

Photographers

Helena Almeida

Fernando Calhau

Alberto Carneiro

Pedro Letria

Manuela Marques

Jorge Molder

José Luís Neto

Paulo Nozolino

Victor Pomar

José M. Rodrigues

Julião Sarmento

Augusto Alves da Silva

Ângelo de Sousa

Ernesto de Sousa

João Tabarra

Júlia Ventura

1970 – 2000

Portuguese Photography

Emília Tavares

1970 - 2000

The History of Portuguese Photography

In Portugal, on 25 April 1974, one of Europe's longest-lasting dictatorships came to an end, an event that was to profoundly mark Portuguese society. The corporative and dictatorial regime of the *Estado Novo* (the New State, as it was called), as well as the far-flung colonial empire that it had maintained for so long, formed a complex web of powers that, despite continued international pressure, had successfully preserved this state of affairs for forty years.

On the death of Oliveira Salazar on 27 July 1970, Marcelo Caetano took over as successor, becoming increasingly aware of the grievous state of the regime and attempting to introduce a slow and measured liberalisation of some sectors of society. The April Revolution was also the predictable outcome for a regime whose very principles and roots were beginning to wither and die.

Other factors also contributed to the inevitable demise of the dictatorship, among which was the wearisome and violent colonial war that Portugal continued to wage against the liberation movements in its colonies, along with a society that was being slowly eroded by poverty and oppression, relegated to a grey and somewhat ill-defined position among the world's nations but nonetheless supported in many of its worst policies because of the strategic importance that Portugal had for the western powers, above all within the framework of NATO.

It was precisely the nation's military officers, through the Armed Forces' Movement, that set in motion the coup d'état that was to bring an end to the oldest and most conservative dictatorship in Europe, largely due to the sense of revolt and rejection that they felt in the face of this long and painful colonial conflict fought on various fronts.

The Revolution of the Carnations as it became known was characterised by the peaceful nature of the transition from one regime to another, even though there was some dissension that was expressed in the immediate aftermath, arising above all from the dispute about whether to create a Marxist-inspired state or to pave the way to a more liberal form of government. Various provisional governments were created one after another until the first free and democratic elections were finally held in April 1976, which thereafter guaranteed the stability of the democratic regime.

In 1976, the new Portuguese Constitution was approved in Parliament. This document was to serve as the legal foundation for democracy while establishing the necessary structure for the country's political activity.

Despite the many reforms of the state and its apparatus, during the two decades immediately following the Revolution of the Carnations, the country underwent a period of great economic hardship as well as a major social and political reorganisation. The end of the colonial empire brought with it sudden and abrupt changes to the country's social and economic fabric, of which the most evident was the return of thousands of Portuguese from the ex-colonies, creating one of the most serious crises in the country's recent history and requiring a complete change of mentality and the immediate integration of these citizens.

The end of the corporative state of *Estado Novo* led to ruptures in the economic system, further aggravated by the political changes that resulted in an inevitable period of economic and social crisis, also revealing the many fragilities

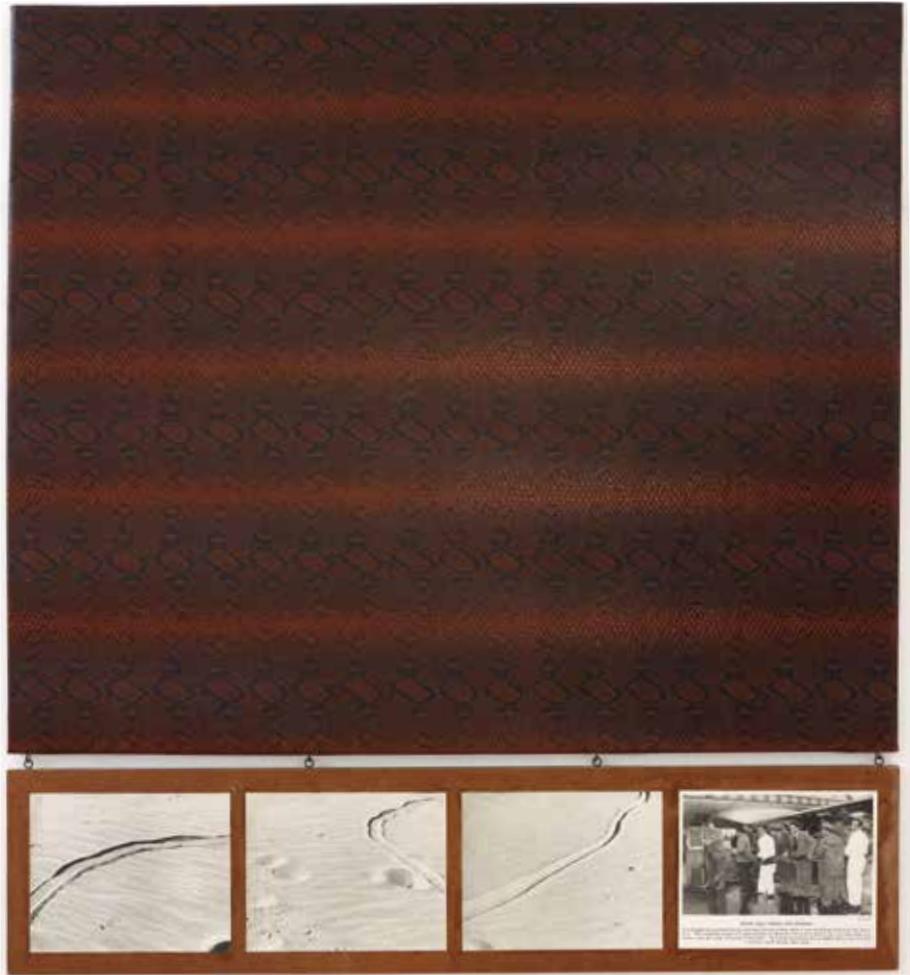


Alberto Carneiro, *Trajectory of a Body*, 1976-1977, gelatin silver prints (46 elements) and colour photographs (2 elements), 139 x 207 cm, Collection Fundação de Serralves © Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto / © Fundação de Serralves, Porto.

of the regime and the historical difficulties of the country's development. When the revolution broke out, Portugal was suffering the consequences of its colonialist political and economic system and the stubbornness of its leader, Oliveira Salazar. The forty years of dictatorship had created a country whose social and economic wounds were immediately laid bare after the revolution.

The economic and social crisis in the post-revolutionary period had as its consequence the first request to be made for international aid, addressed in 1978 to the International Monetary Fund with the support of the United States of America. Later, in 1983, yet another request was made for international funding, once again at a time of major economic and social crisis.

The political orientation of the years after the revolution led to a bipartite division taking root in Parliament. A succession of governments were led alternately by socialists and social democrats, with the occasional support of the Christian



Julião Sarmento, *Sand 3*, 1975, plastic, wood, metal and 4 b/w photographs mounted on crate chipboard, 142 x 130 cm, Collection Fundação de Serralves © Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto, /© Fundação de Serralves, Porto.

Democrats, while the Portuguese Communist Party and other far left parties found themselves isolated from any involvement in government.

The stabilisation of the regime led to the introduction of a series of policies designed to endow the country with a plan for its economic and social development, largely centred around its application for membership in the European Economic Community and the Common Market, presented in 1977.

Among the most important policies for the restructuring of Portuguese society were the creation of a National Health Service and the introduction of a system of compulsory public education, which for the first time was accessible to all social classes. Changes were also made to legislation in order to guarantee the rights of women, who until then had been unable to vote, among a number of other prohibitions they suffered. The state's key sectors were nationalised, including the energy sector, the banking system and public transport.

In 1983, the Council of the Revolution was finally disbanded. This was a body that now only performed a consultative role but which still symbolised a period of political transition to democracy consolidated in the 1980s.

From the 1980s onwards, especially with Portugal's accession to the European Community (EC) in June 1985, a new phase of democracy was initiated, which brought with it yet more social and economic changes.

Portugal's integration into the EC also meant a higher level of funding for various sectors of the Portuguese economy, whose effects were evident in the rise in the standard of living but which, from another perspective, revealed the frailties of the economic system and the country's administrative apparatus, rendering any long-term investment policy unviable.

The alternating governments and the bipartite nature of party politics were also largely responsible for an economic policy that showed itself to be constantly ineffective, not to say even disastrous, since the country's entry into the EC also implied new rules for the country's various sectors of production, many of which were ruinous for all kinds of activities, above all in the area of agriculture.

However, from the mid-1990s onwards the country enjoyed encouraging levels of growth and development, largely due to the consolidation of democracy and its membership of the European Union. Some of the more profound social problems inherited from the dictatorship were overcome for the first time, placing the country at the generally accepted level of international indicators for development in various structural areas. Such improvements included the eradication of child mortality, intensive programmes for literacy, compulsory education, public access to higher education on equal terms for both genders, greater social welfare, the introduction of a national health service, incentives for scientific research and the development of new technologies.

Nonetheless, at the same time, there still remained important structural weaknesses in the country's economy and its system of production, which the recent international crisis of 2008 has only worsened. A banking system which stimulated borrowing in a completely uncontrolled fashion has also contributed to the nation's social collapse since that date.

While, on the one hand, democratic stability and some capacity for development have been assured, on the other hand, in recent years, Portugal has once again suffered the consequences of being a country without any real bargaining power among the great European economic powers.

The political context of the consolidation of democracy also brought with it a cultural and artistic environment that was affected by profound changes. The dictatorship had imposed an aesthetic and cultural *dirigisme* that was supported by the official bodies and which naturally resulted in the country being profoundly isolated from the rest of the world.

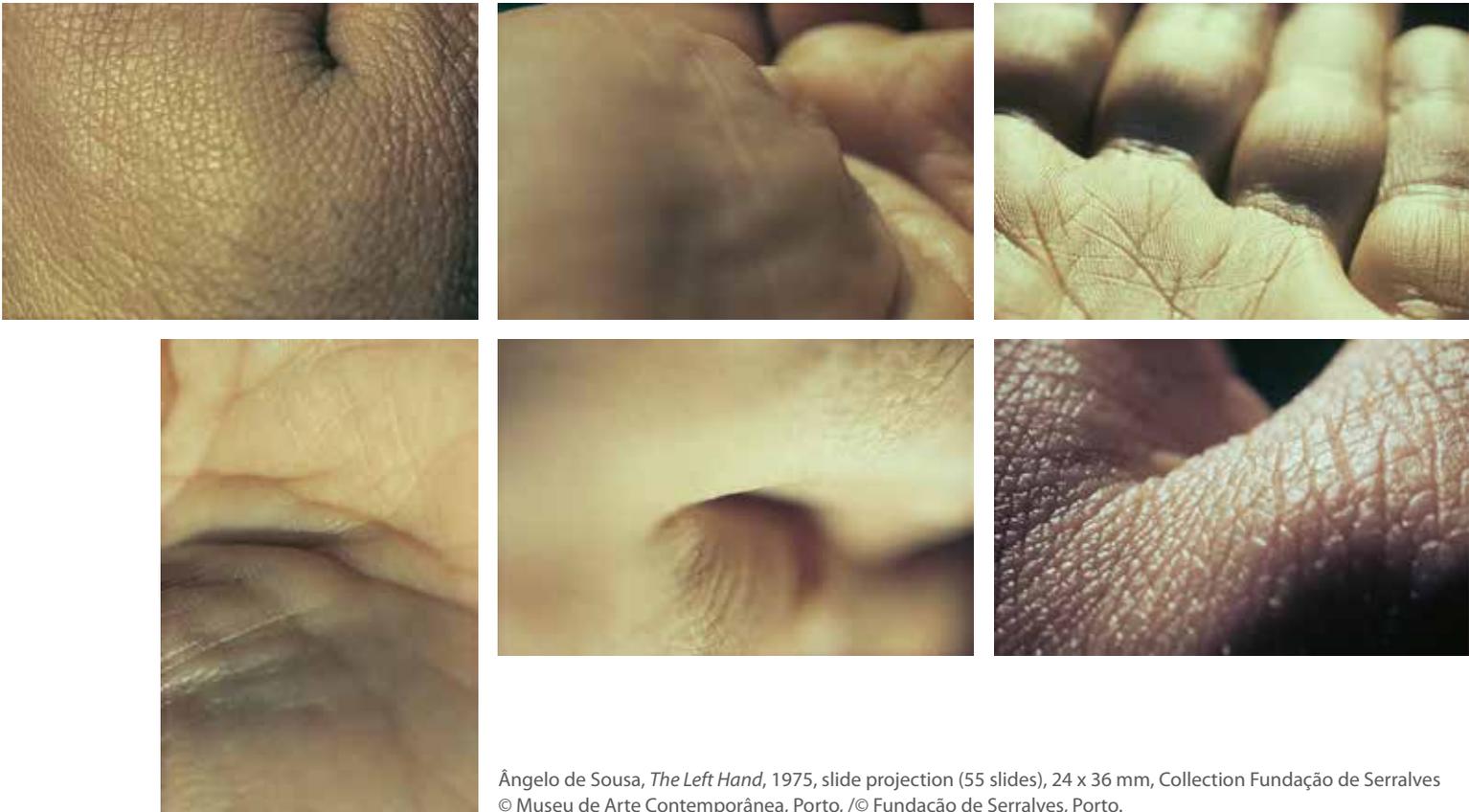
Still, in the 1960s with the creation of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and its programme of scholarships to promote artistic creativity, it became possible for many Portuguese artists to leave the country and come into contact with other contemporary international creators. For many of these people, exile ended up being the only response to a regime that remained crystallised in its authoritarianism.

However, some liberalisation was gradually introduced towards the end of the dictatorship, finally enabling groups of artists and some galleries to play a more active and independent role, while at the same time the art market itself was reactivated under the influence of a new well-to-do class that also saw artistic creations as a guarantee of upward social mobility.

The April Revolution therefore brought a period of enormous enthusiasm and great cultural and artistic expectation. The committed participation of artists and



Helena Almeida, *Inhabited Painting*, 1974, gelatin silver prints and acrylic painting, installation of 6 photographs, Collection Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea © Museu do Chiado, Lisbon / © ADF/DGPC, Lisbon.



Ângelo de Sousa, *The Left Hand*, 1975, slide projection (55 slides), 24 x 36 mm, Collection Fundação de Serralves
© Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto, /© Fundação de Serralves, Porto.

professionals from other areas such as theatre and cinema was fundamental in developing an atmosphere of permanent creative activity.

The generation of the revolution encountered some ambiguity in the treatment of artistic phenomenon, with practices and tastes being divided into either "modern art" or "avant-garde art", resulting from the country's longstanding difficulty in understanding contemporary developments. However, generally speaking, artistic discourses became more radical all across the country in keeping with the prevailing political and social mood.

The great international artistic questions became a major part of all public manifestations and events, being found in street art as well as in art understood as a festivity, in which experimentation was the great challenge for most artists.

New typologies were developed and the implosion of modernist categories dominated most of the works of Portuguese artists during this period. The exploration of photography, video, happenings, performance, installations and visual poetry turned all of these into important media for revitalising an artistic environment that had been subjugated by the academicisation of forms and ideas. Conceptualism thus entered the national artistic lexicon, rubbing shoulders with similar great international manifestations of this form of art.

Artists such as Ana Hatherly, Helena Almeida, Lourdes Castro, Ângelo de Sousa, Alberto Carneiro, Fernando Calhau, António Sena, José Escada, João Vieira, Julião Sarmiento and René Bertholo, among many others, played a fundamental role in the renewal of the Portuguese artistic discourse and in the creation of a new cultural dynamic for the country.

The politicisation of the whole of society in the post-revolutionary period also brought artists into the political sphere, with some of them such as Fernando Calhau, João Vieira and Julião Sarmiento participating in the newly-created Directorate-General of Cultural Action, a body that was created in order to reformulate the whole of the country's cultural and artistic policy.

The aim was to bring the people closer to art, inheriting some of the utopias of the Portuguese neo-realism so that artistic creation could serve as a catalyst for changing mentalities and society itself.

The exhibition *Alternativa Zero* organised by **Ernesto de Sousa**¹ in 1977 was one of the most striking artistic moments in the revolutionary period, and in a certain way it already pre-announced its epilogue. This exhibition was also a manifesto for conceptual art, filled with the desire for cultural change, yet meeting with great resistance.

In truth, this dynamic did not have sufficient capacity to assert itself and thus to change the cultural structures, so that by the end of the 1970s we were already witnessing the demise of this impetus for change, with the failure to create a cultural policy that was capable of changing people's artistic tastes and mindsets.

While the revolution may not have corresponded to the expectations that had been created it did, however, have the merit of having led to a break with the past and its ways of thinking and artistic expression.

The 1980s were a time of contradictions with on one hand, the accompaniment of international trends in the return to neo-expressionism and abstractionism and on the other hand, the almost complete indifference to the social questions of post-modernity, such as gender or colonial issues.

The recovery of the art market was also one of the most important factors during this period, with artistic production being influenced by this economic pressure and by the possibility that, for the first time, artists might be able to develop their activity with evident financial returns.

1 Ernesto de Sousa (1921-1988) was one of the most important personalities in the context of contemporary Portuguese art because of his versatility as a theoretician, curator, filmmaker and creator. Responsible for some of the main events in the context of contemporary Portuguese art in the post-revolutionary period, he also played an important part in updating the country's artistic status such as, for example, through his involvement in the Fluxus movement.

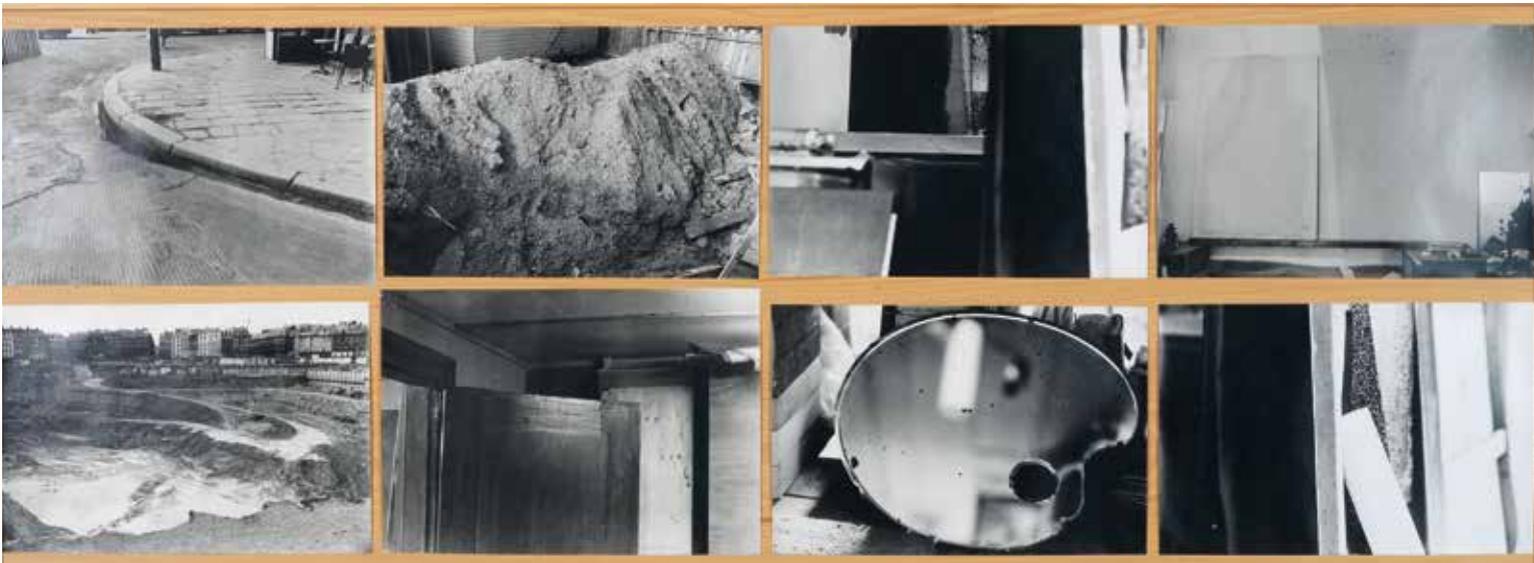
The neo-conservatism that was asserting itself at that time in Portugal was also one of the factors behind the exponential growth in the importance of the market, in a way that was comparable to what was happening in the USA and the UK.

The following decades were marked by public and private investment in a renewed idea of the museum and its contemporary consumer-based formulation, with a strategy being devised that was, above all, important for the renewal of many Portuguese museums not only from the architectural point of view but also with regard to their collections.

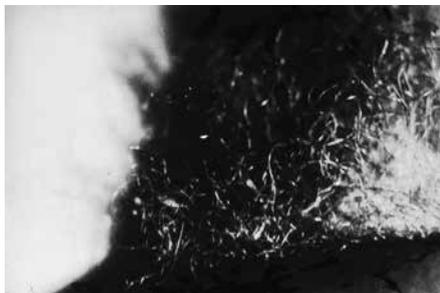
The opening of the Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon (1983), Culturgest in Lisbon (1992), and the Centro Cultural de Belém also in Lisbon (1993), as well as the reopening of the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado in Lisbon (1994) and the creation of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Serralves Foundation in Porto (1999), were just some of the cultural investments that formed part of a highly dynamic and much larger national cultural programme, as were other events such as Lisbon 94, European Capital of Culture, and Expo 1998, Lisbon World Exposition.

In the course of the 1990s and at the beginning of the following century, the country's cultural dynamics became highly diversified, thanks also to the end of a long decade of neo-conservatism. The official cultural and artistic panorama restored the credibility of culture and the previous Office of the Secretary of State for Culture became a full-blown Ministry once again in 1995. At the same time, contemporary art was once again afforded greater room and importance for its development with the creation in that same year of the Institute of Contemporary Art, designed to support the creation and constitution of public art collections.

The teaching of the arts also became more diversified, with the creation of more specific proposals. This proved fundamental for the training of new generations of artists, beginning in the 1980s, with the appearance of Ar.Co and IADE, in Lisbon, and the Cooperativa Árvore in Porto, further strengthened in the 1990s with the creation of MauMaus in Lisbon and ESTGAD in Caldas da Rainha.



Victor Pomar, *Untitled*, 1973, gelatin silver prints, 58,5 x 169,5 cm, Collection Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto.

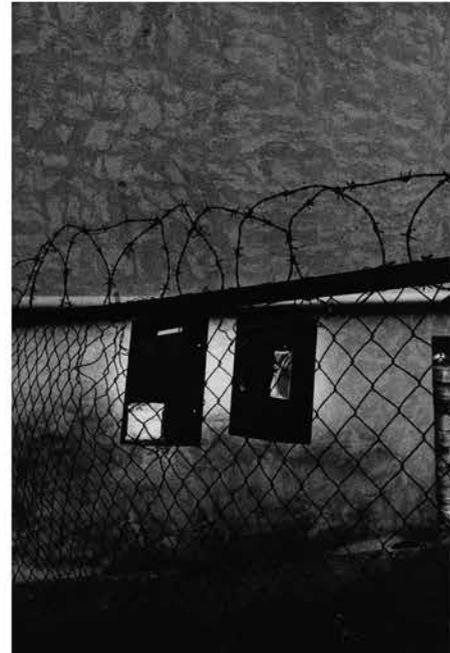


Ernesto de Sousa, *Images from Luis Vaz/73*, 1973, mixed media (slide projection, sound, performance), Ernesto de Sousa Estate, Lisbon.

On the other hand, at the turn of the century, there was a sharp growth in independent artistic projects that did not receive any institutional support, thus giving rise to the creative atmosphere that has largely been responsible for the enormous vitality of contemporary Portuguese art.

Despite the disappearance of many of the public supports available for contemporary creation, the fact is that artists have proved themselves capable of responding with their own high-quality alternatives, further guaranteeing the internationalisation of their projects and promoting the creations of foreign artists in Portugal.

In the last three decades, architecture and cinema have also experienced their own highly important creative affirmation within the general framework of Portuguese culture while, at the same time, producing internationally-recognised creators, such as the architects Siza Vieira, Eduardo Souto de Moura, Diogo Seixas Lopes, Manuel and Francisco Aires Mateus, and the film directors Manoel de Oliveira, Pedro Costa and, more recently, João Salaviza.



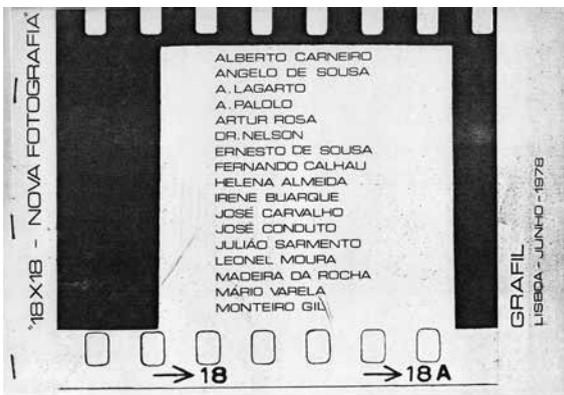
Paulo Nozolino, *Salt of the Earth*, 1989-2000, gelatin silver prints on aluminium, 120 x 80 cm (each), Galeria Quadrado Azul, Lisbon.

From the point of view of photographic culture, the 1960s were marked by a decline in salon photography and photography clubs as well as by the leading role that photography began to play in historiography, largely because of the particular conjuncture of artistic and political change that existed in the country at that time.

The shift from a modernist model to an increasingly post-modern approach to art and photography enjoyed its moment of greatest expressiveness and creative possibility in the 1970s, but it soon found itself confronted with the persistence of the existential models of Modernity, in keeping with the predominant tastes and the greater spread of conservatism and neo-liberalism that the country was experiencing in the 1980s, as has already been said.

In the same way, it can be said that it was during these two decades – the 1960s and the 1970s – that an artistic and aesthetic awareness of photography began to develop, within the framework of the existing arts system, but in which there also continued to co-exist concepts inherited from a greater autonomy of the medium, which never seemed to have been accomplished in previous decades.

The issue that seems to be fundamental in relation to the transition from modernist photography to post-modernist experimentalism is the exhaustive questioning that took place of the ontology of the photographic medium, as well as all the processes leading to the de-sacralisation of its subject matter, within the context of an appropriation and critical approach to mass culture. This questioning also happened in Portugal during the period covered here, although in a gentler and more sporadic way. Aspects related to the visual culture of the mass media began to be a current theme for both critics and artists.



Nova Fotografia, June 1978, cover of the catalogue of the exhibition, 18 x 18 cm, Lisbon.

A text written by Ernesto de Sousa, *Artes Gráficas, veículo de intimidade*² (Graphic Arts, a Vehicle of Intimacy), 1965, may be considered one of the first reflections on an ethical art that had social and political aspirations, providing material for the construction of a collective art, with “an empirical plenitude, through which individual subjectivity is formed, altered and reformed in a unique and intersubjective world.”³

In an even more radical manner, the author concluded that the graphic arts are a “vehicle for conveying intimacy between people” and that the “graphic work of art precipitates an end to the divisions between different forms of art, between literary arts and visual arts,”⁴ thus aligning his analysis with some aspects of the international neo-avant garde visual culture.

This was to be followed by another article written in the same spirit and, on this occasion, offering a critique of the National Exhibition of Photographic Art in 1969⁵ in which he clearly defended photography as a process, seeing it as one of the most effective media for deconstructing the isolated work of art, which the “salonists” still continued to pursue. As a reflection of another language, he cited the works of Helena Almeida, Nuno Siqueira and Victor Fortes in the way that they sought to “destroy painting as an isolated picture within a frame”.

Engraving, photography and all works of technical reproducibility went beyond their traditional status as minor arts, establishing themselves as the

2 Sousa, Ernesto de – *Artes Gráficas, veículo de intimidade* (Inova, Porto, 1965). The text was published in the catalogue of the exhibition of Armando Alves' graphic work.

3 *Ibidem*, p. 10.

4 Sousa, Ernesto de, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

5 Sousa, Ernesto de – “Fotografia – Nostalgia da pintura e antipintura”, in *Vida Mundial, Actualidade*, 28 November 1969.



Jorge Molder, *Untitled*, from the series *Waiters*, 1986, gelatin silver print, 25,9 x 26 cm, Collection Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon.



Augusto Alves Da Silva. *Untitled* from the series *Uma Cidade Assim* (A City like This). 1996, colour photograph Collection Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto.

instruments that provoked the separation of the arts and showing themselves, furthermore, to be capable of becoming the core of a social and neo-avant-garde understanding of art.

But these dualities seem to have prevailed when we observe the panorama of the exhibitions, events and critical thought that were to be found in the 1970s.

In the case of photography, two particular conjunctures clearly began to take shape during the 1960s and 1970s: one that offered a renewal of the legacy of autonomous photography and defended photographic purism, underlined by its neo-humanist, documentary and/or symbolic aspect (IF Group, 6 Photographers Group); and another that symptomatically placed photography within the framework of its artistic practices, stripping it of its status as an aesthetic object to use

it for the purposes of meaning, discourse, series, displacement, as a performative document or even as anti-painting. (Fernando Calhau, Ângelo de Sousa, Ernesto de Sousa, Helena Almeida, Alberto Carneiro, Leonel Moura, Julião Sarmento and Victor Pomar, among others).

It is also important to mention the case of *Instituto Português de Fotografia* (the Institute of Portuguese Photography), IPF, created in 1969 that played a major role in the formation and promotion of Portuguese photography, rejecting the “salonist” paradigm of the old photography associations and clubs. One of its most relevant activities was the holding of the *1st National Retrospective Exhibition* (1975) that brought together authors from the nineteenth century until 1975 in a heterogeneous display that was intended to explain the evolution of Portuguese photography and certainly formed part of a democratising intention after the 25 April Revolution, but whose result was still that of a self-referential understanding of photography.

In their turn, the IF Group⁶ and the group of 6 Photographers were largely responsible for engaging in a form of documentary photography, following a practice that they had inherited from humanism and critical realism in an obvious assimilation of North American models from the 1950s, but also in keeping with their obsession for a formal decontextualisation in which the reality gap became the most representative feature, something that Victor Palla and Costa Martins had already explored exhaustively even though their work had remained largely unknown.

The 6 Photographers Group (João Bafo, Patrick Buhau, José Reis, Pedro Baptista, Alberto Picco and Luís Carvalho) was to have a more sustained position in theoretical terms, rejecting belated salonist aesthetics and a sentimental photo-journalism. In the catalogue of their first exhibition in 1978⁷, João Bafo, one of the group’s members, claimed that there existed a “new generation of photographers” whose main premise was “although they follow different paths – they are driven by the same love of observation and are the same in their representation: the entire negative”.

For the 6 Photographers Group, this option meant a “mental process”. Cartier-Bresson, Renger-Patzsch and Edward Steichen were quoted, as well as the defence of the use of black and white, firmly rejecting the “artful technical tricks, with which photography seeks to plagiarise the stylistic and logical trends of the visual arts”.

They positioned themselves in the opposite camp to the “photographic artists”, opting for a “new gaze, a direct gaze”, inheriting a history of photography based on conquering the real as realism at a time when mass culture had already deposed it from this photographic utopia of the objective gaze of reality.

It is important to compare this text and these photographers with other directions that the image was taking at that time, namely the exhibition *18x18 – Nova Fotografia*⁸ [18x18 – New Photography] also held in 1978 with text by Ernesto de Sousa.

The text for the *Nova Fotografia* exhibition shifted the whole representational idea of the photographic object to its structuralist sphere and to the world of psychoanalytic interpretation. Ernesto de Sousa understood photography in the spheres of memory and desire, stating that: “as a more general approach, the new photography has to do with memory, the (non-)death of memory and the suspension of desire. [...] Photography does not imitate the gaze, it suspends it”.

In this other positioning, photography was no longer a question of the entire negative or even of its material: what Ernesto de Sousa questioned was the



lisboa e tejo e tudo



Lisboa e Tejo e Tudo, 1982, cover of the catalogue of the exhibition, Gallery ether / vale tudo menos tirar olhos, Lisbon.

Lisboa e Tejo e tudo (1982/89) . exposição de fotografias de victor palla e costa martins ether / vale tudo menos tirar olhos . tel:682376 . r. nobrejo da fonsesa 25. 1200 lisboa . PORTUGAL

6 Composed of João Paulo Sotto Mayor, José Carlos Principe, José C. Marafona, Luís de Seixas Abrunhosa Vasconcelos, Manuel Magalhães and Manuel Sousa. This group is still active.

7 Quoted in Sena, António – *op. cit.*, 1998, pp. 306-310.

8 The exhibition took place at the Grafil Gallery and at the Modern Art Centre of the Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, with the participation of Alberto Carneiro, Ângelo de Sousa, António Lagarto, António Palolo, Artur Rosa, Dr. Nelson, Ernesto de Sousa, Fernando Calhau, Helena Almeida, Irene Buarque, José Carvalho, José Conduto, Julião Sarmento, Leonel Moura, Madeira da Rocha, Mário Varela and Monteiro Gil.



José M. Rodrigues, *Amsterdam*, 1989, gelatin silver print, 38 x 38 cm, Courtesy of the artist.

constituent nature of the image, besides including other spheres of thinking, not just the aesthetic ones, in his analysis and theorisation.

These two texts therefore resulted in “manifestos” for the two predominant movements in Portuguese photography during the late 1960s and the 1970s as well as the incongruences that each of them lived through.

On the one hand, there was the idea of renewing a self-referential photographic language, although its aesthetic set of ideas could be modernised through the objectivity of a realistic gaze, categorically rejecting a ghost from the past known as “salon photography”. The truth is that its proponents knew little or nothing about the dynamics of this ghost, or about the heterogeneities that characterised it, which is really quite ironic since some less conventional proposals of salon photography continued to find an echo in the documentary photography of the 1970s. Documentary photography evolved towards a kind of neo-humanism, depicting a reality without any graininess and without any cropping, so that one could observe the paths of a symbolic realism and even of its abstraction.

On the other hand, in the context of the visual arts, photography was to follow a different path that was far removed from these groups. The *Alternativa Zero* exhibition can be considered as one of the exhibitions serving to produce a neo-avant-garde understanding of art, as has already been mentioned, in which photography appeared as a semiotic process. But other earlier solo and group exhibitions had placed photography at the core of the artistic process, as was the case with the exhibition *A Fotografia na Arte Moderna Portuguesa*⁹ (Photography in Portuguese Modern Art, 1977), or a year later with the exhibition *A Fotografia como Arte – A Arte como Fotografia* (Photography as Art – Art as Photography)¹⁰.

Many artists therefore played a leading role in promoting a significant change in the national artistic panorama, in which photographic experimentalism could be incorporated into different artistic paths.

Particular attention is drawn to those who had produced or continued to display coherent work in this field, as for example the referential case of **Helena Almeida**, whose artistic path and recognition became consolidated in the following decades, with her work asserting itself as one of the most important creations in the history of contemporary Portuguese photography. Using her body as the material for her performance, the artist adopted a fresh and renewed approach to questioning the photographic image and its relationship with painting and drawing.

Another artist whose photographic work was also begun during this period was **Alberto Carneiro**, who also enjoyed a long artistic career producing a unique oeuvre in the national panorama of the solid exploration of questions lying between the natural and the cultural, through long photographic series in which the performative body appears as the element that questions nature. Religion, primitivism, the natural elements as creative supports, and the use of photography as documentary material capable of representing the performative ritual in large-sized installations, lay at the core of his very refined artistic work in this area.

In his turn, in the 1970s, **Fernando Calhau**¹¹ began to experiment with photo-mechanical and photographic processes in keeping with the incorporation of the processes of the graphic arts and the mass media into the construction of an art that was free from academic constraints. In 1975, which was a key year for Portuguese art, and having recently returned to Portugal, he held a solo exhibition at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation where he presented a group of photogravures, while in 1978 at the National Society of Fine Art in Lisbon he presented an exhibition of his photography entitled *Night Works*.

- 9 Held at the Modern Art Centre/Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis in Porto and at the National Society of Fine Art in Lisbon, organised by Fernando Pernes with the participation of: Alberto Carneiro, Álvaro Lapa, Ana Vieira, Ângelo de Sousa, António Costa Pinheiro, Artur Varela, Cruz Filipe, Eduardo Nery, Emília Nadal, Fernando de Azevedo, Fernando Calhau, Fernando Lemos, Helena Almeida, João Dixo, José de Guimarães, Julião Sarmento, Manuel Casimiro, Maria Velez, Mário Botas, Mário Cezaryny de Vasconcelos, Noronha da Costa, Pedro Rocha and Victor Pomar.
- 10 Organised by Floris M. Neüss and including on its tour around Portugal the works of Fernando Calhau, Ângelo de Sousa, Alberto Carneiro, Julião Sarmento and Helena Almeida.
- 11 Awarded a scholarship by the Gulbenkian Foundation to study engraving at the Slade School of Art in London in 1974.



José Luís Neto, *Rifle Range, No. 5*, 2000, gelatin silver print, 63 x 45 cm, Collection Foundation PLMJ, Lisbon.

- 12 Promoted and supported by the Office of the Secretary of State for Culture, with the presence of 183 photographers.
- 13 Sena, António, *op. cit.*, 1989.

Mention should also be made of Ernesto de Sousa, who as we have seen defined a fundamental theoretical corpus about the changes in visual culture during the decade while at the same time producing a quite unique body of work in the field of mixed media through works that combined performance, experimental music, photography and archive films, such as *Luiz Vaz/73*; *Almada, um nome de guerra* or *O Meu Corpo é o Teu Corpo*.

Julião Sarmento also began his artistic career during this period with a work that was highly important in the conceptual field and which was to remain forgotten in the course of his later artistic work dedicated to painting and installation. Through photographic installations, the theme of eroticism and desire and the semiotic processes of the image were pivotal in all of his works during this period.

The same thing happened with **Victor Pomar**, who produced some notable work during this period as well as **Ângelo de Sousa**, who during this decade embarked upon a period of experimentation with photography and film, only to later abandon this for a career that was built upon pictorial abstractionism.

Eduardo Nery, Cruz-Filipe and Noronha da Costa, albeit in different contexts, subverted the canons of representation and perception between photography and painting, and between reality and dreams, while Leonel Moura used the devices of mass culture to question cultural identities.

In one way or another, many other artists chose to make use of photography's capacity to effect a break from the aesthetics of the past, as, for example, Ana Vieira, Artur Rosa, Monteiro Gil, António Palolo, João Dixo, and José Conduto.

Some of these artists began to exhibit their work in the late 1960s but it was not until the second half of the 1970s, after the 25 April Revolution, that they began to lay the foundations of their artistic careers, at solo and group exhibitions as well as in some cases by representing Portugal at the international biennials in Venice and São Paulo.

In the early 1980s, José Reis organised an exhibition that was intended to be an overview of the 1970s, entitled *Fotografia Portuguesa 1970-1980*¹². Contrary to the curator's intentions, the exhibition did not present "key works", nor was it even "representative" of what had been Portuguese photography between 1970 and 1980. The mistaken way in which the exhibition had been conceived, in which amateur photographers were summoned from the most diverse professions, with the presence of authors such as Eduardo Nery, Nuno Calvet, Eduardo Gageiro, Luís Pavão, Nuno Félix da Costa and João Bafo, revealed that the understanding of photography from the contemporary point of view was still too weak for some of its protagonists.

On the other hand, photography and the neo-avant garde movements remained stuck in the past in their premises, which were more aesthetic than political and social. In the reorganisation of the artistic panorama in Portugal, and in the return to painting that took place in the 1980s, photography rediscovered a poetic realism and only in the 1990s did it once again fulfil an already historical function as a standard bearer in the fight against a neo-liberal system for the arts, which had quickly managed to install itself.

In 1989, António Sena in his synthesis of the following decade¹³ mentioned that there had been "51 exhibitions of photography" and "36 books that were predominantly photographic in their scope" even though the "photographic domain, despite being quite extensive, does not have the corresponding density: with the exception of Paulo Nozolino, Jorge Molder, José Rodrigues, Gérard Castello-Lopes, Domingos Dias Martins, Fernando Lemos, Victor Palla/Costa Martins, Sena da Silva, Commander António José Martins and Marques da Costa [...]".



Nível de olho - Photography in Portugal 1980, 1989, cover of the catalogue of the exhibition, Gallery ether / Lisbon.



Júlia Ventura, *Geometrical Reconstructions and Figures with Roses*, installation, 1999-2013, Collection Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Lisbon.

The association and gallery *Ether – vale tudo menos tirar olhos*¹⁴, was fundamental in the panorama of Portuguese photography, engaging in concerted action of both promoting and rediscovering historical authors, as well as permanently updating photography in relation to the emerging values. Through exhibitions, catalogues, training activities, and the development of a critical and historical way of thinking, *Ether* corresponded to the growing interest in photography in the national cultural context.

One of its founders, António Sena, was to make his name as a leading figure for the study and dissemination of the photographic image in Portugal and abroad, through a contemporary vision of the Portuguese visual culture.

Yet while the groups and associations, their meetings and their new approaches to Portuguese photography were fundamental in renewing the crystallising ideas of the past, the system of the arts continued to prefer modernist models, postponing the more expanded approaches to the image until a later stage.

It is therefore significant that the experiments conducted with photography and film by some artists, such as Ângelo de Sousa, Noronha da Costa, Julião Sarmiento and António Palolo, were only recovered in terms of exhibitions and art criticism in the late 1990s and early 2000s within the context of an aesthetic and artistic coming of age in relation to the question of photography.

14 Founded by António Sena, Leonor Colaço, Luís Afonso, Madalena Lello, António Julio Aroeira, José Soudo and Alfredo Pinto in 1982.



Washing tanks, Bairro da Belavista, 1998 / *Client, Manuel's Open-Air Barber Shop, Cova da Moura*, from the series *New Discoverers*, 1999, colour photograph, Courtesy of the artist.

- 15 Held at the Cooperativa Diferença, in Lisbon and at the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo in Brazil in 1984. Taking part in this exhibition were Alberto Carneiro, Alberto Picco, Ana Vieira, André Gomes, Curado de Matos, Domingos Caldeira, Eduardo Nery, Ernesto de Sousa, Fernando Zeferino Ferreira, Filipe Jorge, Helena Almeida, Irene Buarque, João Filipe, João Freire, Jorge Molder, Luiz Carvalho, Manuel Magalhães, Monteiro Gil and Nuno Calvet.
- 16 Buarque, Irene, *Artistas-Fotógrafos. São Paulo*: (Universidade de São Paulo, 1984), 4.
- 17 Buarque, Irene, *Idem*, p. 5.
- 18 Organised by the Centre of Photographic Studies (1974-1975), founded by António Miranda, José Hígino, Óscar Almeida, Fernando Zeferino Ferreira, Manuel Miranda and José Viana. From 1985 onwards, Albano da Silva Pereira was responsible for the organisation of the *Encontros*.
- 19 Organised by the Braga Association of Photography and Film, founded by Rui Prata and Carlos Fontes.
- 20 Cerveira Pinto, António – *O Lugar da Arte*. Quetzal Editores, Lisbon, 1989), p. 219.

The photographic panorama of the 1980s further inherited the question of the exploration of the limits of its representativeness, with attempts being made to engage in a subjective post-realism in black and white, finally renewing its relationship with the “real”, as well as introducing the questions of self-representation based on other premises.

Some proposals also claimed to be pursuing the idea of “artist-photographers”, such as the exhibition organised by Irene Buarque and entitled *Artistas Fotógrafos em Portugal* (Artist-Photographers in Portugal)¹⁵ in 1984, in which the choice was “quite clear in the sense of choosing artists for whom photography is somewhat different from recording events and photo-reportage, without, however, underestimating these forms of expression, which are also present here. In this way, a multiform interpretation is offered, which goes beyond the specific limits of photography”.¹⁶ The need to make hierarchical concessions of gender prevented yet another kind of curatorial avant-garde.

In the above-mentioned exhibition catalogue, Ernesto de Sousa replied to the question, “Photography in Portugal? The same as in other countries provided that one places the socio-economic question in brackets ...”¹⁷

The beginning of the *Encontros de Fotografia de Coimbra* (Coimbra Photography Encounters) in 1980¹⁸ was also to prove decisive over the following decade for the greater internationalisation of Portuguese photography and for a greater openness to the discussion and development of photographic theory, without any disciplinary obstacles. This dynamic was further reinforced, towards the end of the decade, in 1987, by the formation of the *Encontros da Imagem de Braga* (Braga Image Encounters)¹⁹.

In fact, the whole future question of the place of photography in a broader context was to involve its dissolution into the post-contemporary “artistic” category, with all the complexity that this implied, including the following features: transferring the “attributes of the *aura*, from the support to the interpretation”²⁰; going beyond the ontology of the photographic image to arrive at an expanded field of visual culture; exploring the technological historicism of photography and the concepts of “archive” and “memory”; a renewed fascination for the virtuosities of the perception of images; and even the possibility of moving between reality and its fiction, which the image has come to establish in the twenty-first century.

The development of the artistic panorama, from the 1980s onwards, also confirmed the affirmation of photography in creative terms, driving the emergence of an art market in which photography became included, as well as leading to the creation of a circuit of galleries that began to give prominence to photographic creation.

At the same time, the state began to show an interest in photography, which in the late 1980s made it possible to create a National Photography Collection²¹ financed by the Office of the Secretary of State for Culture and compiled by Jorge Calado. The collection now represents an important repository of Portuguese and international photography from the nineteenth century to the 1980s.

The late 1990s brought a photographic practice that became increasingly integrated into the current artistic discourse and visual culture, in the broad sense, a process that still continues today. Many of the dichotomies and theoretical disagreements that were still continuing to trouble photography in the previous two decades had since been abandoned.

In 1997, the creation of the Portuguese Centre of Photography²² announced a state investment in the country's photographic heritage which, despite the first years of intense activity in terms of acquisitions and exhibitions, never had sufficient financial and human resources to undertake large-scale programmes relating to the conservation and dissemination of the vast Portuguese photographic heritage.

Despite the various efforts that have been made to study and promote this heritage, it still remains largely unknown and lacks a genuine network of partnerships between the various institutions that are responsible for maintaining photographic collections.

In these two decades, specific paths were established and, despite the artistic and commercial climate created by the return to academic typologies, photography became a matter of increasing interest for many creators, blazing a trail in which its creative facets were recognised and enlarged upon and which was to prove fundamental for the renewal of the Portuguese artistic panorama of post-modernity.

All of this was corroborated in the following decade by the development of Portuguese photography along paths that led to its greater involvement in the main contemporary issues, as well as to the importance of establishing specialised forms of artistic teaching through the already mentioned art schools, a measure that was, and still is, fundamental in supporting training and creation in this area.

New generations coming from highly diverse academic and artistic backgrounds and working in a cultural environment that was free and enjoyed widespread international circulation made it possible for fundamental paths to be developed, which today represent a significant part of the history of Portuguese photography. In four decades, photography succeeded in becoming a safe and credible artistic value while being one of the most relevant genres in contemporary Portuguese art.

Some of the main authors who established themselves in the 1980s and 1990s marked out for themselves an artistic path of great coherence that involved a permanent updating of its themes and concepts. With their different paths and scopes of action, all of these photographers succeeded in becoming important references for the younger generations, clearly expressing the range of different approaches to the photographic image in the contemporary world.

As far as self-representation is concerned, **Jorge Molder** and **Júlia Ventura** have been the most prolific interpreters of this genre: Molder through a body of

21 Currently existing at the Portuguese Centre of Photography in Porto under the supervision of the Directorate-General of Books, Archives and Libraries (DGLAB).

22 Established in Porto, this was designed to be a centre dedicated to the safeguarding and dissemination of the country's historical photographic heritage. In 2007, it was closed and integrated into the network of National Archives, losing a great deal of its powers and resources.

23 In 2003, a group of photographers began a project that they christened with the name of KameraPhoto, seeking to create a visual corpus entitled *Diário da República*, following on from the commemoration of the Centenary of the First Republic. This project resulted in the recording of thousands of images all over the country, up until 2015, in order to create an immense social and political portrait of contemporary Portugal. The group consisted of Valter Vinagre, João Pina, Pedro Letria, António Júlio Duarte, Augusto Brázio, Céu Guarda, Dora Nogueira, Sandra Rocha and Nelson d'Aires, among others.

work that engages in a renewed questioning of the image and its many visible and invisible sides, as well as the literary, psychoanalytical and film-based concept of alter egos; and **Júlia Ventura**, through her exploration of the biopolitical mechanisms of female representation and the way in which the modernist rules of gender established a hierarchy for this.

Paulo Mendes has used the photographic image in the multifaceted group of his works as a whole, through a pioneering idea for the archiving and critical questioning of the historicism of the image, as well as in his incisive and mordant portrait of the country and its incongruences.

In turn, **João Tabarra** constructed a committed and renewed questioning of the discursive and representational limits of photographic reality from a perspective of strong social criticism and through the production of a continued performative work in which he created many different personalities who were always to be found on the border between absurdity and the most violent reality.

Augusto Alves da Silva has marked out for himself a career in which documentary questions are always present, through a photography that is permanently on the move and constantly changing its most obvious references. In his work, intimism coexists with the classical photographic genres, forever evaluating contradictory elements, absurd ones that deride reality.

At the beginning of their careers, **Paulo Nozolino**, Daniel Blaufuks and José Rodrigues were the most faithful interpreters of a procedural language based on the use of black-and-white photography, although they followed quite different paths.

Blaufuks and Nozolino have explored the importance of the image as an intimist diary and as a travel notebook, with this having been the theme of many of their photographic series.



João Tabarra, *Lake + Fool*, 1999, positive, colored gelatin silver print, 185 × 290 cm, Collection Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Lisbon.

In turn, **José M. Rodrigues** has worked with many different languages, ranging from conceptual explorations to abstractionism, leading to a documentary exploration of the absurd or to the most critical form of realism, in one of the most diversified paths to be followed in Portuguese art.

On the other hand, **José Luís Neto** who is from a more recent generation has made what is a rare and unusual incursion, in terms of Portuguese photography, into abstract territory in which he conducts an intense exploration of the plastic qualities of the photographic material itself, working on deteriorated historical images and on the mechanics and material of the photographic process, constantly searching for the aesthetic values of time and the effects of its passing on the essence of the image.

Paulo Catrica, António Júlio Duarte, António Pedro Ferreira, Augusto Brázio, Luís Campos, Luís Palma, Margarida Correia and **Pedro Letria** all belong to a group of photographers²³ who have worked upon a critical and documentary aspect of photography, producing works in which they reflect on the ambiguities and contradictions of the contemporary world, in what amounts to a permanent questioning of the very role of photography itself as a means of representing reality. Working on another aspect, **Manuela Marques** has photographed reality in an approach that is poetical, but is also socially committed.

While this long list of photographers helps us to establish some of the more sustained lines of creation in Portuguese photography in the last few decades, it is also in the generations that were born in the 1970s and 1980s that some of the more interesting proposals have been made, already in what can be described as the post-photographic era.

What characterises these new photographers is their constant switching between photography and film, in a clear dissemination of the possibilities of the mechanism of the image. At the same time, the increasing internationalisation of their artistic paths, and even of their fundamental training, has meant that they have acquired the ability to permanently update their aesthetic language, which is clearly visible in the content of their proposals.

Autobiography, appropriation, intimacy, confrontation with reality, the mechanisms of illusion and perception, fictional materials, seriality, archives and comparisons, as well as fieldwork, were just some of the strategies involved in the construction of the photographic world at the turn of the century.

Adelina Lopes, André Cepeda, André Príncipe, Catarina Botelho, Daniel Malhão, Duarte Amaral Neto, Edgar Martins, João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva, João Paulo Serafim, José Pedro Cortes, Nuno Cera, Noé Sendas, Patrícia Almeida, Rita Magalhães and Rui Calçada Bastos, among many others, are examples of the multiple photographic approaches adopted in a post-photographic context, with the clearly delineated freedom to constitute a new legacy of reflections upon the image.

The conflicts and different forms of resistance that Portuguese culture has always had in relation to contemporaneity seem to have faded at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and a great deal is undoubtedly owed to a dizzying process of updating critical and theoretical thought, as well as to an affirmative creativity that is contemporary, but also well informed.

In this process, photography has always been a barometer that remains historically removed from artistic circles and theory, being relegated to a marginal and unknown position. For this reason, the creative wealth and presence of the debate and theorising about photography, and about visual culture in a more general sense, is presented as a factor of hope that Portuguese culture will never again fall out of step with its own contemporaneity.

Biographical Notes:

Paulo Nozolino (Lisbon, 1955 –) began his artistic career in London in the 1970s and continued to develop in Paris over the following decade, with this being the starting point for his photographic journey through the Arab world and Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. His work is marked by his concern with the social and political consequences that a society in a permanent state of tension can have for people's private lives. Destruction and death, whether from the collective or autobiographical point of view, have been constant features of his photographic development. He is one of the most highly-regarded Portuguese artists, both at home and abroad. He has won various international awards. His work is represented in various Portuguese public and private collections, most notably the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the Portuguese Centre of Photography in Porto, the Novo Banco Collection in Lisbon and the Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, also in Lisbon. Internationally, his work is represented in various collections, most notably the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris, the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern in Valencia, and DZ Bank in Frankfurt.

Victor Pomar (Lisbon, 1949 –) attended the Higher School of Fine Art in Porto and Lisbon, later emigrating to Holland in the 1970s. He immediately became interested in painting but also in photography and film, engaging in a highly-creative conceptual and experimental practice during this

decade. His work is represented in the Portuguese collections of the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, and the Caixa Geral de Depósitos, also in Lisbon.

José M. Rodrigues (Lisbon, 1951 –) was educated in Holland at the Royal Academy of Fine Art in The Hague and at the Professional School of Photography in Apeldoorn, having been awarded a scholarship from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon and various Dutch organisations. He began to develop his work in the 1970s, exploring various photographic languages ranging from conceptualism to abstractionism or oneiric realism, through portraiture, landscape or even performance. In 1999, he was awarded the Pessoa Prize, one of Portugal's most prestigious awards in recognition of his artistic merit. His work is represented in various Portuguese public and private collections, most notably the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the Portuguese Centre of Photography in Porto, and the Novo Banco Collection in Lisbon. Internationally, his work is represented in various collections, most notably at the Dutch Art Foundation and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

Julião Sarmento (Lisbon, 1948 –) has had a long artistic career and is one of the most international Portuguese artists. Despite having first established himself as a painter, it was in the

field of conceptual photography and experimental film that he made his name in the 1970s as one of the most promising artists of the neo avant-garde movement. His work is represented in the most important public and private collections, both in Portugal and abroad, such as the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado in Lisbon, and the Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. Internationally, his work is represented in numerous collections, most notably the MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani Barcelona in Barcelona, Spain, the MOCA Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, California, USA, and the Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, France.

Augusto Alves da Silva (Lisbon, 1963 –) studied in London at the London College of Printing and the Slade School of Fine Art. His photographic work has been firmly established since the 1990s, being based on a great technical and documentary rigour that brings him closer to the German school of analytical realism. In 1998, he was one of the finalists in the Citibank Photography Award. His work is represented in numerous collections, most notably the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the Portuguese Centre of Photography in Porto, the Novo Banco Collection in Lisbon, and the PLMJ Foundation, also in Lisbon, as well as internationally at the Fundació Helga de Avelar

in Cáceres, Spain, and the Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo in Badajoz, Spain.

Ángelo de Sousa (1938, Lourenço Marques, Mozambique – 2011) took the course in painting at the Faculty of Fine Art in Porto and from the 1960s onwards was a member of the teaching staff at that same institution. From 1967-1968, he was awarded a scholarship by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to study in London where he attended the Slade School of Art and the St. Martin's School of Fine Art. His artistic career was fundamentally centred upon painting and sculpture, in which he sought to master and go beyond figurative and abstract questions. In the 1970s he undertook a series of experiments in the fields of photography and film that proved highly important for the history of the neo avant-garde movements. His work is represented in the most important Portuguese public and private collections such as the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado in Lisbon, the Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, and the Berardo Museum, also in Lisbon.

Ernesto de Sousa (Lisbon, 1921 – 1988) was an art critic, curator, artist, filmmaker, teacher and researcher; he was one of the most prolific figures in Portuguese culture from the 1950s right through to the 1980s. In the 1960s and 1970s he was very active in developing and promoting the Portuguese art world through the

media of photography, film, visual arts, performance, theatre and experimental music. He was the creator of some of the most unusual and complex mixed-media works to be produced in the 1970s and the author of some of the most important analyses to be made of photographic creation at that time. He was also a promoter and active participant in many events sponsored by the Fluxus movement, both in Portugal and abroad. His work is represented in the most important Portuguese public and private collections, such as the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado in Lisbon, and the Berardo Museum, also in Lisbon, as well as in Spain at the Museo Vostell-Malpartida in Cáceres and the Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo in Badajoz.

João Tabarra (Lisbon, 1966 –) began his career as a photojournalist, having been one of the leading figures behind the introduction of a modernist language into Portuguese photo-reportage. Starting in the late 1990s, he began to dedicate himself to artistic photography on a more continuous basis, constructing one of the most interesting and important careers in the realm of Portuguese arts. His work is a permanent reflection and enlargement upon questions relating to the photographic subject and its social and political models of control and oppression.

His work is represented in the main Portuguese public and private collections, such as the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado in Lisbon, the Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon and the António Cachola Collection in Elvas. Internationally, his work is represented in the collections of the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea (CGAC) in Santiago de Compostela, Spain and the FRAC – Rhône Alpes/Institut d'Art Contemporain in Villeurbanne, France.

Júlia Ventura (Lisbon, 1952 –) studied painting at the Lisbon Faculty of Fine Art and video art at Concordia University in Montreal and she began her photographic career in the 1980s, dividing her time between Lisbon and Amsterdam, developing an artistic path of her own in which she worked on questions of identity and gender and on the great interrogations that were being made about the role of the image in post-modernity. Matrix, otherness and massification are just some of the themes dealt with by the artist in her works. Her work is represented in the Portuguese collections of the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, the Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, and the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado in Lisbon. Internationally, her work is represented in various collections, most notably the Art Metro.