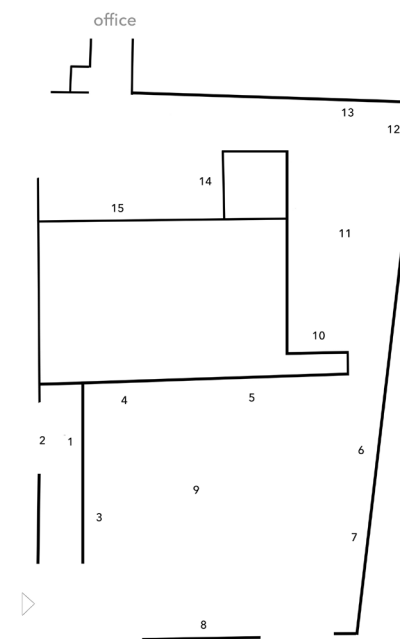


Kubik Gallery

Restauração Street 6, Porto, Portugal

Tuesday - Saturday: 15h00 - 19h30

www.kubikgallery.com/



1] Bull

150x67x57cm

Ink, Iron, 2018

2] Weights

37x15x11cm & 32x17x13cm

Peridotite, rope, steel rings, 2018

3] Hard copy #3

34,5x81,5cm

Printed image on marble, 2018

4] Safety net #2

100x100cm

Rope and fabric strip, 2018

5] Hard copy #6

58,7x52cm

Printed image on marble, 2018

6] Shock

150x140cm

Ink on maleable plastic, 2018

7] Hard copy #4

38,2x104cm

Printed image on marble, 2018

8] Hard copy #5

58x80cm

Printed image on marble, 2018

The confession of the flesh

Hernâni Reis Baptista

9] Jumping ramp

205x214x42cm

Iron, cement, rope and fabric strip. 2017

10] Hard copy #1

35x91cm

Printed image on marble, 2018

11] Horse

140x27x105cm

Wood, vynil, 2018

12] Dumbbell

22x22x41cm

Acrylic tube and marble, 2018

13] Safety net #1

100x100cm

Rope and fabric strip, 2017

14] Hard copy #2

48x44cm

Printed image on marble, 2018

15] Missing net

100x100

fabric strip, 2017

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Bodies, luxuries and works

(excerpts)

by Óscar Faria

The coincidence could not be happier. In France, the fourth volume of Foucault's "History of Sexuality" under the title "Les aveux de la chair" (The Confessions of the Flesh) has just been published posthumously. This event is closely related to the current exhibition by Hernâni Reis Baptista, who borrows the title of the English version of a 1977¹ talk by a series of French intellectuals about a project where the author seeks to "problematize sexual pleasure in a historical perspective of a genealogy of the subject of desire and under the conceptual horizon of the arts of existence."²

"The confession of the flesh" by Hernâni Reis Baptista is at the antipodes of a practice related to the duty of obedience. The show can even be read as a metaphor for the pleasures associated with alternative ways of life, namely those related not only to the worship of the body but also to the "forbidden pleasures", to use the title of a book of poems by Luis Cernuda³. However, even in this intention, the artist's proposal is not without a critical view of the practices aimed at achieving a better performance, whether physical, economic or social. If, on the one hand, the use of pleasures is summoned through suggestive works, on the other, the consequences that such a choice may imply, in particular through the marks left by time visible in some of the works now presented, can not fail to be pointed out.⁴(...)

The idea of game, whether in its erotic meaning or in a sense related to the idea of competition, crosses the most recent production of Hernâni Reis Baptista, especially since the exhibition "Dog eat dog" (Sismógrafo, Porto, 2016). In this show, the artist created an atmosphere saturated with red and blue, colors present in the various elements that made up the installation: sculptures, video, text, photography and floor. All elements were inspired by "Agility", the name given to one of the most popular canine sports. (...)

In the exhibition at Kubik several lines of the recent work of Hernâni Reis Baptista come together. There are works that extend the research done in "Dog eat dog", now appearing in the form of structures that can also be used by humans: a ramp⁵, dumbbells⁶, objects made with climbing ropes⁷ and sculptures that vaguely evoke animals⁸, whose forms that can also be related to gym machines or competition sports. Devoid of any function, these works refer to an imagery related to the cult of the body and practices associated with sadomasochism, such as "bondage".

In a famous passage from "The Venus of Kazabaika," Leopold von Sacher-Masoch writes about a young man who stepped on his horse to better observe Wanda: "In fact he is a handsome man. No, it's more than that, he's a man like I've never seen. He belongs to the Belvedere, carved in marble; it's the same muscles, the same face, the same hair ringed and disheveled, and what gives him a characteristic beauty is that he does not wear a beard. If he had wider hips he could be a woman in disguise, the mouth has the same design; he has lips of a lioness showing partly the teeth and sometimes gives his a face a cruel expression./ Apollo, who had skinned live the satyr Mársyas!"⁹

"Shock"¹⁰, a piece that can be defined as an object-painting, as the title indicates, seeks to take advantage of a material, a malleable plastic, in order to simulate the marks (bruises, scratches) left by some trauma. The presence of two rings in metal validate the reading of this work as being an evocation of intense sexual practices, again related to the S/M culture. The skin of the work also configures the idea of a landscape, thus approaching a vision of art as "the flesh of things", as it can be extrapolated from a note in "The Visible and the Invisible" of the philosopher French Marcel Merleau-Ponty.¹¹

"The confession of the flesh" also includes a previously unseen body of work entitled "hardcopy". In this case there is a set of marbles with prints made on its surfaces through a transfer process, containing fragments of images of Greek, Roman and Renaissance statues¹¹. This "collage" of materials allows not only the connection between the original and the sculptures now revealed, but also to cross a classical discipline with the possibilities generated by the new technologies. The ambiguity produced by the difficulty in identifying either the copied pieces, the sexual gender of the figures represented on the stones, is another of the dimensions of these objects. The artist's decision not to tamper with the visible flaws in the works is also to be emphasized, thus seeking to refer the viewer once more to the follies, namely the illusion of a ruin often sought as a desired effect in these architectures.

We began this short essay on the recent work of Hernâni Reis Baptista with an evocation of Michel Foucault. It is with a story related to this philosopher and reported by James Miller that we close the text. The scene takes place in Berkeley, California. On that day, the French writer had arranged a meeting with Philip Horovitz. In this conversation, the latter, then university student of dance and theater, questioned Foucault about the artist's economic constraints: "Well, you can not have a perfect world"¹³ were the first words of the thinker. And then, according to Miller's account, he went on: "The revolution does not work. Still, it is an ideal. Playing with the structure – transforming and transfiguring its limits – is different from playing inside the structure. Artists have more freedom than ever before. In times, the mere difference between artists and others in terms of clothing and behavior was scandalous. But no more. See how much freedom you have: use it, to obtain even more."¹⁴

These words remain current. And the work of Hernâni Reis Baptista proves this need of every day artists to work for a little more freedom, because this is never a given fact.

For all this, and as the Russian feminist and anarchist Emma Goldman puts it. "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."

¹The original title of the talk is "Le jeu de Michel Foucault" ("The game of Michel Foucault"), in "Ornicar?", Bulletin Périodique Du Champ Freudien, n° 10, Juillet 1977, pp. 62-93. Hernâni Reis Baptista takes the name of the show "The confession of the flesh", the same text published in FOUCAULT, Michel. "Power/Knowledge. Selected interviews and other writings" (ed. GORDON, Colin). New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, pp. 194-228.

²GROS, Frédéric, "Avertissement", in FOUCAULT, Michel, "Les Aveux de la Chair. Histoire de la Sexualité (Volume IV)". Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2018. The original plan of the piece included the publication in six volumes: "1. La volonté de savoir, 2. La chair et le corps, 3. La croisade des enfants, 4. La femme, la mère et l'hystérique, 5. Les pervers, 6. Populations et races."

³CERNUDA, LUIS. «Los placeres prohibidos», (1936). In this book, the spanish poet writes a poem about the death of Orfeu, in which we left the last verse: "Otros cuerpos, Corsario, nada saben;/ Déjalos, pues./ Vierte, viértete sobre mis deseos,/ Ahórcate en mis brazos tan jóvenes,/ Que con la vista ahogada,/ Con la voz última que abran mis labios,/ Diré amargamente cómo te amo."

⁴"Shock", ink on maleable plastic, 2018

⁵"Jumping ramp", iron, cement, rope and fabric strip. 2017

⁶"Dumbbell", acrylic and marble. 2018

⁷"Safety net" #1, #2, rope and fabric strip. 2017/18

⁸"Bull", iron, 2017 and "Horse", wood, vynil. 2018

⁹In the "Metamorphoses", by Ovid, this episode is reported in the sixth chapter (lines 383 and 400). Mársias is a "Frígia satire, inventor of the double tube flute, which defies Apollo for a musical competition and, when it was defeated, was skinned alive; Metamorphosed in the river". In Ovídio, "Metamorphoses", Lisbon: Cotovia, 2007, p.424.

¹⁰Ink on maleable plastic, 2018

¹¹"Its the flesh of things, now that it talks about our flesh and of others - My sight is one of the sensible, of the brute and primordial world, which defies the analysis of the being and of nothing, of existence as conscience and of existence as a thing, which demands a whole reconstruction of philosophy." (work note, May 1959, in "The visible and the invisible", Paris: Gallimard, 1964, p. 251), Our translation.

¹²"Sleeping Hermaphrodite" (roman copy from a greek bronze from the II century B.C.); "Laocoonte group" (40 a.C.); "Venus de Milo" (II century, B.C.), "The rebel slave", by Michelangelo (1513-1516); and "David", by Michelangelo (1501-1504).

¹³MILLER, James. Op.cit. p. 353.

¹⁴Idem.