

Curatorial approach “*A Poética do Visual*” ART-MAP Aveiro 2015

The title “*A Poética do Visual*” gives a clue to the understanding of the organization of this exhibition. The artistic intervention into the permanent collection was composed as a visual poem; it obeys to rhythm and rhyme. The same challenge which was proposed to the participating artists, contemporary discourse through *poiesis*, constituted my task as a creative component of exhibition curation. In Guido (1994:131-137) we can read that poetry communicates through metaphors, poetry recreates verbal codes and provides new associations.

Visual rhyme I understand as resemblance and mimesis. The resemblance between museological objects and contemporary artworks was found in shape, color, subject, pattern, genre or texture. The underlying idea was to form an immediate impression, follow spontaneous decisions which a child would make playing with unknown objects, who would install whatever objects of a common size: a doll, a toy donkey, a book, father’s flipper and a robot at the tea table, imagining their conversation.

The permanent collection of the Museum of the City of Aveiro is intended to give a historical/cultural impression about the region; it is organized by theme and medium: tools with tools, ceramics with ceramics, and paintings with paintings. Each hall is composed and completed by its own logic and the only motif connecting the assemblies in the rooms is the reference to Aveiro. Long corridors and staircases work as areas of transition and some of them contain pictures or artifacts. Halls are very quiet. Inside the Museum the curtains remain closed and most of the lamps are off for economical reasons, so the whole gallery with a moderately dispersed collection of salt work dusty tools, yellow/brown documents, few insignificant statues, paintings, ceramics and reproductions of somebody’s old portraits, related to the history of the region, produces an impression that the time stopped here.

As the first step of the intervention, I proposed opening the curtains and letting the day light in. By force of the agreement, the objects from the permanent collection could not be moved or changed, so the new artworks occupied free spaces on the walls and floor. The video works were distributed between rooms in a way that, while being in one hall the visitor could catch some sounds from the next hall, what provided the expectation of content.

The way I composed the intervention in the Museum of Aveiro is intended to deconstruct the meaning rather than to criticize the old one or create a new one. The critic of Stearn (2013) towards the intervention into the V&A Museum, *Mixed Messages* (2001) by Haacke, is inspired the present interpretation. The works of artists were introduced into the Museum of the City of Aveiro collection in the mimetic or rhythm manner in preference to any logical connection; the “messages are mixed”, the senses are multiple.

The grouping of objects in this intervention is a search for something other than an isolated perception of an artwork or an object. Contemporary pieces imitate the museum objects; question the authority of the museum narrative, turning the story, presented as serious truth, into absurd and playful. The new artworks and the museum objects “[...] become merely raw materials, not works of art, relegated to mere components in a

larger vision, in which it is within the syntax rather than the individual words that the meaning, therefore the interest, is to be found?" (Stearn 2013:44).

From the moment when a didactic dry line of the permanent collection is spiced with contemporary artworks which were made in a different time, with different intension and induced by different concepts, the whole story loses its stability; structure becomes liquid, suggestive, and seductive, the visitor can witness a dialogue of the contemporary artworks with the museum artifacts. According to Stearn (2013:40), "The new artistic objects installed between the museum collection objects liberate these objects from the luggage of connotation". The statement obtains a question mark. This way a very thematic museum collection arranged to prove and illustrate a predefined story- the history of Aveiro in this case - becomes a pretext to create many alternative stories. The message, which can be delivered and the meaning which can be constructed by the observer is of non-informative nature. Still, the meaning exists, it is of abstract and emotional kind providing the condition, as Tzortzi recalls, for the "aesthetical" experience.



III.1 Museum of the City of Aveiro. Installation by José Plácido (Portugal) *Invasoras* (2013), limestone, metal wire;

In one of the rooms of the Museum, the permanent collection is constituted by the portraits of noble men important for the history of Aveiro. As we can see on the (III. 1), the pictures are distributed on the wall in an asymmetrical free manner and supported by a composition of white squares. The white squares are probably serving as a metaphor of other people who are not remembered by history. A contemporary artwork by José

Plácido, *Invasoras* (2013) was installed in front of the portraits. The miniature sculpture heads of women are connected by thin iron sticks to the pieces of stone (*calçada portuguesa*). The exposition was composed by the principle of rhythm: the white stone squares with the white squares on the wall, the sculpture portraits with the black-and-white images on the wall. The diverse size and height level of the sculptures corresponds with the same arrangement of the pictures. The photo clearly illustrates that it is not possible to view one installation separately from another. The permanent installation and the contemporary artwork obtain a visual connection. The dialogue between two pieces becomes a proposal for the critical interpretation of history and genders.



III.2 Museum of the City of Aveiro. Arnont Nonguao (Thailand) *Drink sky on the Rabbit's Field (Lost Control)*. (2014), experimental film;

On the next picture (III. 2), we can see how the modern times collection and a postmodern artistic work can interact. The historical artifact in the glass vitrine - the ancient telegraph was combined with a video work, *Drink sky on the Rabbit's Field (Lost Control)* (2014) by Arnont Nonguao. The film is a dynamic experimental composition which transmits an emotion through the movement of wheels, devices and discs. The mimesis between the two artifacts was found in the shape, technical detail and color. The tension between them is revealed through the contrast statics-movement relation and on the difference of scales. The contemporary artwork by its dynamics and sound induces into the small, insignificant museum object a potential of a mechanism, the industrial dream of Modernity. On the other hand, through the presentation next to the museum device, the video, capturing a mechanical repetitiveness of the broken machines: separate bicycle wheel, recycled transistor and forgotten coffee machine,

obtains an “objecthood”. Yet we cannot separate the perception of the two, the interpretation now lays in-between the museum object and the contemporary work and manifests itself as an allegorical gap between the expectations of the past-away modernity and defragmented abstract sensibility of the emerging postmodern.



III. Museum of the City of Aveiro. Robin Vollmar (The Netherlands) *Reorganization* (2014), printmaking and graphic animation,

One more picture of the intervention in the Museum of the City of Aveiro (III.3) is built on the same pattern-shape repetition. While the white cubes on the first ground present ceramics from the permanent collection, the TV, installed on the same white cube, and the graphics on the wall are the contemporary artworks by Robin Vollmar (The Netherlands), titled *Reorganization* (2014). The artist explores the possibilities of combination of different mediums in the creation of a visual artwork to reveal relations between space and time. The video part consists of a trembling circle and the graphics part captures the same circle but in all positions at once. The composition, which I created as an intervention, continues the discourse started by the artist and contributes to

it by introducing three-dimensional round objects [ceramic vases in front] into a row. The physicality becomes suggestive, the composition plays with the ontology of a circle.



Ill. 4 Museum of the City of Aveiro. Painting by Pedro Espanhol (Portugal), *O Homem do escafandro* (2014), acrylics on canvas, 50 cm;

The last example from the museum of the city of Aveiro, which I would like to describe, is the room with a diving suit (Ill 4). I confronted the costume of the ancient diver presented in the permanent collection by the portrait *O Homem do escafandro* (2014) made by a Portuguese artist, Pedro Espanhol. The obvious resemblance between the two makes a separate perception impossible. The portrait grants the costume with a personality and with a sense which was amputated from it by placing it in a white room. The costume endows the portrait with physicality; however, we are not able to distinguish who of them is the original and who is the representation.

Contemporary Art Exhibition in the Gallery of Capitania.

The Gallery of the Capitania Building is a huge exhibition space with much natural light and windows looking to the city center through the waters of the Lagoon of Aveiro. The gallery plan is very flexible due to the forty units of movable walls which permit an individual solution for each exhibition. Distribution of the walls for this exposition was partly induced by practical reasons. As a result of the condition that most of the gallery lamps are burned and needing to be changed, the walls were built in a way to profit maximum of the daylight for the objects. Additionally, two dark rooms were constructed for the video presentations.

Due to the diversity of artworks, the design of the gallery hall and the distribution of artworks were made during the selection and the montage went according to the plan.

The exposition here was formed of the contemporary artworks only; however, the way of grouping the objects was inspired by the Museum of the City of Aveiro intervention

principle. Movable walls were arranged to form several compartments, each of them received several artworks, arranged by the resemblance principle. A dialogue between the objects was based on common color, pattern or shape matching independently from the technique in which these works were produced. Remarkable is that through the formal similarities the compositions seemed to have a continuous story line.



Ill.5 Gallery of the Capitania Building. Diogo Vieira (Portugal), *O Nosso Ouro* (2014), installation, limestone and gold paper, 80x80x7 cm; Segismundo (Portugal), *Homage to Al Berto, or... Ode to a 1/4 (room) of superficiality* (2013), mixed technique, 88x67x56 cm; Nicole Vanessa Matos (Portugal), *Fernando Pessoa* (2014), digital illustration, 59.4x84.1 cm, 2015; Catarina Real (Portugal), *Módulo do Infinito* (2014), book installation; António Cabral Castilho (Portugal), *Coisas do nada e daqui* (2015), 3 photographs, 27x27 cm; Ting Bao (China/Italy), *Memory Land* (2014), photograph, 28.5x28.5 cm; Isabel de Andrade (Portugal), *Mistério da Flor Vermelha* (2014), papier mache on iron wire structure, 172x68x42cm; Ewa Kulesza (Poland) *Spacetime* (2013), artist's book, mixed technique, 24x31 cm;

On the picture (Ill.5), we can see a part of the exposition based on the rhythm, where not only the artifacts, but also the wall structures and the description papers contribute to the composition. Different artworks support each other through the continuation of rectangular black-and-white shapes within them. Grouping of photographs, installations

and artists books created by different authors becomes suggestive to construct a narrative. *Portrait of Fernando Pessoa* (2014), by Nicole Matos works as a symbolic center of the visual arrangement and the other artworks contribute to the poetical retrospective.



Ill.6 Gallery of the Capitania Building. Rogério Guimarães (Portugal), *Untitled from the series "Day In, Day Out"* (2014), graphite and charcoal on paper, folding table, 60x60x70 cm; Mide Plácido (Portugal), *Projecto "She"* (2015), installation, series of photography; Filipa Cruz (France/Portugal), *Cartas para ontem* (2013), installation of light boxes, 24x32 cm;

The next exhibition compartment in the Capitania Gallery (Ill.6) is based on the repetition of shapes, patterns and objects; this arrangement is very tangible and built around the fragility of materials. Pieces of furniture and table cloth from the artistic installations by Rogério Guimarães, *"Untitled" from the series "Day In, Day Out"* are reiterated in the series of photographs from *"She" Project* by Mide Plácido, who studies the issues of female identity through the plastic expression.

The chaos of black threads on the first ground is supported by the confused knot of white cables which makes part of the light box installation *Cartas para Ontem*, by Filipa Cruz. On approaching, we discover that the tablecloth is made of coal and vegetable paper and the letters in the light boxes are just pressed on the thin white paper, tiny, shiny, warm due to the lamp and nearly invisible.

The persistence of human figures inside the black frames on the floor reveals the dramatic absence of a person on the chair and at the table. The dialogue between the artworks is constructed through their physicality, cleanness and nostalgic auto-representation.



Ill.7 Gallery of the Capitania Building. Telma Salema Valente (Portugal), *Acqua Bella* (2013), aquarella 14.8x21 cm ; Mélanie Rodrigues (Portugal), *Globus* (2014), art object, faience 10.5x10.5 cm; José Carlos Barreiros, Portugal *Nu, Guitarra amarela, Cesto de Pêras* (2015), oil on canvas, 30x40 cm; Joana Azevedo (Portugal), *On ne voit bien qu'avec le Coeur* (2014), graffiti over wood, aprox. 60x100x80 cm, 6 kg,

The last example from the Capitania Gallery which I want to refer, (Ill. 7), is an exposition based on the pattern and color recurrence. Blue-green, orange and black elements keep the composition. The assembly of multiple grotesque shapes, replicated in painting, collage, piece of furniture and finally seen inversed through the eye of the *Globus*, an interactive object by Mélanie Rodrigues, joins into the abstract message. The unity of chaotic lines and anthropomorphic shapes represented in different scales proposes some meaning, but the meaning collapses into a pixilated picture of reality. Although the artworks are from authors whose creation is founded on very different concepts, there is a storyline between them, which can be perceived via visual resemblance.

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