisit a certain notion of female power in a patriarchal world. The title *Fillette* (meaning girl) further complicates the questions raised by this sculpture: the artist refers to a kind of lost innocence of adolescence, but also to that time of provocation, non-conformity and defiance.

This portrait is significant not because it is a direct reference (one of many) in the works of Adriana Molder – we do not recognise Louise Bourgeois in any other of the works displayed – but because its presence indicates Molder's affinity not with a specific work by the French artist, but with her entire visual, conceptual and psychological world.

The film *Serpentina*, with all its sensual, visual and sonorous energy, teaches us that the body – and in this case not just any body, but the artist's body – is the axial element of all the figures she has built. While in her gallery of drawn characters there is no explicit self-portrait, Molder's body is always there. This is a presence that appears through the physical demands of each work: painting on the floor, bent over, on a large scale, with a material that demands swiftness and, simultaneously, precision and a great deal of physical energy. But that presence can also arguably be detected in some of those drawn and painted faces: as though each of them were an alter-ego or facet of the artist, characters through which the artist fragments and multiplies and thus augments the possibilities of meaning and experience of her works. This multiple presence and the

suspensions it raises – that, ultimately, the artist has merely represented herself through others that function as her extension or avatar – invites us to revise her entire oeuvre, not to find versions of the references the artist uses, but to see how these figures as a whole compose a single persona that is none other than the artist herself.

The presence of four drawings made between 1998 and 2000, entitled *Gary*, *Vampiro* (Vampire), *Máscara* (Mask) and *Vídeo*, do not make *Antares* a survey exhibition. On the contrary, it shows how the very possibility of self-representation in Adriana Molder's works implies a transformation in the way we understand the whole set of works she has been developing. This transformation affects not just the perception of each individual work, but also establishes unexpected relationships between works from different periods.

It is as though, in addition to their individuality, each of those faces and bodies belongs to one same family and one same place: there is a feeling of family that unites each body and face, and Molder presents them as though they share one same atmosphere, as though they are all participating in a huge film with various episodes and whose ending is still unknown. As in a typical *film noir*, of which Adriana Molder is a fan, there is always the expectation of an occurrence to come that we can sense but can't entirely foresee.

1

The Spider and The Greek

from the series *ALEPH*, 2024

Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather cord, 150×170×15 cm

2

Fatin-Madonna

from the series *ALEPH*, 2024

Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather cord, 140×100×15 cm

3

Colette

from the series *ALEPH*, 2024

Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather cord, 204×132×15 cm

4

Oracle

from the series *ALEPH*, 2024

Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather cord, 123×185×30 cm

5

Marilyn-Roman

from the series *ALEPH*, 2024

Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather cord, 215×75×25 cm

6

Shadow IX, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 210×120 cm

7

The Naked Lady with the Roses

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023

Indian ink on tracing paper, 218×167 cm

8

Shadow VIII, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 191×192 cm

9

Shadow XII, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 199×172 cm

10

Shadow VII, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 178×191 cm

11

Aleph

from the series *ALEPH*, 2024

Oil pastel on moulded canvas and leather cord, 166×114×14 cm

12

Shadow XI, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 165×96 cm

13

Shadow X, 2024

Indian ink on tracing paper, 140×194 cm

14

She Wind

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023

Indian ink on tracing paper, 270×242 cm

15

Salome

from the series *SERPENTINA*, 2022–2023

Indian ink on tracing paper, 273×146 cm