

*Performing the Shadows: A Feminist Study on Lourdes Castro's Theatres of Shadows  
(1973-1985)*

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**Beatriz Laschi**

Abstract: The multidisciplinary artist Lourdes Castro (1930-2022) was one of the pioneering in performance art in Portugal, yet little is said or published about her inventive Theatres of Shadows. Therefore, this dissertation aimed primarily to collect, expose, and analyse material on her experiments with moving shadows, with particular emphasis on the productions that, to varying degrees, involved the collaboration of Manuel Zimbro (1944-2003) – namely, *The Shadows: Picnic in the Shade, Contour, Night and Day* (1973-1975); *The Five Seasons* (1975-1980); and *Horizon Line* (1981-1985). Associated with this research is a feminist political positioning, as well as the adoption of a comprehensive analysis of the documentation of these ephemeral works. Thus, beyond the central analysis of the proposed case study, a solid political and cultural contextualization aiming to understand the means of production, dissemination, and reception of these artistic productions is conducted. Issues such as the emergence of performance art (comparing the Portuguese case with that of other European countries and the United States of America), the role of women during the dictatorship of *the Estado Novo* (1933-1974), as well as its long-term consequences for national female artists and feminism, are present in this investigation. Also examined are the work and life of the artist Lourdes Castro, emphasizing the significance of her multiple migrations, the performativity she assumes in the fusion of art and life, and the diplomatic skills required throughout her career. Therefore, this research was guided by three main axes: the description and critical analysis of the performative events; the evaluation of their feminist analytical potential considering the centrality of the artist's body in these creations; and the exploration of hypotheses explaining why they have been, and to some extent continue to be, marginalized in the Portuguese artistic panorama. With this work, I intend to acknowledge Lourdes Castro's quality as a performer - and not only as a visual artist – arguing for the experimental value of her Theatres of Shadows, ultimately pointing out to their remarkable resources to alternatively portray the female body and its quotidian.

Keywords: Lourdes Castro; Performativity; Theatres of Shadows; Feminism; Twentieth Century.

*Resumo: A artista multidisciplinar Lourdes Castro (1930-2022) foi uma das pioneiras na arte da performance em Portugal, no entanto, pouco se diz ou publica sobre os seus inventivos Teatros de Sombras. Portanto, esta dissertação teve como objetivo principal recolher, expor e analisar material sobre os seus experimentos com sombras em movimento, dando particular ênfase às produções que, em diferentes graus, envolveram a colaboração de Manuel Zimbro (1944-2003) - nomeadamente, As Sombras: Piquenique à Sombra, Contorno, Noite e Dia (1973-1975); As Cinco Estações (1975-1980); e Linha do Horizonte (1981-1985). Associada a esta investigação está uma posição política feminista, bem como a adoção de uma análise abrangente da documentação destas obras efêmeras. Assim, para além da análise central do caso de estudo proposto, foi realizada uma contextualização política e cultural sólida, com o objetivo de compreender os meios de produção, disseminação e receção destas produções artísticas. Questões como a emergência da arte da performance (comparando o caso português com o de outros países europeus e os Estados Unidos da América), o papel das mulheres durante a ditadura do Estado Novo (1933-1974), bem como as suas consequências a longo prazo para as artistas mulheres e para o feminismo nacionais, estão presentes nesta investigação. Também são examinados o trabalho e a vida da artista Lourdes Castro, enfatizando a importância das suas múltiplas migrações, a performatividade que assume na fusão entre arte e vida, e as habilidades diplomáticas necessárias ao longo da sua carreira. Portanto, esta pesquisa foi orientada por três eixos axiais: a descrição e análise crítica dos eventos performativos; a avaliação do seu potencial analítico feminista considerando a centralidade do corpo da artista nestas criações; e a exploração de hipóteses explicativas para a sua persistente marginalização no panorama artístico português. Com este trabalho, pretendo reconhecer a qualidade de Lourdes Castro como performer - e não apenas como artista visual - argumentando a favor do valor experimental dos seus Teatros de Sombras, apontando, em última instância, para os seus recursos notáveis na representação alternativa do corpo feminino e do seu quotidiano.*

*Palavras-chave: Lourdes Castro; Performatividade; Teatros de Sombras; Feminismo; Século XX.*

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## Introduction

*"Afinal, nunca fiz outra coisa a vida inteira: sombras e teatro que se animam agora. Não me pergunte porquê: aconteceu, nasceu de mim e tenho a inestimável colaboração do Zimbro."*

"After all, I've never done anything else my whole life: shadows and theatre that come to life now. Don't ask me why: it happened, it was born from me, and I have Zimbro's invaluable collaboration."

(Castro in *Diário de Notícias* 1977, 10)

The subject under examination in this dissertation are the theatres of shadows developed by the artist Lourdes Castro, which, between 1973 and 1985, underwent refinement and were extensively presented with the collaboration of Manuel Zimbro. The primary concern of this study was to aggregate existing information concerning these performances, which, in my assessment, were rather dispersed, given the absence of a work exclusively dedicated to them. From this starting point, a feminist perspective emerged and proceeded to analyse Castro's contexts of creation for these performances, the challenges faced, but also the potentials unveiled by this shadow-body of elusive edges, and the fantastically mundane routine that it now performs for the world to see.

First of all, I found it intriguing to note that, despite Castro's status as an extensively studied artist within the Portuguese academia, this aspect of her career remains relatively underexplored. Indeed, the sparse literature on her theatres of shadows often lacks concrete insights into their operational mechanisms, sequences of actions, stage props, quality of movement, intentionality or reception related to each of these endeavours. In fact, at times, these texts assume an overly broad and superficial character in order to encompass other facets of the artist's career, as evidenced in catalogues from exhibitions such as *Além da Sombra* (1992) and *À Luz da Sombra* (2010). Conversely, some publications adopt highly specific focuses to explore particular perspectives on these events, as seen in Kupstaitis' article, titled *O Artista Como Portador da Sombra: o olhar voltado para a experiência com o Teatro de Sombras* (2022), where she delves into

a passage of one of the shows to discuss her interpretation of the artist as a bearer of shadows.

Furthermore, the distinctive nature of the productions in question elaborated another compelling reason for selecting this topic. Unparalleled in the annals of Portuguese art, they are imbued with a unique sensitivity when confronting everyday life, illuminating facets of the often-overlooked female experience - typically relegated to the private and inconsequential sphere. Additionally, I was keen to recognize and disseminate Lourdes Castro's prowess as a performance artist, and not merely as a visual artist as she is often referred to. Indeed, as we shall delve into later, despite the inclusion of the term 'theatre' in the title of these creations, a closer examination swiftly reveals them to be interdisciplinary performative interventions, seamlessly blending elements of cinema, happening, Eastern and Western theatre, and even aspects of the visual arts.

Another rationale behind selecting this topic relates to the political framework shaping this analysis, one aimed at contributing to the creation of an alternative contemporary art history, acknowledging the barriers imposed by social institutions in establishing women's careers in the arts<sup>1</sup>. So, given the persistent imbalance in art history research, which often sidelines investigations into works by women artists, and even more so when these works emerge in unconventional mediums - as commonly found among artists of this genre - and ephemeral forms like performance art, it felt pertinent to undertake this case study. Furthermore, the theatre of shadows is particularly interesting for the portrayal of the female body, as it allows for greater space for self-invention. It is powerful because the artist's body can assume different contours through the fusion of shadows with other objects, subtract/hide body parts for its placement in strange poses, magnify or reduce its size depending on the proximity of light sources, fragment (or even dialogue with) its own projection according to the quantity and positioning of stage lights, paint itself in different colours, "disappear" and "reappear", etc. All these aspects, along with the fantastical scenarios elaborated in collaboration with Zimbro—who, as we will further see, was a multidisciplinary artist installed in Paris between the late 1960s and early 1980s and also a significant promoter of Zen Buddhism philosophy in Portugal—

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<sup>1</sup> About this, in her influential article "From 1971: Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (2015), Linda Nochlin examines how societal institutions shape our perception of reality, suggesting that entrenched social expectations about women inherently hinder their pursuit of careers in the arts.

elevate these pieces to a level of inventiveness and liberation from representational constraints previously unseen in the Portuguese artistic landscape.

On the other hand, it is necessary to acknowledge that studying this type of artistic expression - i.e. grounded in the ephemeral - presents several challenges. This is either because it constitutes a type of unrepeatable work, which cannot be captured, reproduced, or replaced by its derivative products (Metello 2007; Phellan 1993), or due to the "documentary scarcity inherent in performance art and the dispersion of its archives" (Madeira 2020, 201). Additionally, as I did not personally witness any of the presentations that will be described and analysed subsequently, this work is limited by the documentary sources available on them and by the constraints always involved in a second-hand interpretation of an art piece.

For this reason, to a certain extent, the position adopted in this study aligns with Amelia Jones's proposition – made in her article “‘Presence’ in absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation’ (1997) - that documentation can offer another form of engagement or experience of performative works. Jones advocates for an expanded understanding of performance documentation, emphasizing its potential to convey the essence and impact of live performances beyond their temporal and spatial limitations. In her work, Jones challenges the traditional notion of documentation as a mere record or supplement to live events, arguing instead for its active role in shaping our perception and interpretation of performance art. By recognizing the inherent performativity of documentation itself, she suggests that it can become an integral part of the artwork, offering viewers a unique entry point into understanding the artist's intentions and the experiential qualities of the performance. This perspective resonates with the approach taken in this study, which acknowledges the significance of documentation as a means of extending the reach and significance of Lourdes Castro's shadow theatres, allowing for a deeper appreciation of their artistic and cultural significance.

In reality, considering that performance operates at the intersection of art and life, it is not surprising that an artist like Lourdes Castro, who had been exploring the relationship between quotidian and her artistic production since the early 1960s, would eventually gravitate toward this medium. Likewise, in his examination of the article by Paulo Pires Fernandes, he elucidates this sense of immediacy, the longing to experiment and incite immediate contemplation, which has been an underlying theme in Castro's oeuvre:

*"A relação entre arte e vida cotidiana era desejada ali, assim como o desejo de explorar novos materiais e formas (...) ou ainda, em Lourdes Castro, a harmonia com a vida, procurada a todo momento, revela-se em uma busca pelo essencial presente, aqui e agora."*

"The relationship between art and everyday life was desired there, as was the desire to explore new materials and forms (...) or still, in Lourdes Castro, harmony with life, sought at all times, is revealed in a search for the essential present, here and now."

(Fernandes 2010, 1-3).

Regarding structure, following the interdisciplinary approach proposed by Amelia Jones and Tracey Warr (2000) for the study of performance art as well as Griselda Pollock's insights on the development of alternative art histories (1983), this dissertation is inaugurated by a chapter aimed at historically and culturally contextualizing Castro's performative emergence as well as its conditionings. Therefore, an overview of the social, political, and cultural influences was considered necessary for the understanding of the concept, production, and reception of the theatres of shadows throughout the investigation.

With that said, the initial chapter unfolds into two distinct sections, the first of which centres on contextualizing performance art, tracing its origins and development, particularly during the zenith of the artist's activity between the 1960s and 1980s. Drawing from an international perspective, this contextualization progresses to a narrowing down that focuses on the Portuguese case. The section highlights the intention of promoting academic discourse on the concept of performance art and its significance in contemporary art. It focuses on several key aspects, such as its ephemeral nature, relationship with the audience, roots in historical avant-garde movements and its seminal role in women's liberation artistic efforts that became very popular during the 1970s in different contexts. By addressing these aspects, this first section aims to shed light on performance art's multifaceted nature and its impact on contemporary artistic practices and social movements.

Subsequent to this introductory section, a second segment is dedicated to delineating the envisioned role of Portuguese women amidst the extensive authoritarian regime of the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974). Here, the focus is on elucidating the repercussions of this regime on feminist movements and on the (de)politicization of female artists in Portugal. This thematic exploration serves to underscore how entrenched

misogynistic ideologies at the national level led to the marginalization of feminist tenets, persisting even post the democratic revolution, and perpetuated inclusively by many female artists that blindly denied art world's power asymmetries. Furthermore, attention is directed towards the migratory flux of the Portuguese population between the 1950s and 1970s, alongside spotlighting paradigmatic female figures within contemporary Portuguese art, such as Paula Rego, Helena de Almeida, and Lourdes Castro. Associated with this narrative is the emergence of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, in 1957, pivotal in bestowing scholarships upon numerous national artists, thus nurturing the development of experimental and avant-garde expressions unattainable within Portuguese borders during the dictatorship.

Transitioning to the second chapter, the focus shifts to an introduction to the artist, charting her journey from her island roots through her migratory pathways and artistic development until her systematic engagement with Theatres of Shadows from the second half of 1972. This biographical exploration aims to underscore the spontaneity intrinsic to her creative process and the significance of her experiences, both on the island of Madeira and abroad, but specially in Paris, where she resided for a quarter-century. Of particular note is her central involvement with the KWY group and her engagement with *Nouveau Réalisme*, which served as a catalyst for the transition from painting to three-dimensional constructs evident in her oeuvre from the 1960s onward. From these encounters emerges a compelling urge to bring forth the overlooked and mundane into the realm of representation, epitomized by Castro's thematic exploration of shadows. From 1961-1962, she unfolds a continuous exploration around this theme, traversing diverse media, materials, contexts, and conceptual premises, constituting an inquiry so extensive and profound that it becomes inseparable from the artist's own identity.

The third chapter is the heart of this dissertation and therefore the most extensive one. It hosts the three proposed case studies which are approached in the tree subsection. The third chapter is the heart of this dissertation and, therefore, the most extensive one. It contains the three proposed case studies, which are discussed in individual subsections, while the first part is dedicated to a general characterization of the theatre of shadows before delving into each of its three main productions. For this reason, in its first section it was deemed necessary to discuss the specificity of this performative genre, from the artist's early experiences with moving shadows to the detailed explanation of its technical mechanisms and methodology developed in conjunction with Manuel Zimbro. As the

analysis progresses to the subsections dedicated to the three most relevant theatres of shadows in her career - *As Sombras: Piquenique à Sombra, Contorno, Noite e Dia/ The Shadows: Picnic in the Shade, Contour, Night and Day (1973-1975)*<sup>2</sup>; *As Cinco Estações/ The Five Seasons (1975-1980)*; *Linha de Horizonte/ Horizon Line (1981-1985)*<sup>3</sup> – it also became pertinent to provide more space for descriptions of themes, information on stage apparatus, use of light and sound, and the evolution of performed movements. Furthermore, other bureaucratic issues were included in these subsections as they fully impacted the scope and final aspect of those pieces - such as the difficulties encountered in seeking institutional support, the constant need for adaptation and negotiation of logistical requirements during tours, and the resistance of critics to recognize either Castro as a multidisciplinary artist or Zimbro as a co-creator those performances.

Following this section, the fourth and last chapter arises from the desire to highlight alternative - feminist - pathways that can be explored when analysing Lourdes Castro's theatres of shadows, and for this reason, it explores some themes and devices characteristic of these performances, pointing out how they can justify this interpretation. However, this part of the work acknowledges that this perspective would likely not be approved by the artist herself, considering her declared aversion to feminist ideologies (or what she understood by them), as well as many Portuguese artists of her generation. In fact, on the one hand, the text here seeks to demonstrate that, regardless of the author's intentions, there are certain social layers that influence the interpretation of the female body that are positioned beyond the artist's control. On the other hand, the fact that the artwork is not explicitly feminist does not imply that it cannot be analysed through a feminist lens. Furthermore, in a medium like performance art, where the body takes a central position - directly affecting the viewer's perception of the expressive gestures and events -, this phenomenon becomes even more evident and unavoidable.

Finally, it is important to mention that, concerning methodology, this dissertation adopted a qualitative model based on a theoretical intersection with the analysis of

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<sup>2</sup> To simplify and standardize references to this specific theatre of shadows throughout this dissertation, whenever I mention it, I will use only the first part of its title, that is, *As Sombras*. However, it's worth noting that, at a certain point, Castro begins referring to all of her theatres of shadows (and not just this one) as “*as sombras*”, aiming to distance these performances from a more theatrical language and expectations.

<sup>3</sup> The names of the shows used to be translated once they toured, adapting to the language of the host country in question. For this reason, it's also possible (sometimes even more common) to find them under the following names: *Les Ombres: Pic-nic a l'ombre, Countour, Nuit et Jour/ Die Schatten: Picknick im Schatten, Konturen, Tag und Nacht (1973-1975)*; *Les Cinq Saisons/ Die fünf Jahreszeiten/ Las Cinco Estaciones (1975-1980)*; and *Ligne d'Horizon/ Horizontlinie (1981-1985)*.

testimonies and records of the works. It provided space for the analysis of sources ranging from books, scientific articles, reports, exhibition catalogues, brochures, photographs, and films. In particular, the film *Pelas Sombras*, directed in 2010 by Catarina Mourão, proved to be fundamental for the development of this work. In this regard as well, a conversation with the filmmaker, along with two other informal interviews conducted with relatives of the artist, Nuno Brazão (nephew) and Bruno Brazão (brother-in-law), although not directly included in this text, contributed to a better understanding and elaboration on the woman and artist Lourdes Castro, her life, thoughts, dreams, and identity.

## **Chapter I: Contextualizations and Problematics**

### **I.1. Performance Art: the body as a fundamental agent**

“The body is not a thing; it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and our sketch of our project.”

(Beauvoir 1949, 68)

Given the importance of contextualizing the ambiguous concept of performance art in the scope of this dissertation, it is important to point out from the outset that performance<sup>4</sup> will be taken as an ephemeral artistic practice that aims at the dissolution of boundaries between artistic genres and presents a clear emphasis on the performer's body (Brandão 2016, 1). Moreover, by their very contestatory nature, performances are to be understood as irreducible to any discourse, respecting that the potential for instability and questioning they carry is in itself one of their most important characteristics. Therefore, despite the attempt for a definition and contextualization to follow, this dissertation is not intended to eliminate areas of ambiguity, uncertainty, doubt, plurality, or indefiniteness, but rather to see them as fundamental and valuable factors and characteristics of this discipline.

It is, to a certain extent, a matter of addressing events that can be framed within the domain of conceptual art, insofar as their fundamental value lies in the idea, process, and the reactions/connections derived from them. Thus, because the specificity of performance is characterized by its existence in an ephemeral space-time support where the absence of fixed framework and permanent memory is a constraining – or rather liberating - factor (Metello 2007) in the event that any material byproduct may originate from a performance, it will never be more than a documentary residue of what the performance once was. Such argument is emphasized in this excerpt by the author Peggy Phelan, for whom it is inherent to performance ontology to be a representation without reproduction:

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<sup>44</sup> In this dissertation, the term ‘performance’ will be preferentially used to discuss ideas for designating the artistic territory that will be circumscribed in this section, that is, performance as in ‘performance art’ - the contemporary art discipline/medium-, as opposed to its use as a synonym for acting or output.

"Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance."

(Phelan 2005, 146)

This means that the case study to be developed - the theatres of shadow elaborated by Lourdes Castro in collaboration with Manuel Zimbro between 1973-1985 - will also confront challenges related to the volatile nature of performance. Since I was not present when those performances took place, it will therefore only be possible to analyse documents such as images – fragments of videos, diapositives and some photographs -, newspapers articles, remnants of scenography, among other subjective documents and testimonies, which, despite their “exhibition value”<sup>5</sup>, will never be able to replace the experience of the actual events.

However, in order to circumvent this ontological impasse, I will adopt the term ‘performative’ to define some of these documents with a material/permanent nature, relying, in this case, on the theories of Jonah Westerman (2017). According to the author, any medium can demonstrate traces of performativity to the extent that it is not necessarily linked to what is done, but rather is a tool used by artists to raise questions about how art relates to us and the world around us. This is because, although performance often involves an element of live action or a present audience during its execution, most of the issues it addresses can also be effectively conveyed through a photograph, painting, sculpture, or document that then has so-called “performative aspects” (*Ibidem*).

Performance operates in the gap between art and life, aiming to reconnect both to counterbalance the alienation inherent in the principles of modernity. It is a living entity that changes shape and innovatively (re)emerges to try to make sense of our changing world. Therefore, described by artist Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) as “art that refuses to settle” (Tate, 2017), performance seems to want, above all, to include us in its own frame, thus preventing its own stabilization. Furthermore, by summoning and combining the tradition/innovation binomial, performance has clear roots in Modern artistic practices, which contributed to the subsequent blurring and dilution of concepts and nomenclatures (Brandão 2016, 4). In fact, as cleverly put by Jeff Kelly, editor of one of the most extensive collections of writings by Allan Kaprow (1927-2006), known as

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<sup>5</sup> Discussed within the framework proposed by Walter Benjamin in his essay on 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1992 [1936-39]).

famous inventor of performance's subgenre Happening, for him (among other artists that used to share his perspectives), artmaking and living were completely indissociable:

“For him the modernist practice of art is more than the production of artworks; it also involves the artist's disciplined effort to observe, engage, and interpret the processes of living, which are themselves as meaningful as most art, and certainly more grounded in common experience. [...] For him, the contents of everyday life – eating strawberries, sweating, shaking hands when meeting someone new – are more than merely the subject matter of art. They are the meaning of life.”

(Kelley 1993, xii-xiii)

This type of thinking and cosmovision resonate in Lourdes Castro's artistic decisions and discourse, which, as we will see, are central to the present case study of this dissertation. This is evident in statements like "For me, this is not art, it's a way of life" (Castro *in* Mourão, 2010, 41:15), and also when she asserts that "Art is what the Cambodians or the Vietnamese do without knowing they are doing it..." (Castro *in Diário de Notícias* 1977), among others.

On the other hand, taking a more historical perspective on the emergence of performance art, the 20th century witnessed an unprecedented concentration of artistic manifestos. These efforts advocated for radical changes in various aspects of human life and artistic production, since many groups of artists believed in the human-being as an agent capable of steering the course of 'History' to the point of completely changing it, thus creating a totally new order based on an alternative concept of progress. So, inaugurating a veritable 'race' of avant-gardes that was triggered by the 'end' of Romanticism around 1850-60, there was a drastic and generalized abbreviation in the longevity of aesthetic movements. This occurred partly due to deliberately established fierce competitions between the emergent manifestos<sup>6</sup>, but also reflected the need to find palingenetic responses to the processes of "cultural decadence" resulting from modernization (Griffin 2018; Adorno & Bernstein 1991). Although sometimes interpreted problematically, the concept of decadence is employed by Griffin (2018), Adorno and

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<sup>6</sup> The publication of manifestos, beyond promoting their specific agendas, functioned as guidebooks for supporters of diverse artistic movements - spanning from Impressionism until Dadaism and Surrealism - in the 20th century. Oscillating between more or less politicized stances, these manifestos often addressed not only formal aspects of art production but also encompassed statements of moral values, directives for social engagement, objectives and priorities to strive for, pointed grievances, and condemnations of various institutions. At times, they represented genuine proposals for an integral redefinition of human life in society.

Bernstein (1991) to underscore an issue observed in early modern cultural production that reflected a capitalist primacy of quantity over quality, ultimately using artistic mediums to foster alienation and promote the maintenance of a status quo rooted in social inequality.<sup>7</sup>

Within the highly experimental and avant-garde milieu described above, where ‘avant-garde’ emerged as a metonymy for disruptive art that rejects the continuation of aesthetic values and techniques previously dictated by the Western canon<sup>8</sup>, performance art was born as a kind of ‘vanguard of the vanguard’. According to Roselee Goldberg (2007) the ancestry of the genre can be attributed to the Futurist movement (c. 1909 to 1944) and recalls the nature of its numerous manifestos, which, even as texts - and therefore theoretical in nature - contained true 'bodies in potential' within them. This means that by incorporating into their lines an aesthetic of action and speed, their phrases evoked the presence of a young, energetic, and present body - one capable of proposing a 'performative reading' - as only thus could it do justice to the voracious appeals and incitements dictated by them. Consequently, although the Futurists did not properly elaborate a 'model performance' - i.e. with the same intentionality, conceptual cohesion, objectives, recognition, and maturity that the medium would later assume - their so-called Futurist soirées exhibited a series of eclectic numbers and non-traditional forms of making art, where vivacity, physical movement, and impermanence offered artists alternatives to the traditionally static forms of painting, sculpture, and literature<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, the Futurists utilized this performative character to more easily affect/captivate mass audiences: simultaneously disturbing and attractive, their entertainments ranged from truly noisy sound concerts (appropriating the noises of the

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<sup>7</sup> Indeed, particularly Theodor Adorno have published many essays concerning his fear that, by establishing their objectives according to the maintenance of the status quo and the privilege of the bourgeois class, art was becoming alienating and futile, consequently casting a sense of decadence over the so-called ‘mass cultures’. Some examples of his texts are: *On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening* (1938); *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass deception* (1944); *Culture Industry Reconsidered* (1963); *Aesthetic Theory* (1970); etc.

<sup>8</sup> There is indeed a fundamental desire to disengage from the past where "learning" and "copying" are regarded as verbs to be forgotten.

<sup>9</sup> A prime example of this occurred at the first Futurist Soirée (serata) in January 1910, when Marinetti and some companions travelled to Trieste (a politically turbulent city at the time) and occupied the Rossetti theatre with their aggressive pronouncements against the cult of tradition and the commercialization of art. On this occasion, the Futurist manifesto was also recited (by Armando Mazza) while a chorus of other artists praised patriotic militarism and war (Goldberg 2007, 18-19). In the Portuguese context, we can cite the iconic performative reading of the Futurist Ultimatum to the Portuguese Generations of the 20th Century by Almada Negreiros - this took place during a Futurist session organized by him and the painter Santa Rita on April 14, 1917, at the Teatro da República ("*Ultimatum Futurista Às Gerações Portuguesas Do Século XX | E-Cultura*" 2022).

metropolis) to variety theatres which, as described in *La pittura futurista - Manifesto tecnico*, aimed to destroy the solemn, the sacred, the serious, and the sublime in the so-called 'Art' with a capital 'A' (Boccioni et al. 1910).

After the true earthquake in the ecology of creation that was the Futurist movement, a box of possibilities was opened, and the experimental artistic landscape – and specially the one focused on the body - irreversibly expanded. Among the most striking revolutionary proposals were the breaking of the contract of passivity with the audience (often through shock and abjection<sup>10</sup>), attempts to overcome the boundaries between art and life (achieved through their intersection and appropriation of one another), detachment from the art object (from its commercial purpose), as well as the rescue and validation of popular artistic expressions that had been marginalized for centuries (such as variety theatres, circus, and cabaret)<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, these premises deeply influenced the movements that followed, notably: Russian Constructivism (c. 1915-30) - with its mechanical dances and theories valuing the body and action as self-sufficient artistic and communicative vehicles; Dadaism (c. 1916-1924) - with its controversial cabarets, rich in interdisciplinary and experimental content; Surrealism (c. 1910-1920) - with its attack on the self-monitoring of the human psyche versus the recognition of the unconscious as the most genuine expressive domain of all; in addition to the experiments orchestrated by the Bauhaus students (1919-1933) - the first institution to include performance art in its curriculum.

Later, after World War II, with a shift of focus to the United States of America, Black Mountain College (1933-1957) started to become a hub for interdisciplinary and experimental practices, often interested in non-hegemonic cultural matrices (with a focus on the Eastern hemisphere). This attraction, evident in the gestures of numerous school artists, led to the widespread assimilation of new values and worldviews that directly impacted the creative processes developed there. The avant-garde composer John Cage (1912-1992) even taught classes and staged productions where he shared his understanding of music in relation to Buddhist philosophy, arguing that art should not be

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<sup>10</sup> Much influenced by Alfred Jarry and his masterpiece, *Ubu Rei* (premiered in 1896), which, despite being part of the Symbolist movement, carried much of the sarcastic, aggressive, and provocative (if not repulsive, considering the moral values of the time) content that the Futurists aimed for.

<sup>11</sup> This latter point should still be considered insofar as popular forms of art did not carry with them a traditional and canonical burden that Futurism itself struggled against. In fact, this kind of absence of its own historical regulation in these common presentations was what fascinated them the most, as it disrupted the need for academic approval recognized by the elites.

separated from life but seen as part of it, and therefore should encompass all the chaos, spontaneity, and beauty implied in nature<sup>12</sup>. In these productions, participants often received loose scores that left much to be interpreted, ultimately yielding truly unpredictable (also irreproducible) results. Another revolutionary example that emerged from this college was the approach of choreographer and dancer Merce Cunningham (1919-2009), who proposed that common movements such as walking, running, standing up, and remaining still could be read as dance.

On the other hand, the boom of abstract expressionist painting in the 1950s emphasized the involvement of the body in artmaking. Since most of the artists who integrated this movement were based in New York City, they became known as the New York School (c. 1950-1970), and their efforts primarily involved working abstraction in a more affective and emotional manner (Tate, 2017). For this, they drew inspiration from the surrealist ideal that art should come from the unconscious and employed many of its automatism techniques. However, according to the Tate Modern online glossary<sup>13</sup>, the school in question was divided between two main lines of action: the action painters - led by Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), who attacked the canvases with expressive and spontaneous brushstrokes, often using large brushes to leave true gestural marks on the paintings<sup>14</sup> - and the colour field painters - who, under the leadership of Mark Rothko (1903-1970), Barnett Newman (1905-1970), and Clyfford Still (1904-1980), filled large areas of their canvases with a single colour in an attempt to create a contemplative atmosphere for the viewer. In the former case, the expressive brushstrokes took on an extremely corporeal and performative dimension, quickly evolving into works where the focus was not on the result but rather on the process:

"At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or 'express' an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event."

(Rosenberg 1952, 22)

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<sup>12</sup> A philosophy that would also come to guide the life and artistic vision of Lourdes Castro and Manuel Zimbardo, as will become quite evident upon closer analysis of their theatre of shadows.

<sup>13</sup> Unidentified author.

<sup>14</sup> On one occasion, Pollock even placed one of his famous canvases on the floor and danced around it, either pouring paint from the can or dispersing it with a brush (Tate 2017).

In the French context, a good example of the development of these techniques was Yves Klein's (1928-1962) series of works *Antropométrie de l'époque bleue* (1960), for which he hired female models to cover themselves in paint and make prints of their nude bodies on paper according to the painter's instructions in a true instrumentalization of the body.

Shortly before Klein's performances took place, in 1959, Allan Kaprow staged his first happening during the inauguration of the Reuben Gallery in New York. Realized by those who dared to respond affirmatively to Kaprow's provocative invitation letter, the set of performances titled '18 Happenings in 6 Parts' marked the beginning of the genre. In the intriguing message, in addition to some clues about what would happen over the 6 days, potential beneficiaries were asked for financial assistance to fund the project (Bienal São Paulo 2012)<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, the guests arrived with only a vague idea of what would happen, and both witnessed and participated in highly unstructured actions.<sup>16</sup> The elements of these performances were always relational and aimed at formulating relationships with other things often invoking external experiences (Brandão 2016, 48). Therefore, they were based on the use of concrete materials - such as the performers' body, real objects, locations, etc. - that are "taken from and related to the experiential world of everyday life" (Kirby 1966, 20) and, implying attention to overlooked aspects of them, evoke consideration of the event in its impactful and ephemeral totality:

"Happenings are events that, put simply, happen. Though the best of them have a decided impact – that is, we feel, "here is something important"- they appear to go nowhere and do not make any particular literary point [...] Their form is open-ended and fluid; nothing obvious is sought and therefore nothing is won, except the certainty of a number of occurrences to which we are more than normally attentive. They exist for a single performance, or only a few, and are gone forever as new ones take their place."

(Kaprow 1961, 16-17)

Meanwhile, with ramifications that persist to this day, the international avant-garde collective Fluxus has been presenting everyday events as art since 1961, demystifying the figure of the artist by assuming that anyone can be one. In the festival organized by the group in 1962, while Ben Patterson (1934-2016) presented "Variations for Double Bass" - a number in which he shook the strings of a double bass using a variety of unusual objects - Nam June Paik (1932-2006) dipped his head and tie in paint and drew

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<sup>15</sup> See image 1.

<sup>16</sup> Since the assumed goal of its 'conductor' was indeed to make room for something more spontaneous and occasional to emerge, something that not even he could predict.

a line along a four-meter-long roll of paper. Alison Knowles (b. 1933) made a large salad which she shared with the others present, an action that was considered a performance, , thus attesting to an extreme democratization of artmaking, questioning and consciously provoking the fragile boundary between art and life. Nevertheless, Fluxus also included other names with more planned and ambitious proposals, where the radical transformation of art was seen as an extremely serious matter necessary for the evolution of humanity. In this sense, Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), for example, gave lectures and staged various dramatic actions that he called 'social sculptures' – '7000 Oaks' (1982), for instance - and from which he aimed to engender collective consciousness in order to attract definitive changes to society:

"Only on condition of a radical widening of definitions will it be possible for art and activities related to art [to] provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deathline: to dismantle in order to build 'A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART' ... EVERY HUMAN BEING IS AN ARTIST who – from his state of freedom – the position of freedom that he experiences at first-hand – learns to determine the other positions of the TOTAL ARTWORK OF THE FUTURE SOCIAL ORDER."<sup>17</sup>

(Beuys in Tisdall 1974, 10)

In Vienna, a group of artists pursued what they called 'actionism', considering it not only an artistic format but above all an existential attitude. Hermann Nitsch (1938-2022), probably the most popular of the group, became known for placing taboo and even scatological themes at the centre of his performances. Examples of this are animal slaughters, collective blood baths, massive food wastage, sadomasochism, the iconographic appropriation of religious symbols and rituals (particularly those derived from Christianity), among other themes related to sexuality and violence in general. In search of catharsis, the artist often left his audience perplexed and disconcerted (if not shocked). However, in an interview with *The Guardian*, the artist revealed that generating any kind of discomfort or even exhibiting those scenes to criticize certain types of behaviour was never the focus of his work; his commitment was - above all - to reality and the primitive diversity of human nature: "I want to show what it is, I never was interested to make provocation. [...] for me [it] always is important to show life and to

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<sup>17</sup> Capitals in original.

celebrate life”, because, for him, all art “tears the borders apart” (Nitsch *in* Convery, 2017).

Exploring the feminine universe within this topic, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s marked the turbulent peak for performance art. During this time, the Civil Rights Movement and the second wave of feminism underscored the inherently political nature of the body, a potential that women artists knew how to exploit very well. Often using their own bodies as a medium, especially through the subgenre of body art, numerous illustrious women - from Carolee Schneemann (1939-2019), Valie Export (b. 1940), Marina Abramovich (b. 1946), to Orlan (b. 1947), Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), Yoko Ono (b. 1933) among many others - began to artistically reflect on "the powerful place of cultural images in the cementing of the hierarchical relations between social groups and genders" (Pollock 1983, 39). Equally interested in critiquing the objectification of the female body and its everyday exposure to violence, these events frequently positioned the bodies of performers (not without notes of irony and subversion) in risky situations. In a particular critical exercise, for example, in the performance *Tapp und Tastkino* (1968), sometimes translated as ‘Touch Cinema’, Export invited people on the streets of Vienna to unveil and touch her nude body through a box with curtains worn on the upper part of her torso. Despite the seemingly humorous nature of this action for some of its participants, through this performance steeped in sarcasm, Export sought to question precisely how the female body is often perceived in our society, namely as an object of free access, perpetually available in all its passivity.

On a further note, the above mentioned self-declared feminist performer Carolee Schneemann, for example, explained during an interview with *The New York Times* that “In 1963, to use my body as an extension of my painting-constructions was to challenge and threaten the psychic territorial power lines by which women were admitted to the Art Stud Club” (The New York Times 2022). Thus, through the contingent spectacularization in performance art, female, black, transgender, disabled, queer, among other bodies that gathered multiple identities, could be recovered, reaffirmed, and represented through more faithful lenses, finally capable of inaugurating a reactive process of alternative representation against a culture historically guided by the best interests of a male, white, able-bodied, Western, and North-global elite. For all intents and purposes, performers were interested in phenomenology and raising awareness of different viewpoints, something that the insertion of people into works of art helped with - as it was a very

immediate and effective way to counteract the illusory possibility of the existence of a universal perspective.<sup>18</sup>

In response to this, numerous artists, across various regions and circumstances, employed diverse strategies to challenge these hegemonic and biased universalist perspectives. They used their bodies to fully personalize their manifestos, aiming to expose the implicit oppression inherent in such generalizations. At times, performers integrated themselves into paintings, while on other occasions, they wore them; they positioned themselves within spaces, and sometimes they directed others within those spaces. Some performers undertook tasks, while others invited the audience to participate; some created structures specifically tailored to their bodies, while others followed strangers and adopted alternative identities. Performers posed questions, established stores, tested their own endurance, and even willingly confronted the threat of mortality. They frequently inverted the roles of the audience and the artist, playfully merging art and life, the self and the other, often incorporating elements of theatre, dance, and visual arts, blurring their disciplinary limits. All of that while regularly delving into thematic taboos such as female desire, gender-based violence and inequality, beauty standards, voyeurism, racism, ableism, androgyny, eccentricity, etc.

That being said, it is evident that the breadth of possibilities within performance art remains truly immeasurable, allowing performers to delve into an infinite array of themes and concepts. It served as an excellent platform for the dissemination of ideas from various artistic currents and political stances by gathering a heterogeneous set of ephemeral and interdisciplinary events, often unsettling the boundaries between art and life. Performance art rarely contented itself with the most orthodox modalities of exhibition, distribution, and commodification of art, often manifesting against the highly materialistic tendencies of the art market and the increasing passivity of its consumer audience. For this reason, some performance artists even interpreted the frequently confused and indignant receptions from spectators as signs of true success. They aimed much more to provoke aesthetic experience - whether positive or negative - as they believed this to be the defining characteristic of art, rather than the shallow appreciation of a canonically pleasing form. Translating into an extremely unstable and difficult-to-

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<sup>18</sup> That is, to speak for everyone and to be transcendent to the diversity of events, languages, and histories that traverse the identity of each individual and cultural group on the planet; not to mention all the fluidity that each of these categories already assumes per se.

define medium to this day, this aspect also contributed to its delayed incorporation into the contents of art history and still poses a difficult quest in analysing its artworks. In fact, what seems to unite them all is a shared willingness to challenge conventional notions of art and audience interaction and, positioning the performer's body as a fundamental agent of the artistic discourse, convey the urge to question/denounce the burden imposed by historical representations of what art is.

Regarding Portuguese context, it is impossible to map the birth of national performance art without mentioning the commendable contribution of the multifaceted Almada Negreiros (1913-1970). Traversing a series of different artistic movements and supports, he is probably the most prominent figure in this story, at least when considering its early days (Madeira, de Oliveira & Marçal 2016; Madeira 2020). Truly, allegedly discontented with the expressive limitations imposed by the academia and averse to the idea of specializing in a single artistic practice, Negreiros ultimately acknowledged that the 'Spectacle' was his greatest interest, as he stated in an interview given to RTP in 1968:

*“Eu enganei-me muitas vezes na minha vida e sobretudo com a palavra ‘teatro’... Ainda hoje estou absolutamente subjugado pela palavra ‘teatro’. Mas expliquei-me a mim mesmo do que se tratava. Não é o Teatro que me interessa, não é a Escultura, não é nenhuma Arte especial. O que me interessa a mim é o Espectáculo.”*

"I have often deceived myself in my life, especially with the word 'theatre'... Even today, I am absolutely captivated by the word 'theatre'. But I explained to myself what it was about. It's not the Theatre that interests me, it's not Sculpture, it's not any particular Art. What interests me is the Spectacle."

(Negreiros in RTP 1968, 3:41)

Expressed in this anguish for feeling drawn to practices that were still not well understood – not even by himself -, and assuming that performance arises from the encounter and decomposition of all artistic disciplines – therefore conjuring a place where theatricality can exist without theatre and pictoriality without painting and so on (Lista 1997) -, it can be stated that Almada Negreiros would easily fit into the category hypothesized by researcher Mariana Brandão, when she places performance as:

*“[...] um território para onde convergem artistas insatisfeitos com as limitações da sua formação e prática, uma espécie de plataforma de expansão, suficientemente maleável para albergar a resistência destes autores à tradição, assim como o seu investimento na contaminação e experimentação.”*

"[...] a territory where dissatisfied artists converge, seeking expansion beyond the limitations of their training and practice, a kind of platform flexible enough to accommodate these authors' resistance to tradition, as well as their investment in contamination and experimentation."

(Brandão 2016, 5) <sup>19</sup>

In fact, according to the model suggested by Goldberg (2007), we could say that Negreiros was the most representative figure of Portuguese modernism when it came to inaugurating an aesthetics that was "born as a discourse of the body" (Eagleton 1990, 13). In his case, such dialect use of this present physicality – so characteristic of the performative approach – was consummated in him mainly through the declamation/incorporation of extremely sarcastic manifestos, such as the *Manifesto Antidantas* (1915) and the *Ultimatum às Gerações Portuguesas do Século XX* (1917).

However, the consequences of these early acts—too heretical for a cultural scenario that was aligning so slowly with global trends—were quite harmful in some cases because, in addition to fierce criticisms, certain artists had to deal with dismissals, personal defamation, and loss of professional credibility (Madeira 2020). Whether from the public (although little reactive in practice), from art critics, or from artists of other generations (many of whom still preserved a taste for the nineteenth century), discussions with inconclusive results, letters of repudiation, and words of ridicule were rarely spared when mentioning these new trends and their adherents:

*“Naqueles finais dos anos 30 em que vigorava ainda, contra as intenções modernistas das exposições do S.P.N., uma sólida corrente estética de Oitocentos, esse juízo era normal e normativo. [...] Almada Negreiros era ainda o diabo e o «futurismo» uma ameaça de desordem sempre presente.”*

“In the late 1930s, when a solid nineteenth-century aesthetic current still prevailed, against the modernist intentions of the exhibitions of the S.P.N. (Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional), this judgment was normal and normative. [...] Almada Negreiros was still seen as the devil, and 'futurism' a threat of disorder ever-present.”

(França, 1974, p. 73)

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to clarify that such a hypothesis emerges and is confirmed in Brandão's thesis when analysing the Portuguese first performative wave that occurred in the 1960s. This mostly refers to a group of artists that, coming from a traditional fine arts background, started to experiment with their bodies and mix artistic medias in a very self-taught manner.

Thus, even though Almada had been performing such experimental acts since the first decades of the XX century, it is also true that those interdisciplinary performative tendencies - when compared to their expansion in most countries of continental Europe and the United States of America - started to be systematically practiced in Portugal significantly later. Indeed, from a political perspective, it makes special sense that performance art began to thrive in national territory only by the mid-1960s/1970s and to gain real institutional validation even later, around the 1980s (Brandão 2016, 7). This is because it was precisely within these chronological boundaries that the collapse of the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974) regime occurred, especially marked by the colonial war (from 1961 until the end of the dictatorship in 1974), as well as the correlated latent state of revolution translated by moments of active radicalization of formulas and processes in the artistic realm. Before that, particularly between 1930s and 1950s<sup>20</sup>, during the first decades of Salazarist dictatorship, a legislation project of cultural censorship was established in the country. Called *Política do Espírito*, this law, despite not completely nullifying the "roots of a more marginal and hybrid art," contributed to its "temporal misalignment with the international movement" (Madeira 2020, 47). It is noted, however, that despite state efforts to try to suffocate a more hybrid, inherently indefinable, and transgressive art, mainly through the legitimization of a small group of artistic practices and objects, historical records indicate that marginal art always resisted and coexisted in national territory (*Ibidem*).

According to Mariana Brandão (2016), two main generational performative flows can be identified at the national level: a first emerging in the 1960s<sup>21</sup>, that was formulated mostly by a self-taught group with rather diverse backgrounds - including names such as Egídio Álvaro (1937-2020), Ernesto de Sousa (1921-1988), João Vieira (1934-2009), Jorge Peixinho (1940-1995), Salette Tavares (1922-1994), Elisabete Mileu (b. 1956), Lourdes Castro (1930-2022) -; and a second one emerging in the 1980s, marked by artists mainly coming from the performing arts fields, typically hailing from a dance background - such as João Fiadeiro (b. 1965) and Vera Mantero (b. 1966). Furthermore, in Portugal, contrary to what was observed in most other countries where performance art flourished, literary arts played a fundamental role in introducing the genre to the national artistic scene. If Eduardo Lourenço in his *Labirinto da Saudade* (2017) already recognized

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<sup>20</sup> It was implemented gradually over the course of the regime's existence.

<sup>21</sup> Although it reached its peak of activity in the 1970s, particularly after the Carnation Revolution in April 25, 1974.

literature as the flagship of the artistic practices historically developed in the country, less surprisingly would it be to note that the first records of this experimental vanguardism came precisely from the field of poetry. In addition to this, there is also the factor pointed out by Melo e Castro (cited by Madeira 2020) that experimental poetry had an advantage over censorship procedures (when compared to theatre or painting, for example) because its less explicit quality made it more difficult to detect 'undesirable' traces by the PIDE – i.e., the International and State Defense Police.

As a result, initial advances were made by the PO.EX group<sup>22</sup> - and later developed by the Portuguese Anti-Surrealist group – until other artists from different areas gradually began to embrace revolutionary practices such as happenings. However, it is important to clarify that, despite the prominence of some individuals that are to be quoted here, in Portugal, performance art was rarely developed as the main or exclusive practice of a single artist, both because its inherent multidisciplinary nature and due to the inability of the national art market to sustain such endeavours (Filomena Serra et al., 2017). In this sense, the first Portuguese happening - the *Concerto e Audição Pictórica* - involved a group of artists<sup>23</sup> and took place on March 3, 1965, at the *Divulgação* Gallery in Lisbon (Brandão 2016; Madeira 2020). However, the knowledge—both theoretical and practical—shared by national artists about this performance subgenre was limited, and the term ‘happening’ was commonly used in the 1960s and 1970s to describe ephemeral and multimedia presentations in general<sup>24</sup>. Regarding this matter, artist Fernando Calhau (1948-2002), renowned for his awareness of the international context, commented on this issue during an interview in 1998, stating that in Portugal they primarily relied on a few

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<sup>22</sup> PO. EX is an acronym for *POesia.EXperimental* (Experimental Poetry) created by E. M. de Melo e Castro for the exhibition PO.EX/80 (National Gallery of Modern Art, Lisbon), and, as an artistic collective, they made a very important contribution within the spectrum of performance art. Their experimental poetry often witnessed a process of escape from the word towards the embodiment and materialization of the text. Moreover, *POesia.EXperimental* was the title of a journal organized by António Aragão & Herberto Helder (Issue 1, 1964) and António Aragão, E. M. de Melo e Castro & Herberto Helder (Issue 2, 1966), plus a book 'PO.EX: Theoretical texts and documents of Portuguese experimental poetry' (edited by E. M. de Melo e Castro & Ana Hatherly, 1981) (“Arquivo Digital Da PO.EX – Poesia Experimental Portuguesa” 2024).

<sup>23</sup> Namely: António Aragão, Clotilde Rosa, E. M. de Melo e Castro, Jorge Peixinho, Manuel Baptista, Mário Falcão, and Salette Tavares.

<sup>24</sup> Portuguese happenings would usually assume a 'cagean' approach - referring to the genre developed by the musician John Cage (1912-1992) – meaning those were commonly guided by principles of randomness and the inclusion of audience interactions/reactions in the very 'script' of these events (Madeira 2020). This most probably is connected to the visit of the artist to the city of Lisbon in 1963, when he did a performative conference and concert at Tivoli.

photographs that lacked testimony, which, therefore, could not fully capture the experiential aspect of the events:

*“Nós não tínhamos acesso aos happenings, por exemplo, aos do Kaprow, do Oldenburg, do próprio Jim Dine, que também tinha feito umas coisas. O que nós apanhávamos aqui eram fotografias. E uma fotografia de um happening não dá nunca para ver como é que é, não se percebe o que é que é. Mas esses happenings normalmente tinham uma história, havia uma espécie de narração, eram uma espécie de teatrinho, digamos”*

"We didn't have access to happenings, for example, those by Kaprow, Oldenburg, or even Jim Dine, who had also done some things. What we got here were photographs. And a photograph of a happening never gives you a sense of what it really is, you don't understand what it is. But these happenings usually had a story, there was a kind of narration, they were a sort of little theatre, so to speak."

(Calhau *in* Freitas and Wandschneider 1998, 170)

The 1970s, by its turn, marked a pivotal period for performance art in Portugal, characterized by a notable increase in experimentation and the incorporation of performative elements into artistic practices, particularly after April 25, 1974. Throughout this decade, figures like João Vieira and Ernesto de Sousa played significant roles in promoting and shaping performance in Portugal. For instance, Vieira embarked on a 15-year journey with performance art that was inaugurated by his ‘action-spectacle’ at the *O Espírito da Letra (Exposição Dura)* exhibition in 1970 (Brandão 2016, 241). His work often engaged the spectator, reflecting the era's fascination with challenging language's interpretive possibilities, its learning/ unlearning mechanisms. Meanwhile, Ernesto de Sousa emerged as a key figure in fostering performance art, organizing events such as *Alternativa Zero* (1977) or the ironic ‘anti-conference’ named *Da Vanguarda artística em Portugal e do mercado comum; com uma receita que contribuirá para a resolução de alguns problemas que afligem a nossa pátria (em 1972)*<sup>25</sup>. Sousa also collaborated with the Quadrum gallery and co-founded the *Cooperativa Diferença* in 1979, contributing significantly to performance's establishment as an artistic expression form in Portugal. Moreover, it was during the late 1970s that Portugal received a number of foreign performers, including Gina Pane and Ulrike Rosenbach<sup>26</sup>, as well as emigrant artists who

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<sup>25</sup> A solo performance which was actually presented in 1973 at *Dinastia* Gallery (Lisbon). Of humorous and provocative nature, it entailed the delivery of a highly ironic text during an AICA conference, where adorned in a tuxedo and bow tie, the performer mimicked the persona of a vintage art critic while articulating unorthodox and satirical opinions on the artistic and cultural context of the period.

<sup>26</sup> In the context of a series of activities organized by Ernesto de Sousa and initiated by him with the conference *arte-processo ou artes de ação* in 1978 at the Quadrum gallery (Brandão 2016, 245).

had been conducting their research outside the country for some time - such as Lourdes Castro that visited, in 1977, Lisboa, Funchal and Porto with her theatre of shadows called *As Cinco Estações* (1975-1980), as we will see in a subsequent chapter.

During the 1980s - especially from the second half of this decade - performance art in Portugal began to gain more visibility and recognition within the artistic community. In this regard, it is important to highlight the Modern Art Center (CAM) of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, through its recently inaugurated service ACARTE (Artistic, Cultural Action for Renewal and Transformation in Education)<sup>27</sup>, organized significant exhibitions including performance, such as the *Exposição-Diálogo sobre Arte Contemporânea*, in 1985<sup>28</sup>. While still relatively nascent compared to other countries, such as the United States and some European nations, performance art in Portugal started to gain recognition as a valid artistic medium, coinciding with a period of democratic stabilization. In fact, following the initial years of post-revolutionary turmoil, conditions conducive to accommodating such emerging transdisciplinarity and hybridism in Portugal were finally being established. This institutional engagement and the expansion of the Portuguese cultural landscape towards more alternative horizons, despite lacking precise dates and milestones to be characterized as drivers of change, can also be attributed to a greater process of internationalization that could only have occurred from this decade onwards, as described by programmer Maria de Assis:

*“... as coisas não têm um começo, não é? Mas não há dúvida que eu considero que é no final dos anos 80 que começa a tornar-se cada vez mais evidente um ambiente de renovação e de mudança ... [...] acho que a partir do 25 de Abril ..., não imediatamente próximo do 25 de Abril, porque acho que os primeiros anos foram anos de renovação e de aprendizagem de democracia, estávamos muito voltados para dentro ainda e, por isso, é que só nos anos 80 começa a haver uma circulação de projetos artísticos internacionais ligados às tendências de renovação europeia e não só, mas foi um momento de renovação na Europa e nos anos 80 ainda há muita confusão e, por isso, é que o Serviço ACARTE e os Encontros ACARTE se tornaram paradigmáticos.”*

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<sup>27</sup> The ACARTE Service was an initiative of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, in operation between 1984 and 2003, that aimed to promote innovative cultural, artistic, and educational activities, spanning various areas such as performing arts, music, visual arts, and cinema. It played a crucial role in invigorating the cultural scene in Portugal, organizing events, exhibitions, performances, and educational programs that significantly contributed to the development and diversification of the cultural landscape in the country.

<sup>28</sup> Here, Castro and Zimbro had another opportunity to demonstrate their new performative genre with their work *Linha de Horizonte* (1981-1985), which opened the event's programme.

"...things don't have a beginning, do they? But there's no doubt that I consider it's in the late 1980s that an environment of renewal and change begins to become increasingly evident...[...] I think from April 25th... not immediately after April 25th, because I think the first years were years of renewal and learning about democracy, we were still very inward-looking, and that's why only in the 1980s there began to be a circulation of international artistic projects linked to European renewal trends and not only, but it was a moment of renewal in Europe and in the 1980s there was still a lot of confusion and that's why the ACARTE Service and the ACARTE Meetings became paradigmatic."

(Assis *in* Madeira 2010, 10)

Notwithstanding, as pointed out by the author Cláudia Madeira (2020), Portuguese performance art history still exhibits serious gaps -both in its documentation and research, but also in its representation in the collective memory of the Portuguese people. So, speaking volumes about the social performativity of the nation<sup>29</sup> itself (Filomena Serra et al., 2017), this fact helps to explain why its history often remains "unknown even to several artists and programmers who have developed their work considering references from international performance art" (Madeira 2020, 10-11). This fact also sheds light on the social performance of this nation, which, in turn, reflected (and still reflects to a certain extent) the consequences of a long-lasting dictatorship (1926-1974), as noted by the influential actor and director Carlos Wallenstein<sup>30</sup> (1926-1990) in the following statement:

*"Compreendeu-se, entretanto, que meio século de vida de uma nação sujeita a determinados e fixos parâmetros, não se olvida num momento e que, quando se põem em causa as estruturas de base, logo entram em exercício, como que automaticamente, tensões de vária ordem."*

"Meanwhile, it became understandable that half a century of a nation's life subjected to certain fixed parameters is not forgotten in a moment, and when the basic structures are called into question, tensions of various kinds immediately come into play."

(Wallenstein, 1974, 63)

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<sup>29</sup> With 'social performativity of the nation,' it is intended to refer to the collective actions, behaviours, and representations of the Portuguese people as a society, ultimately revealing broader patterns and cultural attitudes that shaped how certain aspects of its heritage were (or were not) documented, remembered, and represented.

<sup>30</sup> He directed the Theatre Section of the Gulbenkian Foundation between 1963 and 1990 and served as the main intermediary between Castro and the institutions during the negotiations for the staging of her performances in Portugal, both in 1977 and 1985.

In conclusion, it can be said that, at least since the 1970s, performance art has been a relatively constant object in the world of art, internationally used to examine a wide range of human issues. It has been documented and exhibited, but it is largely resistant to commercial forces and offers artists a way to work outside the—often oppressive—market system. Although it can mean many different things today, performance art originated from interdisciplinary thinking and still thrives in these intermediate spaces of border crossing and indeterminacy. Therefore, assuming that elitism is something to be challenged in the realms of art, many artists have used performance as a strategy to deliberately offend and/or abandon tradition, reconstructing art from within and fostering its democratization. Furthermore, performance art arose from the desire to flatten hierarchies inherent in traditional artistic forms, aiming for a more direct relationship between audience and artist, one that is not mediated by physical (canvas, frame, plinth, stage, etc.) or intellectual (codes, specific cultures, and formations, etc.) barriers. In reality, it was not so much that people wanted to do something called 'performance,' but rather that these activities infiltrated other disciplines where they no longer fit so well or where the supports used were no longer sufficient for what was intended to be conveyed.

## **I.2. Women’s Role during the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974): Long-Lasting Implications for National Feminism and Female Artists Politicization**

“Alternative art histories lie within those schools of thought and historiography which insist upon the social character of all practices, including artistic practice which is shaped by concrete social relations, and works within and on socially produced ideologies.”

(Pollock 1983, 39)

As evidenced by the previous section analyses of Portuguese performance, it is impossible to discuss modern and contemporary art in Portugal without considering the aftermath of the longest-lived European dictatorship of the Modern Age. Furthermore, for the case study at hand, examining the condition of women, and ultimately that of women artists, in this scenario is crucial. So, understanding the Portuguese artistic context requires acknowledging the impact of the conservative political regime and its idiosyncrasies on society as a whole, including the influence it had on ideas about what art could be and how women could (or could not) intersect with this field. That is because, during this time, national ideological propaganda contributed to consolidating misogynistic and sexist values in the collective subconscious, restricting women to a very selected group of roles and rights that were reflected in phrases supported by the regime, such as the following:

*“As mulheres não são adequadas a certas ocupações; a mulher é por natureza feita para o trabalho doméstico, e é isso que a leva não só a preservar a sua modéstia como também a promover a boa cuida dos filhos e o bem-estar da família”.*

“Women are not suitable for certain occupations; woman is by nature made for domestic work, and it is this that leads her not only to preserve her modesty but also to promote the good care of children and the well-being of the family.”

(Rerum Novarum, Leo XIII 1891, as cited in Calado 2024, np.)

Therefore, especially from this type of religious discourse based on a supposed inherently servile and passive identity of women, throughout the dictatorship, female place in Portuguese society was profoundly confined to the domestic sphere and motherhood. Indeed, this kind of mentality - which, of course, did not emerge with the extreme right-wing regime, but was intensified during it - infiltrated so effectively into the thinking of

the population that, dangerously shared as common knowledge, left marks that proved difficult to overcome even after the democratic revolution.

In fact, among the most harmful effects of the dictatorship in Portugal, philosopher José Gil (2004) characterizes the silence and pervasiveness that followed the April 25th revolution, ultimately shaping Portugal as a 'country of non-inscription'. The absence of trials for the PIDEs or for the leaders of the former regime, for instance, corroborated an immense pardon, naively veiling the contentious 48 years of authoritarianism. This way of coping with such dreadful events denied the opportunity for the people to confront (or even acknowledge) their recent past of humiliation and oppression. Consequently, an enormous risk was taken of allowing the persistence or (re)flourishment of certain ideologies associated with this oppressive past in the near future:

*“Como se a exaltação afirmativa da Revolução pudesse varrer, de uma pena, esse passado negro. Assim se obliterou das consciências e da vida a guerra colonial, as vexações, os crimes, a cultura do medo e da pequenez mediocre que o salazarismo engendrou. Mas não se constrói um «branco» (psíquico ou histórico), não se elimina o real e as forças que o produzem, sem que reapareçam aqui e ali, os mesmos ou outros estigmas que testemunham o que se quis apagar e que insiste em permanecer.”*

“As if the affirmative exaltation of the Revolution could sweep away, in one stroke, that dark past. Thus, the colonial war, the humiliations, the crimes, the culture of fear, and the mediocre pettiness that Salazarism engendered were obliterated from consciences and life. But a 'blank' (psychic or historical) is not constructed, reality and the forces that produce it are not eliminated, without the same or other stigmas reappearing here and there, testifying to what was intended to be erased and insists on remaining.”

(Gil 2004, 16)

However, before delving deeper into its consequences for the post-revolutionary posterity, it is necessary to first characterize and briefly situate the scope of Portuguese dictatorship - prioritizing, of course, angles that favour the discussion of the artistic scenario and the condition of Portuguese women, as well as their biases. In this sense, it must be acknowledged that, for almost half of the twentieth century, Portugal was governed by a repressive authoritarian regime, which began on May 28, 1926, with a military coup that established a nationalist government of exception that became known as *Ditadura Nacional* (1928-1933)<sup>31</sup>. In 1933, after the promotion of the then Minister of Finance, António Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), to President of the Council of Ministers

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<sup>31</sup> Under the justification that politicians from leftist parties were causing instability in the country, it was decided that a regime inspired by Italian fascism (which had come to power four years earlier) would be necessary to reorganize it (Secco 2004; Augusto 2011).

(in July 1932), plus the approval of a new national constitution, the regime was renamed *Estado Novo* (1933-1974). Sometimes also referred to as Salazarism, in reference to its founder and main leader, *Estado Novo* was characterized by an extremely nationalist and conservative discourse, efficiently summarized by the motto 'God, Homeland, and Family'. In fact, the main pillars of Salazarism were: the defence and use of Catholicism as an integral part of Portuguese social and political life, the economical corporativism (aiming to protect the national private economy), the rejection of socialism or any other syndicalist movements, and the ideology of Lusotropicalism - which saw Portugal as a pluricontinental nation by including the territories of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau (Secco 2004; Augusto 2011).

On the one hand, based on a propaganda of self-sufficiency, such a period was characterized by a deep isolationism that ignored Europe while maintaining a preference for bilateral economic relations with the African colonies. In this sense, in 1933, the 'Colonial Act' was enacted, a document intended to formalize the 'Portuguese Empire' and solidify the relations between the 'Metropolis' and the 'Colonies' - all of this confirming the preference for colonial relations over integration into the European market, thus keeping Portugal "proudly alone" (an epitome commonly uttered by Salazar). Additionally, in the same year, other extremely traditionalist values - which directly affected the status, freedom, and life of Portuguese women - were proclaimed and enshrined by law, such as the 'Family as a social cell', that projected onto the concept of family the elements of the State, claiming its maintenance more important than the citizens/individuals themselves (Cunha 2005).

On the other hand, concerning the artistic panorama, despite the severe limitations imposed by censorship policies and systematic repudiation of internationalization, some significant initiatives emerged within the Portuguese artistic milieu from 1933. Such flexibilization can be attributed to the direction of António Ferro, who became the head of the Secretariat of National Propaganda (SPN) in that year and was involved in elaborating a richer and more updated cultural scene in Portugal. Some examples are the establishment of the dance company *Bailados Portugueses Verde Gaio* (1940 - 1977)<sup>32</sup>, the support of Leitão de Barros' anecdotal and comedic films, and, in the realm of visual

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<sup>32</sup> Inspired by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

arts, the Portuguese World Exhibition (1940) plus the organization of various painting salons, namely the *Exposições de Arte Moderna*.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, by the 1950s, despite an initial growth of the Portuguese economy (at least in raw numbers) thanks to the measures applied to benefit national companies, this aspect was accompanied by low per capita income and high social inequality - ultimately resulting in the country with the lowest life expectancy in Europe (Oliveira 2019). By that time, Portugal was essentially rural, and its people was haunted by poor nutrition, low rates of access to essential goods and services (such as piped water, sanitation, and electricity) and high rates of illiteracy (*Ibidem*). Thus, unsurprisingly, when transposed to the feminine context of extreme subordination and sparse rights, these difficult living conditions corroborated a dehumanized and imprisoning existence that trapped women within the domestic sphere, severely diminishing their capacity to rebel:

*“No país do Estado Novo, a mulher existia para ser a mãe extremosa, a esposa dedicada, uma verdadeira fada do lar. Desde pequenina que era treinada para ser assim, submissa ao poder patriarcal do pai, do irmão e, mais tarde, do marido. O único futuro que podia ambicionar era o de fazer um bom casamento que garantisse o sustento da família, que, custasse o que custasse, tinha de se manter unida, estável e forte; uma metáfora do próprio regime. Oliveira Salazar não permitia que a ordem social fosse questionada, todos os assomos de feminismo iam sendo silenciados.”*

"In the country of the Estado Novo, the woman existed to be the devoted mother, the dedicated wife, a true 'home fairy'. From a young age, she was trained to be submissive to the patriarchal power of her father, her brother, and later, her husband. The only future she could aspire to was that of making a good marriage that guaranteed the family's livelihood, which, at all costs, had to remain united, stable, and strong; a metaphor for the regime itself. Oliveira Salazar did not allow the social order to be questioned, and any signs of feminism were silenced."

(“O Ideal Feminino Do Estado Novo - RTP Ensina” 2023).

Indeed, as António Barreto (2007) observes, these women did not have access to certain basic rights, such as voting, having a passport, freedom to travel abroad, having a bank account or taking contraceptives without the express approval of their husbands. Similarly, they were barred from occupying certain professional positions of great

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<sup>33</sup> According to Artur Portela (1987), Salazar's SPN (National Propaganda Secretariat) differed from Ferro's approach in that, for the former, it aimed at the collaboration of the greatest Portuguese values, whereas for Ferro, the SPN served the function of 'fighting defeatism' and promoting Salazar and the Estado Novo as 'the new, the most advanced impulse, the vanguard'.

authority and political influence - such as police officer, military personnel, diplomat, and judge (Barreto 2007; “O Ideal Feminino Do Estado Novo - RTP Ensina” 2023). Less than 30% of the student population was composed of women, and these were mainly enrolled in courses of humanities without real professional intentions (Secco 2004), reflecting the idea discussed in Nolchen (2015) that women needed to choose between having a family or a career – with the addition that, should they choose the latter, they would forever grapple with social non-acceptance. In fact, if miraculously they were able to enter the job market, they would most likely earn nearly half the salary paid to a man for the same role (“O Ideal Feminino Do Estado Novo - RTP Ensina” 2023). By its turn, the marital contract also comprehended an imbalance, since it expected from women the – non-reciprocal – duty of total obedience to their husbands. In conclusion, being a woman in that period meant having little escape from her subordinate condition, as “society was patriarchal, both in customs and in law” (Barreto 2007, 22).

As observed by Tavares (2010), women constantly needed to adapt to male needs/desires, given that this type of ideology (i.e. based on acute gender inequality) was shared by many nations in the post-war period: "in several countries, campaigns intensified to encourage women to return home, leaving jobs to men" (p. 58). The only realm where women could assert greater control and agency was within the confines of the house, a domain – it is important to stress - where their authority did not always equate to the privileges of power ownership, but instead manifested as an overwhelming burden of responsibility (often extending to matters beyond their control or foresight). This dynamic consistently led to the continual invisibilization of the labour, mental strain, and emotional intelligence demanded by domestic work and management —a devaluation that persists to this day. Reinforcing, therefore, the importance of female alienation, confinement, and docility as pillars of patriarchal society. As Maria Graciete Besse (2006, 16) highlights, within this context we most found ourselves faced with "female figures marked by various constraints, mistreated, confined, forcibly married, deceived, exploited, and, despite everything, extremely patient".

So, in the late 1950s and 1960s, due to a combination of political persecution, limited education, and economic inequality, there was an intensification<sup>34</sup> of the exodus

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<sup>34</sup> This migratory process began in the 1940s but intensified particularly in the 1960s with the onset of the colonial war (in 1961) and the consequent processes of popular revolt - due to the traumatic recruitment of young Portuguese to fight overseas - and the deterioration of the Portuguese economy - which was increasingly spending on armaments and other demands of the war (Augusto 2011).

of Portuguese people to other European countries (Secco 2004). This trait would prove decisive in shaping the trajectory of numerous national artists and, among them, several women can be found to have benefited from conducting their artistic research in other countries - such as Paula Rego (1935-2022), Helena Almeida (1934-2018), or Lourdes Castro herself. The emigrations were fundamental in allowing artists to experience different realities and engage with the major centres of global artistic creation, enabling them to access much more liberated and conducive environments for creativity:

*“Para os artistas e escritores portugueses que optaram por sair de Portugal a partir dos anos 1950, o ambiente de liberdade e a diversidade cultural encontradas no estrangeiro opunham-se à atmosfera vivida em Portugal, na altura dominado pelo Estado Novo, um regime totalitário, repressivo, que sujeitaria mais tarde o país a uma guerra colonial. Para além disso, a mobilidade dos artistas portugueses permitia-lhes explorar novas oportunidades formativas e profissionais, abrindo-lhes a possibilidade de se dedicarem exclusivamente à prática criativa – algo que, no seu país, lhes parecia quase impossível.”*

“For Portuguese artists and writers who chose to leave Portugal starting from the 1950s, the atmosphere of freedom and cultural diversity found abroad contrasted with the environment in Portugal, then dominated by the Estado Novo, a totalitarian, repressive regime that would later subject the country to a colonial war. Additionally, the mobility of Portuguese artists allowed them to explore new educational and professional opportunities, opening up the possibility of dedicating themselves exclusively to creative practice - something that seemed almost impossible in their own country.”

(Baião & Oliveira 2020, 94)

In this regard, it is also worth highlighting the importance of the scholarships provided by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation through its *Serviço de Belas-Artes* (established in 1956), which played a decisive role, particularly in terms of consolidating structures and launching experimental and innovative projects (“Serviço de Belas-Artes” 2021) - a venture from which Castro had benefited in 1957 and 1958, her first years abroad. Actually, these migratory paths were rather significant and noteworthy even at the time, as evidenced by this testimony made by the art critic Fernando Pernes (1936-2010) as early as 1967:

*“Tenho acompanhado a actividade destes jovens artistas nestes últimos anos, fiquei com a impressão de que o que de mais válido se faz actualmente na arte portuguesa é feito em Munique, Paris, Londres, etc.”*

"I have been following the activity of these young artists in recent years, and I have the impression that the most valuable work being done currently in Portuguese art is being done in Munich, Paris, London, etc."

(França et. Al 1970, cited in Oliveira 2019, 125)

Notably, it was from the mid-1960s onwards that there was a substantial change both in the quantity and in the form and importance of the presence assumed by female artists (Oliveira 2019)<sup>35</sup>. This was very possibly due to the contextual effects marked by contact with foreign influences, and subsequently, with a greater openness of the state regarding censorship - observed since Salazar's replacement by Marcelo Caetano in 1968<sup>36</sup>. However, despite Emilia Nadal (2008, n.p.) stating that the "reformulation of the identity consciousness of women artists already consolidated in the late 1960s", there was still a staunch resistance among women artists to acknowledge any gender-specific disadvantage within their field of work. In fact, Oliveira (2019) explains that it was not possible to identify at this time any Portuguese woman artist politically engaged and in alignment with an explicitly feminist discourse – even though, as the author also reminds us, this does not mean that interpretations along this conceptual line cannot be fostered by their works and attitudes.

With the Carnation Revolution on April 25, 1974, many things changed, and a huge number of movements emerged seeking to intervene in society. In the visual arts, this revolutionary climate translated primarily into an associative logic with shared actions among artists and collectives (Oliveira 2019). However, despite this climate of change, the cultivation of feminism in Portugal during this time faced some obstacles and weakening. So, even throughout the 1970s, when several feminist associations were established in Portugal, misogyny was so deeply entrenched in the foundations of Portuguese culture that many of them - such as the Women's Democratic Movement (1968) - had their transformative potential regarding gender inequality issues jeopardized. Another symptom of that was the alarming 80-year gap between the first two feminist

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<sup>35</sup> A phenomenon that is reflected in editions of the magazines *Colóquio* and *Colóquio Arte*, edited by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, where the presence of women in articles is accompanied by a rise both in quantity and quality, sometimes even being the subject of front-page features as was the case with Paula Rego and Lourdes Castro (Oliveira 2019, 109-110).

<sup>36</sup> Sometimes referred as 'Marcelist Spring', this period, despite a spirit of renewal, kept the Colonial War in the background (Rosas 1994, 548).

congresses in Portugal, the first being held in 1928 while the second happened only in 2008, occurring already 34 years after the fall of the dictatorial regime.

Indeed, there was a structural impasse evidenced by the feminist struggle of Portuguese women during the anti-regime movements or even after the revolution in the first decades that followed the 25 April. It was observed a widespread and characteristic reductionism of gender causes and issues – allegedly- in favour of collectively focusing on resolving the 'bigger problem', namely, the general dissatisfaction with the *Estado Novo* (Oliveira 2019). Therefore, considering that women's rights were perceived as concurrent with universal rights at the time, the opportunity for the introduction of more specific women's demands within the opposition was very limited; in other words, feminism was subsumed within anti-fascism (Tavares 2010).

“Strongly conditioned by gender belonging, female opposition activity was experienced by women and perceived by men based on what was then the condition of women in Portuguese society, which had consequences, notably, in marking social space.”

(Gorjão 2002, 21)

Once again, women were suffocated, intoxicated, confused, and/or persuaded of their 'innate smallness', of the insignificance and little urgency of their causes throughout their quest for freedom, tracing back to a cultural tradition that aims to depoliticize and diminish everything associated with systematically oppressed voices:

“The first person is arguably the only voice with any political urgency, but one that has often been denied women and other marginalised people unless it confirms what they – they, the patriarchy, the tastemakers, the ones who decide things – expect to hear from us. And then it’s rejected or minimised for being small, anedoctal, irrelevant to the Big Concerns like politics, war, business, sport. Particular instead of universal. We get accused of being narcissistic, inappropriate. We say too much; we overshare.”

(Elkin 2023, 27)

Not to mention the absurdity of the very proposition that assumes that this ‘saving of reactionary efforts’ towards women's interests and their liberation from patriarchal values is, at the very least, suspicious and self-interested.

Before concluding, and regarding the visibility of women artists in the 1970s, it is worth mentioning the exhibition *Artistas Portuguesas*, held in 1977, which took place in Lisbon, at the halls of the *Sociedade Nacional de Belas-Artes* (SNBA). Organized with institutional and technical support from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, despite

featuring contemporary Portuguese painters and sculptors, the exhibition aimed to distance itself from a feminist and assertive spirit ("História das Exposições" 2016). In an interview with Márcia Oliveira (2019, 111), Emília Nadal, who alongside Clara Menéres and Sílvia Chicó formed part of the organizing committee, recalls this exhibition and the reasons why the included artists demonstrated such urgency in proclaiming their detachment from feminist ideology:

*"Para já o feminismo tinha má fama. Por outro lado as mulheres que sempre expuseram ali livremente não se sentiram com vontade nem com direito, nem tinha sentido, fazerem uma manifestação feminista ao nível da arte naquele contexto."*

"For starters, feminism had a bad reputation. Furthermore, the women who had always exhibited there freely did not feel inclined or entitled, nor did it make sense, to make a feminist statement at the level of art in that context."

However, despite their efforts, the extraordinary exhibition inevitably stirred controversy, as the very fact of grouping works only by women was itself surprising – sometimes even disturbing - for the public (Chicó 1977, 1). It is, nevertheless, inevitable to accept uncritically that just because the artists of the time did not recognize themselves as being discriminated against in the art world, that this corresponded to reality. In fact, regarding assertion in the market and reception by art critics (of which the 1977 exhibition itself was a victim<sup>37</sup>), it remains to question why women continued to be a minority among the most valued artists, or even why female painters are so rare in Portuguese art history (Palla 1977, 8).

Conclusively, even after the democratic revolution in 1974, when several feminist associations were established in Portugal, misogyny remained deeply ingrained in the foundations of Portuguese culture, weakening the transformative potential of women in addressing gender inequality issues. The legacy of the *Estado Novo* regime - which confined women to the domestic realm and the role of motherhood - continued to cast a shadow over contemporary Portuguese society, shaping detrimental attitudes and perceptions regarding gender roles and women's rights that ultimately impacted the self-perception of Portuguese female artists, as Rato (2005, 45) aptly states:

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<sup>37</sup> In addition to the scathing criticisms by Francisco de Sousa Neves – who, among other remarks, deemed the exhibition "insufficient" and "rife with glaring errors" - as discussed in Oliveira (2019, 134-136), journalist Maria Antónia Palla also commented to Chicó (1977, 35) on how the exhibition of 1977, despite sparking some interest and astonishment among certain individuals, was received in Lisbon without much enthusiasm.

*“Há formas de reprodução do estatuto social que estão muito interiorizadas: tem que ver com a maneira como as mulheres se encaixam nas estruturas, com relação que estabelecem com a hierarquia de carreira, com o que se faz para chegar ao topo ou com o que cada artista acha possível para si próprio.”*

"There are forms of reproduction of social status that are deeply internalized: it has to do with the way women fit into structures, with the relationship they establish with career hierarchy, with what is done to reach the top or with what each artist finds possible for themselves."

This lingering influence inhibited their ability to recognize inequities within the Portuguese artistic landscape, resulting in an extreme reluctance to align explicitly with feminist ideologies - despite the potential implications evident in the character and content of their works. Furthermore, as stated above, the significant role of emigration, facilitated by scholarships provided by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (which financed many of these residencies abroad), must be emphasized. These opportunities enabled artists to engage with international trends and access a certain freedom of expression that was often constrained within the borders of Portugal, particularly for women.

## Chapter II: A Woman in the Shadow

“Às escuras e em silêncio é que se trabalha. [...] Há um trabalho que a gente faz na escuridão que ninguém vê nunca e este trabalho é a germinação do que depois se dá a ver”

"In darkness and in silence is where the work is done. [...] There is a work that one does in darkness that no one ever sees, and this work is the germination of what later becomes visible."

(Castro in Mourão 2010, 04:25)

Maria de Lourdes Bittencourt de Castro was born in December 1930 on the island of Madeira (Portugal), in the city of Funchal, a geographical origin that would later prove essential to the understanding of her work. She had a very free childhood - intimately connected to a landscape of verdant mirages and a ubiquitous sea - and lived on a large property very close to Formosa beach, where bananas, grapes, and sugarcane were grown (Pacheco 2022, n.p.). While growing up her education was primarily provided by females, with her grandmother, Ana Laura Stela Magna<sup>38</sup>, serving as her first teacher. These lessons took place during her attendance at the *Colégio Alemão da Madeira*, which had been founded in 1928 and distinguished itself by its emphasis on language instruction - including Portuguese, German, French, and English - as well as its inclusion of manual work, drawing, and singing in the curriculum (Men 2015). However, with the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the school was closed, and her German language instruction was taken over by a German widow who had a home filled with plants and exotic birds, that deeply intrigued Castro (Pacheco 2022). After completing high school, she remained on the island for another three years, working as a *kindergarten* teacher, since she did not really know what she wanted to do or become on a professional level. By the end of this period, her primary desire was to leave Madeira and explore the world, something that she claimed acutely necessary even later in life when she was back living on the island: "It is necessary to leave. You see the sea, you see the boats, then you need to leave" (*Ibidem*).

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<sup>38</sup> Lourdes Castro grandmother was the first ever female student – and later first female teacher - of the island.

Although she stated in a few interviews<sup>39</sup> that she had always engaged in various artistic practices - such as painting, dancing, and acting - in a spontaneous manner, she never really considered it as a potential professional pursuit until going to college:

*“Sempre desenhei. Não sei quando começou esta vontade de desenhar...sempre fiz. Como sempre esteve comigo, não considero que seja uma coisa muito especial, nem muito extraordinária, nem uma profissão, nem que seja arte. Para mim isto é uma maneira de viver, o mais natural possível”*

" I have always drawn. I don't know when this desire to draw began... I've always done it. Since it has always been with me, I don't consider it to be a very special thing, nor very extraordinary, nor a profession, nor even art. For me, this is a way of living, as naturally as possible."

(Castro in “Um Dia Com... Lourdes Castro”, 1970)

Therefore, her formal education in the arts began only in 1951, at the age of 20, when she moved to Lisbon to attend the School of Fine Arts and pursue a Special Degree in Painting.<sup>40</sup> In 1954, still as a student, Castro began her painting career with a collective exhibition - alongside José Escada (1934-1980) and Francisco de Carvalho e Rêgo (1898-1960) - at the Centro Nacional de Cultura in Lisbon. The following year, she participated in two other collective exhibitions (one at the *Museu das Janelas Verdes* and another at the *Galeria Pórtico*) and had her first solo exhibition in Funchal, specifically at the *Club Funchalense*. During this period, her work was predominantly focused on serigraphy and abstract painting.

Nonetheless, despite her talent, the artist demonstrated a transgressive spirit and a libertarian vision regarding artmaking, which did not fully align with the Portuguese academy. Consequently, in 1956, which should have been her graduation year, she attempted to exhibit a series of canvases on the walls of the school that did not conform to the prevailing academic canon<sup>41</sup> and was expelled from the institution. These were exercises of nude models, with antimimetic alterations reminiscent of Fauvist painting, upon which a jury wrote the verdict "excluded" in chalk—a sensory gesture promptly appropriated by the artist (Peres 2018). In 2019, during an interview with the *Expresso*

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<sup>39</sup> As in Pacheco (2022) and Tolentino (2016).

<sup>40</sup> During this post-war period, the artistic realm was marked by debates between neo-realism and surrealism, abstraction and figuration, which constituted major references in the formation of the young artists of Castro's generation.

<sup>41</sup> While demanding that students depict six nude models "according to what they saw" - for them, unmistakably in a realistic fashion -, they did not approve when what Castro claimed to see - and hence painted - were bodies in a non-realistic colour palette (blue, green, purple, etc.).

newspaper (which was then republished after her death, in 2022), the artist commented on the incident with her characteristic humour:

“*Já não podia mais com aquilo. Se a gente não pintava corzinha de pele, meio rosa... O mestre de Pintura não aceitava. Pinteí a pele dos nus de verde e de azul. Como pintava em casa, comecei a pintar à minha maneira. Já fazia outras coisas. Isto era no Curso Superior de Belas Artes, que não acabei. Porque era preciso fazer seis modelos nus, seis naturezas mortas e mais não sei o quê... era tudo às meias-dúzias.*”

“I couldn't take it anymore. If you didn't paint a little bit of skin color, kind of pink... the Painting master wouldn't accept it. I painted the skin of the nudes green and blue. Since I painted at home, I started painting my way. I was already doing other things. This was at the College of Fine Arts, which I didn't finish. Because you had to do six nude models, six still lifes, and I don't know what else... it was all in dozens.”

(Pacheco 2022, n.p.)

The unfriendly departure from the Portuguese academy and the desire to explore more avant-garde creative processes led, the following year, to her emigration - which she would later characterize as a “cultural exile” (*Ibidem*). Accompanied by her first husband and fellow painter René Bertholo (1935-2005), as well as two friends she had made during her time at the School of Fine Arts in Lisbon, António Costa Pinheiro (1935-2015) and Gonçalo Duarte (1935-1986), she initially travelled to Munich (Acciaiuoli 2001, 28). Upon arrival, they settled in the neighborhood where most artists resided – known as *Treibaus* (the greenhouse) -, and they met a lot of creative people, including the painter Jan Voss (b. 1936), with whom a strong friendship blossomed. During her short residency in the German city, Castro, along with her Portuguese colleagues, participated in the exhibition *Vier Mahler aus Portugal*, which took place at the *Galeria 17* and *the Internationale Haiüs*.

During the winter of 1957/1958 the couple relocated to Paris<sup>42</sup>, where she would fix residency for the next 25 years<sup>43</sup>. In her first year there, she and Bertholo created the group and magazine KWY (1958-1964), which, spanning 12 editions in total, constituted an essential contribution to understanding and characterizing Portuguese art that was being produced abroad, thanks to emigration. In these magazines, abstract painting of an informal nature predominated, followed by a slow but progressive return to neo-figuration (Caires 2013, 13). Around this initiative, gradually, other friends and notable artists would

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<sup>42</sup> Gonçalo Duarte and Costa Pinheiro would join them a little later, with the assistance of scholarships provided by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (*Ibidem*).

<sup>43</sup> Having as exceptions only two temporary hiatuses (of approximately one year each) spent in Berlin: one between 1972-1973 and the other between 1978-1979.

gather - namely António Costa Pinheiro, João Vieira (1934-2009), José Escada, Gonçalo Duarte, Jan Voss, and Christo (1935-2020) –, all united in the pursuit of stability outside their homeland, as Castro recalls: “We had the same problems: finding a place to live and work, something to subsist on, and we shared the same adventure” (Castro *in* Zimbro 2001, 165). Indeed, the adventurous group was characterized by the free experimentation of materials and forms, by playfulness, by indifference to artistic ideologies that aimed to limit formal conceptions, and by the spontaneous search for new ways to combine art and life (Gil 2001, 73). So, when considering that this occurred during the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, amidst the time of a Portuguese dictatorship soon absorbed in the Colonial War, it is no surprise that the avant-garde group generated a great stir when first exhibited in Lisbon in 1960 at the SNBA. In this regard, as noted by Acciaiuoli (2001, 27): "In 1960, Lisbon might have been prepared for many confrontations, but not for the one that was waged with the doubts of painting".

Another significant connection shared among many of these individuals of KWY was the fact that most of them would eventually be granted the first Gulbenkian Foundation’s scholarships to support them throughout their artistic endeavors (Peres, 2018). In the case of Lourdes Castro, this support was received at the beginning of her artistic journey abroad – specifically, in 1957 and 1958 – and, through the reports she submitted to the institution, it became evident how crucial it was for her to be in Paris during that time of such cultural flux and artistic innovation<sup>44</sup>. In fact, she actively engaged with the cultural scene by attending the most important exhibitions passing through Paris during those years, as well as those offered by the city itself, often meticulously documenting her experiences. In one these reports she highlights, for instance, the significance of the Guggenheim Collection at the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* in 1958, as well as various exhibitions where she had the opportunity to view the latest works by artists such as Bissière, Manessier, Kandinsky, Klee, Miró, and Max Ernst (Acciaiuoli 2001, 30).

Concurrently, as Lourdes Castro developed her identity as an artist, she gradually distanced herself from painting, or rather, expanded her conception of what could be considered painting. Therefore, in 1961, she became associated with the *Nouveau Réalisme* movement and embarked on a process of transitioning from two-dimensionality

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<sup>44</sup> According to José Gil, at the end of the 1950s, in a France that had just emerged from the post-war era, the moment was one of indeterminacy and gestation (Gil 2001, 73).

to three-dimensionality. This transition was initially manifested in works such as canvases, boxes, among other supports, onto which she affixed found objects, often painting them with aluminum - examples of this approach can be seen in works like *Coroa de Reis* (1961), *Máquina de Escrever* (1961) and *Caixa de alumínio com caixa de aguarelas* (1963).

Led by the French art critic Pierre Restany, in a reaction to abstract art, this movement was based in the idea that the whole world could become a painting and that art should correspond to an "appropriation of the poetic power of the world" (Restany in Acciaiuoli 2001, 22). So, advocating for the blurring of boundaries between art and life<sup>45</sup>, *Nouveaux Réalistes* sought to explore new modes of expression that engaged with the realities of contemporary society, finding in collage, assemblage, and ready-mades, tools by which they managed to expand its perception and apprehension. For this reason, they embraced domestic objects, urban debris, industrial materials, and even garbage as legitimate artistic materials, promoting reflection towards the rise of consumer culture and mass media in the post-war period. Nevertheless, despite well-established philosophical and ideological notions, when it came to formal directions, this movement was rather free and allowed its followers to develop very distinctive languages and processes, in its founder words: "It [the *Nouveau Réalisme*] is a collection of new perceptual approaches to reality. In other words, as we can see, it is a general idea that each individual subscribes to for particular reasons" (Restany 2000, 51). Thus, imbued with a particular way of looking at objects and understanding artmaking – one deeply rooted in the refunctionalization of objects and focused on unveiling what goes unnoticed – Castro would ultimately discover what would become the central theme of her entire artistic research: the shadow. The then new approach adopted by Castro to depict objects and individuals through the simplicity and minimalism of their contours, delineated a nuanced and progressive trajectory of material exploration and conceptual sophistication, integral to her artistic *oeuvre*:

*"A surpresa do desenho, a simplicidade da forma, do contorno numa sombra, da sua invisível presença fascinou-me tanto que ainda hoje para mim é nova. Uma sombra tem*

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<sup>45</sup> Such claim was made in Restany's second manifesto, associated to the movement, called 40 Degrees above Dada (1961).

*para mim mais significado do que simplesmente um objecto descrito. É uma maneira de contemplar as coisas e as pessoas à minha volta”*

"The surprise of drawing, the simplicity of form, the outline of a shadow, its invisible presence, fascinated me so much that even today it feels new to me. A shadow holds more meaning for me than simply a described object. It is a way of contemplating the things and people around me."

(Castro in Pereira 1992, 50)

Castro's artistic exploration of shadow began around 1961-1962 when she started focusing predominantly on shadow projection and capturing the silhouettes and contours of people and objects. From these years onwards, the artist's international exhibitions multiplied, surpassing the borders of Europe and carrying with them works such as: "*Contornos fundo bege*" (1961), *Sombra projectada de Costa Pinheiro* (1963) and *Sombra projectada de Christo* (1964). Initially, these works took the form of serigraphy, created by placing objects on pre-sensitized silk, and only from 1963 did they begin to incorporate uniform vibrant colours such as red, blue, or green (Museu Nacional do Azulejo, 2021). It was also in this year that Castro began cataloging her findings - information, quotations, and discoveries - on the subject of shadows and organizing them within the so-called *Álbuns de Família* (Caires 2013, 14).

However, after some time projecting shadows onto a canvas and tracing their outline, the opacity of the paint itself became problematic for her, as it was unable to replicate the nuances of the shadow. It was from this premise that Castro therefore found, in 1964, plexiglass (or acrylic glass), which she described as being a "material immaterial like shadows" (Castro in Caires 2013, 14), due to its translucent qualities. Indeed, despite its increased difficulty of manipulation, it better fulfilled her in representing shadows by producing pieces with multiple layers capable of interacting with ambient light and space - blending, fusing, changing -, ultimately inaugurating a whole new phase in her exploration of shadow representation:

*“Foi complicado [trabalhar com o novo material]. Mas não fazia sentido pintar a sombra em tela: tudo branco e depois o tracinho... Porque eu queria um material menos material. Poderia ser vidro, mas parte-se. Comprei umas plaquinhas de plexiglas e experimentei pintá-las. A partir daí pensei: “Tem de ser em plexiglas”.”*

"It was challenging [working with the new material]. But it didn't make sense to paint the shadow on canvas: all white and then the little line... Because I wanted a material that

was less material. It could have been glass, but it breaks. I bought some plexiglass plates and tried painting them. From then on, I thought: 'It has to be plexiglass'."

(Pacheco 2022, n.p.)

From this phase emerged works such as *Sombra projetada da minha mãe* (1964), *Sombra projetada para um outro guarda-roupa* (1966), *Branco e branco* (1966), *4 Transparentes* (1966), among others, which ultimately brought her great prominence. In this regard, in 1967, she held her first international solo exhibitions in London, Amsterdam, and Malmö, which were then added, in 1969, to those held in the cities of Padua, Milan, Essen, Cologne, and Frankfurt. All this without ever ceasing to participate in exhibitions organized in her country of origin, as is the case of *Novas Iconologias* (1967) – at Buchholz Gallery -, *Imagem não Imagem* (1967), and *O Objecto* (1968) - both at *Quadrante* Gallery.

After devoting herself to working with plexiglass for nearly four years, in 1968, during a summer spent in Madeira, the idea of 'laying down' the shadows arose, a concept that the artist would only materialize and exhibit from 1970 onwards. Drawing from her insular cultural background and experience with typical manual labour of the region, she began embroidering the silhouettes of friends on linen sheets and pillows. For the creation of these pieces, the models often posed nude, which is why most of them remained anonymous - an unusual event in Castro's work, as she typically credited her references. Furthermore, even closer to life and everyday experiences, these bedsheets embroidered with the outlines of people laying down particularly interested Castro because they were capable of horizontally tracing their shadows without requiring the sun's incidence to define them (Caires 2013, 14). A few summers later, in 1972, Lourdes Castro was again at the island and, imbued with the desire to "show the inexhaustible richness of the trees, herbs, fruits, and flowers of Madeira" (Crua 2013, n.p.), she created one of her most emblematic works: the *grande herbário de sombras*. Containing around one hundred botanical species (labelled with the scientific name of each species, its common name, and habitat), it is characterized by preserving shadows directly fixed by the sun on heliographic paper (phototypy).

In September of that same year, the artist moved to West Berlin following her husband, René Bertholo, who was awarded a one-year-scholarship from the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD). While Castro was not the artist benefited by the *Berliner Künstler Programme* (BKP), during Bertholo's artistic residency, she recognized an opportunity to leverage the DAAD's resources for her own artistic pursuits by aligning

her explorations of shadows with his research into electronics applied to the arts. During this period, the connection to life and everyday action would cause Castro's shadows to rise, losing their fixedness and gaining a 'life of their own' through events projected in the form of theatres of shadows. On the other hand, René Bertholo developed a custom apparatus for controlling the colours and intensity of lights during these performances, plus produced original recordings of electronic music, which would be occasionally integrated into them. As a result, in 1973, when the couple collaborated on curating an exhibition titled *Ein Jahr in Berlin*, Castro not only displayed selected photographs of her experiments with moving shadows - that she had been conducting throughout that residency -, but also premiered her first extended piece.<sup>46</sup>

Between 1973 and 1985, Lourdes Castro would, with the backing of her second husband, Manuel Zimbro (1944-2003), extensively present these performances around Europe and Latin America, gradually putting together a very specific expressive genre. However, for these collaborations to be understood, it is important to point out that Manuel Zimbro was an artist who prioritized the 'art of living' - rejecting the notion of pursuing a career in the conventional sense - and was a significant promoter of Zen Buddhism in Portugal (Pomar 2015, n.p.). Born in Lisbon, he attended the António Arroio School of Decorative Arts before relocating to Paris in the late 1960s to work as an assistant to René Bertholo, period in which he first crossed paths with Lourdes Castro. Apart from his projects as a multidisciplinary visual artist, Zimbro also demonstrated a profound affinity for writing, having produced numerous texts of great eloquence and poetic quality<sup>47</sup>. For this reason, in addition to the technical and creative contributions he provided to Castro's performances, he also became the primary figure responsible for drafting documents outlining the concepts and intentions behind them – explaining, as we will see next, why his words quickly became associated with most promotional materials and grant applications related to such productions. In fact, without further ado, these, among other subjects concerning these collaborative theatres of shadows, will be the central focus of discussion in the forthcoming chapter.

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<sup>46</sup> Remarkably, Castro's artistic output and diplomatic skills garnered such favour with the DAAD's director and exhibition curator, Karl Ruhrberg, that he subsequently facilitated her return for an independent artistic residency in Berlin in 1978 hosted at *Künstlerhaus Bethanien*.

<sup>47</sup> As a result, several of these would later take part in important publications - particularly those related to the artist Lourdes Castro, with whom he shared both work and life – including, for instance, the catalogues published after the exhibitions *Além da Sombra (1992)*, *KWY: Paris 1958-1968 (2001)* and *Sombras à Volta de um Centro (2003)*.

## Chapter III: Theatres of Shadows: Lourdes Castro's meditative performativity

### III.1. Diving into the Ephemeral: A Path of No Return

Between 1973 and 1985, every time the couple Lourdes Castro and Manuel Zimbro arrived at a new city, theatre, gallery, or museum, there was a need to inform the audience that their performance was, in reality, “more shadows of theatre than a theatre of shadows”.<sup>48</sup> That is to say that they were closer to everyday propositions (that have always fascinated Castro) which she appropriated to animate her artistic research on shadows, than anything else more classically related to the overtly staged theatrical realm (Castro, 1985). In fact, she sometimes even called these spectacles just “the shadows”, because it made them sound “less theatrical” (*Ibidem*). With this statement, the artist clarified her intention of not properly representing things or telling very linear and consequent stories to an audience but rather to experience quotidian and its marvelousness through and alongside them – echoing much of what was happening in the performance art world of Kaprow's happenings, Abramovic's body art, Fluxus' movement, and so on – as observed by this Parisian newspaper entrance of 1974:

*“J'ai toujours pensé que le théâtre d'ombres, c'était pour les mômes. Finalement "Les Ombres" nous ouvrent une nouvelle perspective dans le rapport public-plateau. En franchissant cette barrière, je tombe pour ainsi dire, sur une "chose" qui, buvant dans la source du théâtre al'Orient, serre la main au happening, embrasse le théâtre de la bouche de scène, et avec le cinéma va faire ses courses pour exalter la respiration de qui s'endort et se réveille tous les jours de la vie. Bref, jamais le rêve a été si proche de la réalité.”*

“I always thought that theatres of shadows were for kids. In the end, The Shadows opens a new perspective in the relationship between the audience and the stage. By crossing this barrier, I find, so to speak, something that, drawing from the source of Eastern theatre, shakes hands with the happening, embraces theatre from the stage's mouth, and with cinema goes shopping to exalt the breath of those who fall asleep and wake up every day of life. In short, never has the dream been so close to reality.”

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<sup>48</sup> Zimbro was typically responsible for the prefaces included in the performances' program sheets, flyers, informative brochures, and funding applications. The quoted phrase was commonly found in such documents, as can be seen in images 6 and 7.

(C.H. 1974, n.p.)

It is worth noting, however, that despite the debut of this performative genre typically being attributed to 1973 – with the formal premiere of her 'first' theatre of shadows, *As Sombras: Piquenique à Sombra, Contorno, Noite e Dia* (1973-1975), at the *Akademie der Kunste* in Berlin – it is known that the initial experiments date back much earlier. In fact, there are interviews indicating the execution of an experimental film with moving shadows as early as 1965 (Tolentini 1977, n.p.). Additionally, as mentioned in the invitation letter published for the spectacle held at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1977<sup>49</sup>, the artist herself credited Graziella Martinez's Dadaist piece, *Sainte Geneviève dans la Baignoire*<sup>50</sup>, from 1966, as the catalyst for her exploration of this medium. Notably, a journalistic report from *Tribune des Arts* documenting this show features Castro alongside the artist Samuel Buri and describes their enactment as "a very simple morning of a couple revealed in Chinese shadows"<sup>51</sup> (Valogne 1966, n.p.). This observation is significant as it aligns with the interpretation that Castro's interest in theatres of shadows may have always been intimately linked to her conceptualization and intimate recreation of domestic environments and everyday life scenes - besides, of course, her overarching interest in shadows. Similarly, in an exhibition catalogue authored by Pierre Restany just a month later, Castro was characterized as an artist capable of achieving a "perfect osmosis between interior and exterior spaces" (1966). Restany noted her ability to construct a discourse that evoked moments or gestures from a woman's life, wherein her intimacy was laid bare even when her shadows "deprived us of all the usual points of reference of the Euclidean world" (*Ibidem*).

Furthermore, as photographic documentation suggests, since Martinez's show, the artist started to gradually include performative elements in her – and, more rarely, at friend's<sup>52</sup> - individual exhibitions<sup>53</sup>. There are also testimonies pointing to the existence of a theatre of shadows film that was recorded for broadcast on Portuguese television in

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<sup>49</sup> See Image 4.

<sup>50</sup> See image 5.

<sup>51</sup> It is also interesting to note how in this very play Castro already managed to implement her plexiglass kettle (image 5), an element which would also accompany her last performance: *Linha de Horizonte* (image 8).

<sup>52</sup> According to Nóbrega (1977, n.p.) there was a theatre of shadows enactment in the opening of an exhibition of the artist Jan Voss at *Galerie Brusberg* in 1974.

<sup>53</sup> By examining image 9, it is evident that Lourdes Castro enacted an embryonic form of what would later become her theatres of shadows' performances during the opening of a solo exhibition at the *Galerie Thelen*, in Essen, 1969.

1970, a work that the artist herself later considered highly experimental (Tolentino 1977, n.p.). Upon analysing a fragment of this film<sup>54</sup>, one can observe the typical performance of daily activities<sup>55</sup>, but also a brief excerpt where the unusual appearance of another human shadow – a male figure, thus possibly Bertholo - is projected in the screen alongside Castro's 'shadow-body' (Pires 2009, 6:31). Additionally, the artist provided important technical assistance related to shadow-projections for Jérôme Savary's *Grand Magic Circus* in a 1971's production that took place in Paris (Tolentino 1977, n.p.).

Nonetheless, all these experiments corroborated a much less elaborate format and a more experimental character than the performances we will analyse in more depth within the next subsections. Records of more structured solo explorations, or rather, duets – as the assistance provided by either Bertholo (for the development and premiere of *As Sombras*) or Zimbro (who provided technical support during *As Sombras* tour and from then on started to be completely involved in the next productions) - date back to 1972. These first emerged under the name of *Teatro Ambulante de Sombras* (Sharrer, n.d.) and marked her almost exclusive dedication to the medium of performance art. In fact, the genre that Castro developed after all these years of experimentation involved long periods of preparation and rehearsals that typically lasted around a year, since they were always developed from scratch (Mourão 2010; Pacheco 2022). It entailed the synchronization of a series of meticulous tasks ranging from the colour, intensity, and positioning of the lights – designed and operated by Zimbro<sup>56</sup> - to the selection of actions to be performed, how they should be performed, the creation of scenarios, selection and preparation of objects and sounds to be used, and so on.

The operational mechanism of the theatres of shadows was remarkably precise and straightforward. As elucidated by Leblanc (1975), the system comprised a rectangle of white fabric, approximately six square meters in area, suspended by one of its long sides on two hooks. The fabric had its weave obstructed by glue to facilitate the diffusion of a

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<sup>54</sup> Filmed at the Teatro Laura Alves that existed in Lisbon from 1968 until 2012).

<sup>55</sup> In this particular excerpt, for example, we see her waking up, combing her hair, brushing her teeth, tying a scarf around her hair, dusting, putting on shoes, undressing, dressing again, applying makeup, tending to houseplants, sitting down for tea, smoking, and so forth.

<sup>56</sup> With the sole exception being the conception and premiere of *As Sombras: Piquenique à Sombra, Contorno, Noite e Dia*. Although never stepping onto the stage, Zimbro played a pivotal role as an inventive co-creator of the shadow theatres, his contributions primarily revolved around nurturing the performances through technical innovation and by articulating their methods and intentions through the writing of spectacle brochures and exhibition prefaces. In fact, this infusion of Zimbro's insights brought a more introspective and philosophical tone to Castro's performances.

luminous projection - which, in turn, remained geographically undefined (*Ibidem*). Furthermore, in a valuable letter exchanged with the head of the theatre department at Gulbenkian in 1977, Carlos Wallenstein, Castro provided precise instructions regarding space requirements and other necessary infrastructure for their first performance in Portugal.<sup>57</sup> There, she specified that the screen (i.e. the white fabric/sheets) measured 3 meters in width by 2.2 meters in height - emphasizing its ease of transportation and handling due to its lightness and foldable characteristics. Consequently, the stage should have at least 5 meters in width, 3 meters in depth, and 2.70 meters in height.

Additionally, she insisted that the space be completely enclosed with black opaque cloths, including the sides of the screen, to prevent any interference from external light during the theatre projection. She also noted that it would be ideal if the room itself was not particularly large and the only technical requirements she made was a 220-volt power outlet and a magnétophone, explaining that the background music is on a professional-grade tape. She also mentioned some simple wooden objects that were to be constructed on-site and gave some details about her target audience. In fact, Castro emphasized that the performance was not intended for a children's audience, stating that while there was nothing that a child could not see in it, she recommended the experience only from the age of 12, when, she believed, individuals could start to better perceive what was happening.

The artist also had non-negotiable requirements regarding space availability. These elaborate performances were never presented fewer than three times on a given stage or space, and a full day of preparation at the venue before the premiere was essential. This consideration respected the preparation time, the artist's sensitivity, and the effort involved in adapting the show to a new place without compromising its character:

*“Eu dizia: ‘As sombras não fazem menos que três espetáculos e subentendia em cada sítio, em cada palco diferente. [...] Isto porque a montagem, a preparação, são muito minuciosas e a nosso cargo. Há sempre também um ensaio geral em cada lugar diferente.’ [...] Quando chego a esse palco, lugar que me é estranho, necessito de ter a serenidade de o poder vir a fazer meu. Isto em favor de uma certa qualidade que mais tarde é revelada na maneira como decorre o espetáculo. A preparação é extremamente laboriosa e minuciosa e nessa maneira tudo está inscrito.”*

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<sup>57</sup> See image 18.

"I was saying: 'The shadows perform no fewer than three shows, and I implied in each place, on each different stage. [...] This is because the setup, the preparation, is very meticulous and up to us. There's always a dress rehearsal in each different place.' [...] When I arrive at this stage, a place that is unfamiliar to me, I need to have the serenity to make it mine. This is in favour of a certain quality that is later revealed in the way the show unfolds. The preparation is extremely laborious and meticulous, and in this way, everything is inscribed."

(image 14)

In fact, Castro and Zimbro's theatres of shadows had a deliberate conceptual methodology that precisely defined what should occur behind, in front, and in the middle of the screen - a intellectualization of procedures that emerged, at least, from 1974, when the document<sup>58</sup> where these concepts were first articulated on paper<sup>59</sup>. According to this document, the couple of authors/artists aimed to create a multi-dimensional experience that transcended traditional theatrical boundaries, manifesting materially and symbolically across three distinct areas: 'Behind', 'In the Middle', and 'In Front' of the white cloth rectangle – often referred as 'screen'. In each of these spaces, the performance was meticulously designed, with every element contributing to the overall ambiance.

Specifically, the 'Behind the Screen' served as a contained space for action, where lights and colors interacted with the screen's backdrop. The staging was precise yet allowed for spontaneous intervention, creating a structured yet fluid atmosphere. Music played a crucial role here, not simply accompanying the images but interacting with them. Objects, some prepared in advance, were also part of this section and should cast shadows that evolved throughout the performance, blurring the lines between reality and illusion. Conversely, the 'In Front of the Screen' section invited viewers to engage with the shadows devoid of reference, slowly revealing banal shapes that took on new significance. These shadows, lacking context yet mesmerizing in their mystery and ephemerality, captivated the audience and inspired contemplation and tranquillity. Lastly, the text explained the 'In the Middle of the Screen' layer, where all elements converged to

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<sup>58</sup> Image 31.

<sup>59</sup> Which would later be translated into different languages and used sometimes as justification for grants and for venues that could host them (image 7), and sometimes to compose some of the informative brochures distributed before the performances (image 6). It is also interesting to consider how the very process of elaborating this text already indicates a deeper maturation of ideas about the experiments themselves after the initial years of working on moving shadows.

create a focal point containing the distilled essence of the performance. This space represented the heart of the performance, where the viewer's gaze and the performers' actions intersected, forming a nexus of meaning and interpretation.

That being said, it seems that Castro's moving shadows aimed to transcend traditional theatrical conventions, inviting viewers to explore the boundaries between reality and illusion, presence and absence, and meaning and ambiguity. Through meticulous staging, evocative imagery, and dynamic interaction, the performances offered a unique and thought-provoking journey for all who experienced it. Constructed through each audience member's mind, the theatres of shadows formulated a personalized story, evanescent, mysterious, and ephemeral by their very essence. Furthermore, despite the meticulousness and extensive preparation, Castro and Zimbro embraced the possibility of chance and gladly welcomed the potential for error. Ultimately, the couple's intentions with the theatres of shadows were to project serene reflections on everyday life, symbiotic tensions between the banal and the fantastic, capable of, in the ideal setting, anesthetizing the audience from their anxieties:

*“O espetáculo que vou apresentar com o Manuel Zimbro é uma espécie de oásis da paz interior no meio do mundo inquieto. É muito íntimo, não é agressivo e traz ao público uma tranquilidade que a vida às vezes não lhe oferece.”*

*"The show I'm presenting with Manuel Zimbro is like an oasis of inner peace in the midst of a restless world. It's very intimate, not aggressive, and brings the audience a tranquility that life sometimes doesn't offer."*

(Castro in *Diário de Notícias* 1977, n.p.)

The three most significant examples of Castro's performative genre - in terms of duration, technical proficiency, conceptual coherence, scope, reception, and institutional validation - will be individually analysed by their chronological order of release in the next sub-sections. Furthermore, there was an elemental communion between the subject (here, a cisgender woman), nature and domestic objects experienced through her 'shadow-body,' which will be critically discussed subsequently in Chapter IV.

### **III.1.1. *As Sombras: Piquenique à Sombra, Contorno, Noite e Dia* / *The Shadows: Picnic in the Shade, Contour, Night and Day* (1973-1975)**

*As Sombras* (1973-1974) marked Lourdes Castro's initiation into a journey of longer, meticulously planned, and more cohesive theatre of shadows productions. However, unlike the subsequent two works that followed, it exhibited a slightly distinct set of features in terms of structure, exhibition context, international influence, and critical reception. These disparities set it apart and underscore the evolution of Castro's personal journey and mastery within this emerging art form. As she gradually honed her vision, *As Sombras* served as a pivotal step, until she felt she had explored all she desired within the genre. A pattern of embracing new challenges and moving on, as discussed before in this dissertation, that was a recurring theme in her life and career, ultimately leading her to explore new artistic frontiers and become such a multifaceted artist and individual.

First of all, it was not always easy to maintain such pattern of constant change of medium/style within the art market. In fact, Lourdes Castro herself encountered some resistance as she endeavoured to transcend the materiality of her art and delve into the ephemeral medium of performance art to express her shadows. Despite her established status as a visual artist, she faced challenges from both institutions and critics who seemed inclined to reduce her to the role of a producer of objects, rather than acknowledging her capacity to perceive and manipulate the inherent beauty of transience. This resistance was manifested in: discouraging reviews in newspapers; galleries' apparent insistence on accompanying theatres of shadows with object-based exhibitions; and a notable lack of economic and institutional support for such initiatives, particularly during the creative and rehearsing phases of the performances.

In this sense, the most expressive non-appreciative reviews of Castro's performative work discovered during the present investigation were concerning this initial piece. Published at the newspapers *Feuilleton Fersehen* (Germany) and *Combat* (France) and written by Hiltrud Zantis and Nathalie Godard respectively, even though both critics acknowledged the quality of the artist's body of work, they characterized the theatre of shadows as a sort of inferior phase of her career. In fact, Zantis (1974) described it as "a bit thin" or "a rather weak attempt," pejoratively likening it to "arts and crafts" and ending the critic with "Honestly, I prefer the artist's portraits." Similarly (although

softer), Godard (1974) deemed it "outdated"<sup>60</sup> and "perhaps too discreet to be presented as a spectacle in itself." Therefore, in essence, these critics conveyed that what they had witnessed was not substantial enough to be considered a valuable and independent artistic event, let alone a 'proper theatre of shadows' as previously announced by its poster (Zantis 1974).

Secondly, regarding the venues' requests to showcase the performance only if accompanied by an exhibition of the artist's objects, it's important to clarify that there's no evidence proving this was indeed a condition negotiated for accepting and funding Castro's performance at their premises. However, it's noteworthy that half of the galleries that hosted *As Sombras* (specifically *Akademie der Kunst* in Berlin, during the autumn of 1973<sup>61</sup>, *Internationaal Cultureel Centrum* in Antwerp, and *Galerie Brusberg* in Hannover, both in 1974) seemed to treat the performance as a complementary attraction or a means to promote her—or others'<sup>62</sup>—material exhibitions held concurrently at the same location, something that would not be repeated in the two subsequent productions.

Thirdly, there is also the issue that she received no financial or institutional support for the theatre of shadows's research process, production, rehearsal or distribution. Of course, it must be recognized that she conducted most of the explorations for this project under DAAD's supervision (i.e. at *Kunstlerhaus Bethanien* facilities), in the same context where she would eventually premiere her piece. However, such infrastructural aid and exhibition opportunity were largely conditioned by the fact that her then husband, René Bértholo, who had joined her in researching theatre of shadows, was the scholarship recipient of DAAD's project Artists-in-Berlin in the first place – meaning her benefits were primarily in terms of space-concession and even this was only by extension. Moreover, concerning this matter, in a letter exchanged with *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* in 1975<sup>63</sup>, Castro briefly mentions a failed attempt to apply for national

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<sup>60</sup> That comment was made regarding the soundtrack, most likely pointing to Lourdes Castro's preference for classical music, especially from composers of the Classical and Romantic periods like Chopin and Schubert, known to have been included in some of her performances.

<sup>61</sup> Although there is no precision of dates for the performances, it is known that Castro and Bértholo's exhibition named *Ein Jahr in Berlin* happened from September 19 to October 7 of 1973, while *As Sombras* is known to have been premiered at Akademie der Künste and reenacted other two times through the course of September and October of that same year (Sharrer n.d.).

<sup>62</sup> Her performance at the Brusberg gallery occurred on the occasion of the Jan Voss exhibition opening in May 22 1974 (Nóbrega, 1977).

<sup>63</sup> Image 15.

funding made in 1974 to bring *As Sombras* —and consequently, her unique research and exploration within the realm of theatres of shadows—to Portugal.

Conversely, it is imperative to acknowledge the positive outcomes stemming from this inaugural venture into performance art. Notably, some receptions of her work also garnered commendatory reviews and recognition for its quality and avant-garde characteristics. This is evidenced by *La Lune*'s (H. 1974) and *Theatre Futur*'s (U. 1974) enthusiastic publications, as well as a comment from Alain Leblanc, made a year later on the occasion of Castro's theatre of shadows returning to Paris for the *Festival d'Automne* (1975), this time, with *As Cinco Estações* (1975-1980). Additionally, she successfully presented it across seven distinct venues<sup>64</sup>, gathering a number of respected galleries and theatres, spanning six cities situated in four different countries – Germany (Berlin, Aachen, and Hannover), the Netherlands (Amsterdam), Belgium (Antwerp), and France (Paris) (Porta 33 2024). Therefore, it is conceivable that these achievements facilitated subsequent funding opportunities, extended outreach, and heightened recognition for her ensuing production, *As Cinco Estações* (1975-1980), as we shall delve into further in the next section.

In a more detailed analysis of *mise en scène*, encompassing stage props, lighting, scenic elements and gestural choreography, the three-acts-performance, spanning roughly 45 minutes, commenced with *Piquenique à Sombra*, which exhibited the most elaborate scenario and prop arrangements. In this opening segment, a young girl<sup>65</sup> was depicted enjoying a picnic on lush green grass, presumably set within a forest or wooded park (Zantis 1974). Regarding Manuel Zimbro's lighting design, subtle variations were employed to evoke different atmospheres, predominantly casting a verdant hue to align with the intended ambiance of solitary leisure amidst nature. According to Zantis (1974) and Godard (1974) descriptions, the *mise en scène* featured an array of stage props in this idyllic exercise that included: a bicycle (upon which the 'girl' entered the stage); a picnic basket (reminiscent of a magician's bottomless bag since an abundance of items emerged and neatly fit); a multitude of bottles (which were individually extracted from the basket,

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<sup>64</sup> Namely: *Akademie der Kunste* (Berlin) - in 1973-, *International Cultureel Center* (Antwerp), *Melkweg* (Amsterdam), *Neue Galerie Sammlung Ludwig* (Aachen), *Brusberg Galerie* (Hannover), *Théâtre d'Orsay Renaud Barrault* (Paris) - in 1974 -, and *the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris* (Paris) - in 1975.

<sup>65</sup> Although Lourdes Castro was a middle-aged woman of forty-three years old when she presented this piece, her silhouette appeared to be that of a young girl to Zantis (1974), demonstrating the versatile and transformative power of shadow, which strips details from the lines and the face to deposit this expressive responsibility in body and gesture.

showcasing its eccentric multiplicative spatial dynamic); numerous hanging branches (that were put in the backdrop to create a forest-like ambience); a piece of bread (symbolizing the idyllic meal arrangement); a ball (used by Castro to play games with herself); and a photographic camera (which sometimes she pointed to nature, others to herself). The inclusion of the camera is particularly noteworthy, as it can be interpreted as an inception for the performance itself, suggesting the artist's inner desire to capture, remember, and showcase the simple beauties of life and nature – these moments of joyful solitude that may not always bear symbolic witness to their significance, except for oneself.

On the other hand, the second segment, titled *Contorno*, took a more minimalist approach, not including any props and focusing on a significantly more intricate and precise interplay between Castro's 'shadow-body' and Zimbro's lighting. Descriptions of these theatre of shadows techniques included manipulation of focus - alternating between sharply outlined silhouettes and blurred motion - as well as a mix of slow familiar gestures and faster abstract movements – sometimes even comically distorting the projections of her womanly figure (Godard 1974, n.p.). This segment also featured interaction between two shadows projected by the same body (i.e. Castro's body), achieved by positioning two light sources at opposite ends of the stage, as described by Zantis (1974, n.p.) below:

*“Eindrucksvoll hingegen ein ganz kurzes Spot: Eine Frauengestalt zeichnet mit dem Zeigefinger die Kontur ihres Schattens nach. Da erinnerte man sich an das, was Lourdes Castro im Bereich der bildenden Kunst macht.”*

“Impressively, however, was a very short spotlight: a female figure traced the contour of her shadow with her index finger. This reminded one of what Lourdes Castro does in the field of visual arts.”

Indeed, even though this comment presents a clear necessity to align Castro with the visual arts scene to lend credibility to the compliment, the fact is that both critics – Godard and Zantis - seemed to demonstrate a particular enthusiasm with this part of the spectacle. Notwithstanding, in an informative pamphlet published in June 1975, José Augusto França expressed his disagreement with what seemed to be this prevailing reception of *As Sombras*'s second act because of its obviousness:

*“No acto Contorno há uma intervenção artística que desvia a sombra-forma abstracta, movendo-se informalmente sobre o écran-tela. É a parte mais imediatamente valorizada do espetáculo – e, porém, a menos interessante, porque mais óbvia. Que uma sombra seja sombra, onde está a surpresa?”*

"In the 'Contour' act, there is an artistic intervention that deviates the abstract shadow-form, moving informally across the screen. It is the most immediately valued part of the show - and yet, the least interesting, because it's more obvious. Where's the surprise in a shadow being just a shadow?"

(França 1975, n.p.)

Furthermore, within the same text, he asserted his preference for the fragments in which the shadow appears to switch places with its referent, namely, *Piquenique à Sombra* (act 1) and *Noite e Dia* (act 3). He justified this preference by highlighting how, through seemingly assuming agency in everyday gestures and repeating them flawlessly, the shadow pretends to embody the absent body in an almost scary way. Eventually, it creates the impression that the shadow is, in fact, the body itself, complete with all its iconic responsibilities (*Ibidem*).

Finally, the third and last act, called *Noite e Dia*, appeared to conclude the performance with the artist's discovery of what would later become her performative and thematic canon, namely the representation of a woman's everyday life in solitude juxtaposed with moments of dreamlike surrealism<sup>66</sup>. So, positioned somewhere between what had already been performed in that sequence – that is, between the portrayal of a girl amusing herself alone in the park and a radical choreographic experience involving the contours of the female body – this segment depicted "the daily routine of a female figure while dressing, drinking coffee, arranging flowers, and vacuuming" (Zantis 1974). It included a fair amount of domestic items as stage props<sup>67</sup> and contrasting glimpses of banality with dream-like moments.

The magically growing flowers, or "thoughtful corollas" as described by Godard (1974), that seemed to spring to life and develop at astonishing speed during the daily act of arranging flowers in a vase (Mourão 2010), perfectly exemplify the paradoxical blend of fantastic and mundane that Castro would later refine in her other theatres of shadows. Furthermore, this last act also featured beautiful atmospheres created through artistic experimentation with water and light, resulting in luminous reflections on the white sheets, elements that imbued a mystical and meditative air into the performer's familiar gestures. Even the sound, alternately populated by delicate tracks of classical music and

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<sup>66</sup> Only possible by Castro's and Zimbro's technical mastery over moving shadows.

<sup>67</sup> Including pieces of clothing, a table, a chair, a cup, a vase of flowers, a vacuum cleaner, among other domestic utensils (Zantis 1974; Godard 1974; Mourão 2010).

unpleasant grunts of domestic life, reflected such ambivalence. In fact, when questioned during Catarina Mourão's film, *Pelas Sombras* (2010), about whether her theatres of shadows always dealt with everyday life, Castro responded affirmatively and described a segment of *Noite e Dia* while explaining this need for rupture and contrast in her pieces:

*"Às vezes é bom partir as coisas. Eu lembro no teatro havia uma cena de interior... depois estava assim tudo muito bonito, muito 'coiso'. E eu punha um ramo de flores e depois, em sombra, com a água, também havia assim uns reflexos e não sei o que. E depois é... é como é a verdade todos os dias. Depois eu pego no aspirador e há aquele barulho do aspirador que é horrroso depois dos Estudos do Chopin. Mas é esse o nosso dia-a-dia, não é?"*

"Sometimes it's good to break things. I remember a scene in the theatre, an indoor scene... everything was very pretty, just so. I put flowers and their shadow with the water as well, the reflections and what not. Then it's like... real, everyday reality. Then I get the vacuum cleaner and the awful noise it makes, right after Chopin's Etudes. And that's our day-to-day, isn't it?"

(Castro *in* Mourão 2010, 45:47)

On the other hand, towards the conclusion of the piece, it is also documented that Lourdes Castro made a poignant political statement – which is, by the way, very rare in her oeuvre. She inscribed 'Lisbon, April 25, 1974' onto a transparent board, thereby prompting the audience to acknowledge and commemorate the significant date (Zantis, 1974). Although this particular event is confirmed to have occurred solely during the performance in Aachen in May 1974 - and nothing similar would be mentioned in any of the subsequent performances-, it is important for it underscores her alignment with revolutionary values and her satisfaction in witnessing (even from afar) the liberation of her homeland from the protracted grip of dictatorship.

In conclusion, despite later being characterized as a spectacle extremely "welcome in Europe" (Leblanc 1975, n.p.) endowed with "a triumphant tour" (Cabanne 1975, n.p.), the contextual descriptions presented above, from both the creative and reception perspectives, reveal that this characterization was not entirely accurate. As *Sombras* (1973-1975) was the least conceptually cohesive production of the couple Castro and Zimbro, with a shorter touring duration compared to the subsequent two productions - *As Cinco Estações* (1975-1980) and *Linha de Horizonte* (1981-1985) -, totalling less than three years on stage, and subject to the most severe and discouraging critiques. However, this also points to a rising recognition of theatres of shadows and Lourdes Castro's work

as a performer, with this performance being fundamental for the artist to recognize her own style of theatre of shadows, exploring specific themes and mastering distinct techniques. It is also important to highlight the artist's credit for remaining faithful to her intentions and convictions, despite scarce support and sharp pressure to return and remain in the media where she was already recognized (i.e., in visual arts), especially at the beginning of this endeavour. In this regard, we will see next - addressed through examples of scholarship negotiations and other subsidies - how the artist's diplomatic skills, charisma, and persuasive power were equally crucial for conquering this new space in the art market.

### III.1.2. *As Cinco Estações/ The Five Seasons (1975-1980)*

The second more structured theatre of shadows' performance of Lourdes Castro became known as *Les Cinq Saison* or *As Cinco Estações* (1975-1980) and was referred to by the artist herself as a "more refined"<sup>68</sup> exemplar of her performative research. In fact, it ended up demonstrating a much more cohesive form of movement and transitions through the scenes, along with a more well-established array of themes. Furthermore, it garnered excellent reviews (almost exclusively), secured institutional support (from the beginning), and marked her greatest touring journey. In fact, for the first time venturing beyond the confines of the European continent and making its debut in South America, her second large theatre of shadows production was showcased in 11 different performance venues spread across 10 distinct cities<sup>69</sup>. This included her home country, Portugal, where she had always aspired to perform - in fact, it is noteworthy how the most experimental works of Lourdes Castro could only be embraced within the Portuguese artistic scene once the country emerged from dictatorship. Moreover, *As Cinco Estações* became a recurring attraction in the city of Paris within a span of five years, what happened probably due to Castro's influence in the artistic scene of where she lived added to the popularity of the spectacle itself<sup>70</sup>.

Lasting approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes, this production by Castro exclusively featured sequences characterized by meticulously slow gestures, seamlessly blending elements of everyday life with fantasy, thereby cementing her canonical style in the realm of performative mediums. In stark contrast to the second act of the performance *As Sombras*, titled *Contorno*, where a deeper exploration of the abstract qualities of shadow led to a greater rhythmic variation of movements, Castro's presentation eschewed stage props and any overt narrative or figurative ambitions tied to daily life routines. Consequently, the gestures employed in *As Cinco Estações* - and later, in *Linha de Horizonte* (1981-1985) as well - were consistently lauded with adjectives related to its

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<sup>68</sup> This refers to the previous show, *As Sombras*, as commented on in a letter exchanged with one of the directors of the DAAD and her friend, Karl Ruhrberg, in January 1976 (see image 16).

<sup>69</sup> Namely: Paris (1975, 1977 and 1980), Ciudad Bolívar (1976), Caracas (1976), Lisbon (1977), Funchal (1977), Porto (1977), Trieste (1978), Mantua (1978), Berlin (1978), and Munich (1980).

<sup>70</sup> She first performed it at the occasion of the 1975 *Festival d'Automne*, at the *Art-Recherche-Creation 2* (ARC 2) of the *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris*, an institution where she would present the same show two years later, in 1977. In 1980, Castro presented "The Five Seasons" again in Paris, but this time at the *Maison du Portugal* located within the university campus.

slowed rhythm and empathetic effects, such as calm, rounded, expansive, graceful, polished, or familiar, nostalgic, and overall imbued with profound emotion (Bergamini 1978; Sabatti 1978; Tasset 1975). In a passage from his critical review titled *Teatro de Sombras ou o Quotidiano Fascinante* (Theatre of Shadows or the Fascinating Everyday, in literal translation), Gastão Cruz praises the choice of a slower movement, asserting that it imbued the performance with a certain ritualistic dimension, particularly stimulating for the minds of the audience witnessing it:

*“A lentidão dos movimentos se, por um lado, torna mais intenso o desenho, mais densas as linhas descritas, contribui, por outro, de forma decisiva, para que os gestos do quotidiano assumam a dimensão ritual. A memória do espectador desperta para a descodificação de toda uma gestualidade antiga e fechada.”*

“The slowness of the movements, while on one hand intensifies the design, making the described lines denser, on the other hand, decisively contributes to the everyday gestures taking on a ritualistic dimension. The spectator's memory is awakened to decode an entire ancient and closed gestuality.”

(Cruz 1977)

In this much more consequential show, no interruptions were allowed, so the performer (who was alone behind the fabric and thus was the sole manipulator of the stage props) constantly dealt with the challenge of making things 'appear' and 'disappear' without having to leave the stage – or, more accurately, doing this as minimally as possible. This new format required new techniques, since the transformations had to occur in front of the eyes of the audience, making it even more magical and dream-like. That being said, this particular issue came to be solved through one of two distinct means: the first was through the use of "prepared objects" (Cruz 1977) – i.e., cut-outs in plexiglass – which allowed the shadows to interact with each other without necessarily implying their fusion<sup>71</sup>, as well as, thanks to their two-dimensionality, 'disappear' as a line depending on their positioning in relation to the light source; the second, through the same type of repositioning but, as it involved three-dimensional objects – in Castro's words, "fearlessly domestic" objects (*Ibidem*) –, not to achieve 'disappearance', but a transformation of form and consequent symbolic resignification of their shadows (which was also aided by

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<sup>71</sup> Because the material had a high level of transparency, it allowed the shadow of other three-dimensional and opaque objects to be projected on top of them without mixing, as the former would always have a different tonality, a weaker shading, and (often) a different color, equally visible but softer because they allowed some light to pass through (see image 17).

changes in lighting, setting, and interaction with the performer). An example of this latter case that occurs in *As Cinco Estações* is when an ironing board is later placed upright and used to create the shadow of a tree, as Castro recalls in Catarina Mourão's film (2010) while going through a sequence of photographs from the performance:

“Aqui é uma cena em que eu engomo, estavam lindas as sombras... a tábua de engomar que depois vira tronco de árvore. É tudo sempre transformado, sempre transformado...”

"Here is a scene where I iron, the shadows were beautiful... the ironing board that later becomes a tree trunk! Everything is always transformed, always transformed..."

(Castro *in* Mourão 2010, 51:27)

Regarding the structure or teleological line of the piece, it is much more difficult to ascertain in this case because, although there is documentation indicating the existence of a video of the performance *As Cinco Estações*<sup>72</sup>, no copy was found during the research process described here, and the only fragments known are a few seconds included in Catarina Mourão's film, *Pelas Sombras* (2010, 44:29 – 45:46). It is true that, in *As Sombras*, there was not even a video documentation to be mentioned, and the amount of photographs of this performance is barely inexistent. However, unlike the latter, *As Cinco Estações* was not divided into acts, which ended up impacting the way journalists and critics who documented the event wrote about it. In fact, the chronicles, critical reviews, advertisements, and reports found were much vaguer regarding structural details about this piece, hardly ever hinting the order of events as had happened in the former case.

Nevertheless, there were indeed many mentions of the *mise-en-scène*, from the colours of the lights to characterization of the performer, some commentators spared no expense in their descriptions and employed very meticulous observations. That being said, while the production inherently embraced transient moments where the stage defied characterization within a specific context, it is documented that it encompassed at least three primary scenic settings: one evoking the ocean, another depicting an indoor space (likely a domestic setting given the activities portrayed), and a third evoking a forest (Tasset 1975) - once again, domesticity and nature assert dominance over Castro's

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<sup>72</sup> In images 19 and 20, respectively, one can observe an Authorization signed by the Fine Arts Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to finance the video recording of the theatre of shadows production *The Five Seasons*, and an Invoice sent by Lourdes Castro to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, detailing only the material expenses incurred in the production of the film-experiment, given that the cinematographer Mario Barroso provided his work as a courtesy.

thematic domain. Within these spaces - or amid their various transient phases - Castro manifested, among myriad other personas: a swimmer with hair resembling stars, capturing fish bare-handed and placing them in a basket; a traveller arriving at her destination, marvelling at the natural surroundings, harvesting fruits from trees, tending to their roots, and observing their changes with the passage of time; a homemaker engaged in diverse domestic tasks, ranging from sewing, hanging, and ironing clothes to moments of leisure and meditative solitude where she dons a robe, arranges flowers on the table, and sits down to smoke a cigarette and drink tea while reading a newspaper, or illuminates a lamp to type on her loud typewriter (Bergamini 1978; Cabanne 1975; Cruz 1977; Sabatti 1978; Tasset 1975)<sup>73</sup>.

In this performative experience, words were prohibited, and music assumed a significant role as an 'echo,' humorously labeled by Castro as "the shadow of music" (Sabatti 1978). Conversely, lighting, with its diverse color palette ranging from blue to red, passing through yellow, green, and even black (Bergamini 1978), seemed to serve either a contextualizing function, transporting the 'shadow-characters' through different ecosystems, or injecting dynamism into the scene with its contrasting "flashes of variable opalescent lights" (Ibidem). Thus, while music and sound effects were employed to mirror the soft and dreamlike bodily gestures performed, lights were cleverly operated by Manuel Zimbardo to convey moments of dynamic contrast and provide more nuanced contextualization.

At the conclusion of the show, Castro expressed special gratitude, symbolically represented by a shadow of a signboard, to the objects and the music that contributed with their shadows and echoes during the performance (Sabatti 1978). This only reaffirms the holistic way Lourdes had to look at art and life, not properly separating those two, and emphasizing the collaborative nature of her creative process and the importance of every and each element (including chance) even when she was alone on stage. In fact, her fascination with this sort of secret agency of inanimate objects, coupled with her attention and respect for things that are usually merely instrumentalized or overlooked in our daily lives, such as the shadow itself, is a recurring theme in her interviews, as mentioned before in this dissertation, that is particularly demonstrated by the excerpt below:

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<sup>73</sup> To ensure coherence in the text and streamline the process of cross-referencing information obtained from various sources, it is pertinent to highlight that this descriptive part concerning the performance's actions and props is synthesized from a fusion of data gleaned from all five distinct periodicals cited herein.

*“Ho voluto disegnare le ombre continua perché ho sempre amato le cose che non sono importanti, che si buttano via. Alle quali non si fa attenzione.”*

"I wanted to draw shadows continuously because I have always loved things that are not important, that are thrown away. Things that are not paid attention to."

(Sabatti 1978)

This time, Castro also had clearer intentions regarding her target audience and the type of reception she sought. On one hand, she believed that the play could be better appreciated by a more mature audience. On the other hand, she thought that even adolescents (from around 12 years old) could follow along to the extent of drawing some beneficial conclusions from the spectacle. It's not that there was anything inappropriate for a child audience to see, but due to the thematic content and the pace of the performance, she deemed it less advisable<sup>74</sup>. As for her ultimate goal, contrary to what might be expected from those involved in crafting and presenting spectacles to an audience, it wasn't about the applause and recognition, nor conveying a specific message. Quite the contrary, her emphasis was on highlighting the theatrical quality of daily rituals we commonly perform or witness, while also aiming to instill in the audience a sense of peace and tranquility, "a sort of drowsiness, which is transmitted like hypnosis to the spectator" (Bergamini 1978), something capable of distancing them - even if only briefly - from the stress and bustle of the anxious and nature-disconnected daily life experienced by the majority of urban dwellers:

*"Non mi aspetto applausi dopo lo spettacolo perché il pubblico sarà rilassato, tranquillo e gli applausi fanno troppo rumore. [...] Non penso di trasmettere un messaggio, ciò che voglio sottolineare è il teatrale nella semplicità dei gesti e degli effetti, la calma e la serenità a chi guarda."*

"I don't expect applause after the show because the audience will be relaxed, calm, and applause makes too much noise. [...] I don't think I'm conveying a message; what I want to emphasize is the theatricality in the simplicity of gestures and effects, the calm and serenity to the viewer."

(Sabatti 1978)

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<sup>74</sup> Please refer to Castro's comment in the letter available on image 18, specifically the last paragraph of the third page.

And in the end, the truth is that Castro was quite successful in her mission, as evidenced by both, the reviews of certain critics<sup>75</sup>, and comments from the artist herself. This is exemplified in a poignant excerpt where she describes an incident during the tour of *As Cinco Estações* in Venezuela:

*"A Caracas, la turbolenta e inquieta capitale venezuelana, dove tutti, causa il clima bizzarro, sono nervosissimi, la gente aveva le lacrime per la strana serenità che stava godendo."*

"In Caracas, the turbulent and restless Venezuelan capital, where everyone, due to the bizarre climate, is very nervous, people had tears for the strange serenity they were enjoying."

(Sabatti 1978)

Indeed, throughout this investigation, no criticisms or reviews were found that revealed a more negative perspective on the performance *As Cinco Estações*. The only text presenting less favourable comments related to the performance criticizes the audience, suggesting significant disregard and insensitivity towards what the author considered a notable work. Specifically, this pertains to a text written by Gastão Cruz, published in the Portuguese newspaper *O Jornal*, and directs criticism towards the Lisbon community that attended (or failed to attend) the performance at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in June 1977. The overarching impression conveyed in the commentary is that this audience was perceived as snobbish with antiquated tastes, overlooking an extremely innovative and interesting work due to conservative academicism, as can be read below:

*"O Teatro de Sombras de Lourdes Castro e Manuel Zimbro trouxe ao Auditório Dois da Fundação Gulbenkian o espectáculo «As Cinco Estações» que passou quase despercebido. O que não admira muito num meio onde frequentemente se glorifica o que é académico, o que é banal ou o que é medíocre, e se ignora ou procura destruir o que incomodamente se instala na via da inovação, da aventura rigorosa, da procura intransigente de uma linguagem viva."*

"The Shadow Theater of Lourdes Castro and Manuel Zimbro brought the show *As Cinco Estações* to Auditorium Two of the Gulbenkian Foundation, which went almost unnoticed. This is not very surprising in an environment where what is academic, what is banal, or what is mediocre is often glorified, while what uncomfortably ventures into the

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<sup>75</sup> According to Bergaminni's 1978 review, for instance, the audience at the Teatro Stabile in Trieste was completely engrossed in Lourdes Castro's performance. He even notes that after the show, many remained seated in silence for a long time, possibly surprised by its brevity, hoping for more.

realm of innovation, rigorous adventure, or the uncompromising pursuit of a living language is ignored or sought to be destroyed.”

(Cruz 1977)

However, even this commentary can be subject to contestation when considering a correspondence exchanged between Lourdes Castro and her friend Ruhrberg, wherein the artist expresses quite the opposite sentiment. In such a document, she narrates her excitement following the allegedly successful presentations of the theatre of shadows in Lisbon, stating that she had "3 completely full halls and very good reviews in the Portuguese newspapers that support my inner journey.”<sup>76</sup>.

Similarly, the institutional support that Castro received during part of the creation process, and especially after the premiere of *As Cinco Estações* (on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1975) - including special invitations and some subsidies that fostered her performative research and international touring - was much greater than with *As Sombras* (1973-1975). Among the names that can be mentioned in this regard is the director of the *Festival d'Automne a Paris* itself, Alain Crombecque, who directly invited the artist to premiere her new production at its' 1975 edition as one of the main attractions – different from the previous year when she presented her theatre of shadows at the *Théâtre d'Orsay Renaud Barrault* as a guest of the Grand Magic Circus (the original guest, hence main attraction)<sup>77</sup>. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the aid he provided after the show in the form of a recommendation letter addressed to the director of the Fine Arts Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation<sup>78</sup>. In this correspondence he emphasized Castro's theatres of shadows artistic and innovative qualities, stating that she delivered not only an extremely interesting performance but also undertook a very important work at a continental level, as she dedicated herself to the study of theatres of shadows in a unique way, without precedents or competitors throughout Europe.

Most likely, this letter was taken seriously by the director of the Fine Arts Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, as he decided, in 1977, to subsidize the performance, ultimately fulfilling the artist's dream of bringing her moving shadows

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<sup>76</sup> See image 21.

<sup>77</sup> It is true, however, that a re-enactment of *As Sombras* took place a few months before the premiere of *The Five Seasons*, at July 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 1975. This event was hosted at the invitation of the *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris*, where the theatre of shadows took centre stage as the main attraction, demonstrating a growing recognition of the quality of these experiments among the Parisian audience.

<sup>78</sup> See image 22.

to Portugal. Notwithstanding, initially, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation showed little flexibility when it came to providing scholarships or any type of regular financial support to Lourdes Castro within this least material-based phase of her work, especially when considering the creative parts of the process. After all, in contrast to Castro's initial request<sup>79</sup> for financial support to assist her during months of research, idea testing, and rehearsals for the show (which she described as very laborious and extensive), this was not granted. In fact, her requests for support only began to be taken more seriously by this institution after the theatre of shadows's national premiere (in July 1977). Probably due to the positive reception they received, from then on, assistance became considerable, as indicated by the following reports of financial aid, all related to *As Cinco Estações*, granted between November 1977 and November 1980: an amount of 440.80 *Escudos* described as a budget reinforcement (image 23); funding for documenting the show in film as well as for a series of colour slides that costed 376,82 and 7000 French francs respectively (images 19, 20 and 24); 73000 *escudos* paid to enable the performance's participation at the Venice Biennale (image 25); Invitation to represent Portugal on the occasion of the Portuguese Culture Program in Munich scheduled for November and December 1978 (Image 24).<sup>80</sup>

It is also important to note the pivotal role that another institution, namely, the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD), played in the development and establishment of Lourdes Castro's theatres of shadows in the international art market, which was no exception during the season of *As Cinco Estações*. In fact, after the infrastructural and genre-launching support provided in Castro's first performative attempt, *As Sombras*, in *As Cinco Estações*, albeit coming later in the process, this infrastructural and financial support was also sought in 1978 in the form of an alternative artistic research grant, created especially for the specificity of the artist's case. This grant included a monthly award of 1600 deutsche marks plus an additional allowance of 200 deutsche marks to assist with accommodation in the city of Berlin. It was initially approved for a semester, commencing in late April 1978 (image 26), but was later extended until January 31, 1979 (image 27). During her stay there, Castro presented *As Cinco Estações* at Studio 2 of *Kunstlerhaus Bethanien* throughout the month of October

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<sup>79</sup> See image 15 with the whole letter for further detail.

<sup>80</sup> Note that although the last two performances of this list did not occur - for reasons that are not clearly documented -, it is important to acknowledge the proactive stance of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in supporting the documentary and touring initiatives of the show.

1978, but her residency at such institution was, in fact, much more crucial to what would become Lourdes Castro and Manuel Zimbro's last—and possibly most well-known—theatre of shadows, called *Linha de Horizonte* (1981-1985). This is because it was precisely there, with these structures, financial support, and creative freedom, that the first discoveries and experiments for it took place (Mourão 2010).

Therefore, upon analyzing Castro's trajectory during the development, presentation, and distribution of what can be considered her second major moving shadows production, a greater maturity and diplomacy are evident. This maturity is primarily reflected in the clarification of the purpose proposed to the audience, seeking to evoke serenity through the slow demonstration of the intrinsic theatricality of everyday gestures. Additionally, there is a clearer understanding of the target audience, catering to a more adult viewership, and aiming not for their applause but for complete absorption, enabling them to set aside the stresses of urban life. The refinement of techniques involved in the execution of the performance is also noteworthy, encompassing various aspects such as lighting and sound (handled by Zimbro), as well as thematic choices, gestural choreography and hand-made stage props (curated, performed and prepared by Castro). Diplomacy, on the other hand, is primarily evident in negotiations for the performance tour, now with the imposition of minimum requirements before accepting engagements at certain venues. This approach aims to avoid financially unviable situations and respects the performer's sensitivity, who required a minimum of three performances per stage, along with an entire day reserved for general rehearsal. These measures were implemented to ensure that the performers could become comfortable with the space and guarantee the quality of the theatre of shadows. This personality trait is also evident in negotiations for subsidies, artistic research grants, and other forms of financial and material support, consistently establishing close friendships with directors of institutions that were instrumental in the success of her performances (such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the DAAD). All of this, obviously, is supported by a more solid understanding and better-articulated exposition of her performative experiments, which have increasingly gained journalistic validation and been well-received by critics.

### III.1.3. *Linha de Horizonte/ Horizon Line (1981-1985)*

With heightened critical acclaim and fortified conceptual foundations, Castro embarked on the zenith of her performance art career, bidding adieu to the medium akin to her previous departure with the embroidered sheets. Titled *Linha de Horizonte* (1981-1985), this culminating piece garnered limited yet substantive documentation, pointing to an even more cohesive conceptualization and technical mastery of theatre of shadows (with the maximization of the premise of reusing the same shadows/objects to recreate various symbols), an augmented acknowledgment of Castro's role as a performance artist from its inception (rather than merely post-performance) and of the intrinsic coherence of this performative stance within her overarching artistic trajectory. Furthermore, the mention of Zimbro as a co-author of the theatres of shadows—not merely as a technician, as we will see bellow—was finally becoming more frequent in newspapers, programs, and performance advertisements, as Castro always intended to. Additionally, a discernible shift in her focus emerges through an examination of this concluding performance; gradually, she transitions away from such ambitious and expansive artistic undertakings—characterized by protracted preparation periods and the intricacies of managing contacts and organizing tours—towards a settled existence in Funchal (a transition initiated in 1983 and persisted until her demise in January 2022). Then, she further aligns her life with the ethos she championed in her theatre of shadows: embracing serenity, nurturing a closer connection with nature, and cultivating space for contemplation of life's everyday marvels.

In terms of conception for this final performance, Castro was documented by Catarina Mourão (2010) discussing the precise moment she believed she had discovered what would become *Linha de Horizonte's* leitmotif:

*“Peguei no pau (porque quase fala) pela primeira vez em Berlim, no atelier de Bethanien, quando se andava a começar os ensaios de uma nova peça ainda sem nome e experimentávamos todos os objetos que encontrávamos em volta. Num caderno de notas tenho a data deste acontecimento: 7 de agosto de 1978. Facto que suspeito que, com o decorrer dos meses se tornou no leitmotiv de toda a peça e no objeto principal que dá como que a tonalidade a todo o espetáculo.”*

"I picked up the stick (because it almost spoke) for the first time in Berlin, in the Bethanien studio, when we were starting rehearsals for a new piece still unnamed and experimenting with all the objects we found around us. In a notebook, I have the date of

this event: August 7, 1978. A fact that I suspect, over the months, became the leitmotif of the entire piece and the main object that gives a kind of tone to the whole show."  
(Castro *in* Mourão 2010, 46:27)

From this excerpt alone, we can grasp the manner in which the show's creation initially unfolded, as well as gaining an understanding of the extensive scope of this creative process (which commenced in 1978 and was probably only finalized in 1981, the year it premiered in Strasbourg). Through this insight, we learn that Castro began with a particular object or form (in this case, the stick/line), and then endeavoured to explore its versatility in conveying figurative meaning as a shadow, thus developing the entire spectacle that would become known as *Linha de Horizonte*. In this performance, the stick, or more precisely, its shadow, came to represent a myriad of things, serving numerous functions ranging from the horizon line itself (separating sky and sea) to a festooned flagpole at a village festival, passing through a curtain rod, a fishing rod, a staircase banister, a dividing wall (marking the boundary between inside and outside of 'home')<sup>81</sup>, a door, a picture frame, or simply an axis where light and colour planes are defined (Ribeiro 1982; Pomar 1985; *Diário de Lisboa* 1985). Indeed, the stick stood as the sole 'actor' that remained ever-present on stage, embodying a form of protagonism that resonates closely with Castro's artistic vision, a sentiment that is further underscored by the practice of commencing the piece – or concluding, as observed in *As Cinco Estações* (Bergamini 1978) – with expressions of gratitude "to all the objects that lent their shadows for this spectacle, and likewise to the echo" (*Diário Popular* 1985, n.p.; *Primeiro de Janeiro* 1985, n.p.).

Notwithstanding, transitioning from the simplest concept, such as the line, to more intricate representations like the fishing rod or flagpole, necessitated additional accessories or a more specific performative interaction for the audience to effectively connect with their symbolic meaning<sup>82</sup>. To facilitate this transformation or refunctionalization process, the original object could undergo alterations, such as small

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<sup>81</sup> It's important to note how the highly precise lighting also played a pivotal role in enabling these spatial coexistences within the same frame. While the line (stick) was used to delineate and separate, the lighting painted these different divisions with distinct colours, aiding in the creation of a sea (as opposed to a sky) or an outdoor space (as opposed to indoors).

<sup>82</sup> See examples on image 9.

cuts or marks, signaling its continual transmutation of states and functions, aiding the performer at her role of modifier/creator agent, as described below:

*“O pau é uma ripa de madeira de secção retangular de 2 cm por 1,5 cm que com o andar das exigências cênicas foi condecorado com sinais e teve que sofrer ligeiras tatuagens: numa das extremidades um corte pequeno e pouco de fundo para segurar um fio das bandeiras quando ele vira mastro; no 4º lado mais abaixo ainda numa das faces mais largas um coração vermelho pintado para que eu distinga a altura dos meus olhos, qual é o lado que se vai pregar ao ecrã para quando eu vir a parede.”*

"The stick is a wooden slat with a rectangular section of 2 cm by 1.5 cm which, with the demands of the stage, was decorated with signs and had to undergo slight tattoos: at one end, a small and shallow cut to hold a string for the flags when it becomes a mast; on the fourth side, lower down on one of the wider faces, a red heart painted so that I can distinguish the height of my eyes, which side is going to be attached to the screen when I see the wall."

(Castro *in* Mourão 2010, 47:01)

Still regarding the stage props, it is known that much like in *As Cinco Estações*, this performance also utilized ‘prepared objects’—that is, two-dimensional forms cut from plexiglass—to represent the shadows of certain household items, providing them with a distinct level of autonomy and versatility. Examples of this include the book/herbarium that Castro flips through while inside the ‘house,’ revealing pages of various colours and plants<sup>83</sup>, and the kettle, which, after being used to ‘serve tea,’ is repositioned in the light to reveal its ultra-thin thickness and, akin to a magic trick, transforms into a tray<sup>84</sup>. Similarly, other household items were utilized for their natural transparency, allowing for the coexistence and interplay of shadows without promoting their fusion. This was the case with the blue raincoat<sup>85</sup> and the various colourful pennants used to recreate the festive atmosphere<sup>86</sup>.

From a perspective of performative action, beyond the qualitative maintenance of movement (slow) and the thematic exploration of gestures and actions (mundane), *Linha do Horizonte* presented something particularly intriguing that had not been mentioned in any descriptions of previous performances: the execution of reverence as a shadow. This phenomenon was highlighted by Alexandre Pomar in his critique for the *Expresso*

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<sup>83</sup> See image 17.

<sup>84</sup> See image 8.

<sup>85</sup> See image 29.

<sup>86</sup> See image 9.

newspaper, where the author referred this feature as extremely coherent with the entire nature of the work, stating that "it is still through the screen, preserving the foundational absence of the spectacle, that Lourdes Castro responds to the tradition of final applause" (1985, n.p.). Thus, by acknowledging the importance of her physical body not appearing to ensure the autonomy of her shadow-body, the artist remained as a silhouette even after the interpretation concluded, and when needed to thank the audience, she chose to do so behind the screen, as a shadow<sup>87</sup>. In fact, by emphasizing the absence of the physical body that should function as the source projecting the shadows, Castro reinforced the notion that it could, within the fantasy each viewer allowed themselves to formulate, not exist behind the curtain, thereby maintaining an aura of mystery and depth in the theatre of shadows experience. Consequently, this approach could be seen as a way to challenge traditional expectations of how performers interact with the audience at the end of a performance, while also allowing the reflective and evocative atmosphere of the show to extend beyond its 60-minute duration. This is because the usual divide between the spectacular (i.e., the dreamlike realm of shadows created behind the white sheet) and the real (the artist and the household objects with which she interacted) never actually materialized before the audience's eyes.

Furthermore, in Portugal, it was particularly from *Linha de Horizonte* onwards that Castro began to be more referenced – in cultural programs and news reports for instance – as a performance artist. In other words, there was less necessity for a tightly woven connection to her career as a visual artist in order to ensure credibility for the work she was doing with the theatres of shadows – a situation that, as we have seen earlier in this study, was not always the case. Both in pre-show advertisements, cultural programmes and critical reviews delivered after the performances, the artist and the theatre of shadows were increasingly situated within the fluid and interdisciplinary category of performance art, respecting their specificities and avoiding comparisons or attempts to fit into other artistic categories or genres<sup>88</sup>, as evidenced by the excerpt below:

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<sup>87</sup> See image 28.

<sup>88</sup> Among these comparisons, notable ones include references to cinema, happenings, music halls, cabarets, pictorial representation, and, notably, both Western and Eastern theatres (H. 1974; Tasset 1975; Cruz 1977; Bergamini 1978; Sabatti 1978; Ribeiro 1982). While such categorizations and comparisons serve a purpose in analysing and describing performances—especially for audiences less acquainted with the term 'performance art'—it is a fact that these comparative analyses can be somewhat reductionist, as they may not fully capture the work in its entirety and specificity.

*“Não é, no entanto, a permanência de uma inspiração que importa sublinhar a propósito de Linha do Horizonte, estreado em Lisboa a abrir o programa de acções complementares da «Exposição-Diálogo», mas o efeito próprio dessa forma particular de «performance» que, como as suas homólogas, inscreve o corpo e a acção do artista num objecto efémero, que retoma uma prática infantil e uma arte oriental de teatro de sombras, além de aprofundar a direcção particular da criação visual de Lourdes Castro.”*

"The emphasis in *Linha de Horizonte*, premiered in Lisbon as part of the supplementary events program for the 'Exposição-Diálogo', does not lie in the continuity of inspiration, but rather in the distinctive effect of this particular form of 'performance'. Similar to its counterparts, it embeds the artist's body and action in an ephemeral object, drawing from childhood practice and oriental theatre of shadows, while further exploring the specific direction of Lourdes Castro's visual creation."

(Pomar 1985, n.p.)

What also becomes evident from this statement is the growing recognition of Lourdes Castro's performative experiences and their alignment with her exploration of shadows. Early reviews of *As Sombras*, coupled with difficulties encountered in securing scholarships and funding at the outset, shed light on the scepticism prevalent in the artistic market and influent institutions as Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. In fact, many perceived this shift as a departure from her established career as a visual artist, viewing it as uncertain and perhaps too risky, even lacking coherence with her previously successful endeavours as a creator of objects. Nevertheless, Castro remained undeterred by these initial reactions and, what some critics initially perceived as a mere 'phase' in her career, ultimately led to a significant transformation in her artistic perception. Despite the relatively brief period during which she engaged in performance art and the limited number of official productions, these explorations forever changed her approach to her work. It prompted a radical change in her creative perception that continued to impact her pieces, even later in life - when she returned to focusing on the production of objects such as herbariums, tiles, and tapestries –, leading her to prioritize the experiences those were able to evoke over their form.

*“No fundo o teatro era fazer um quadro que durava uma hora mas depois desaparecia, e este lado efémero - quando tu estás nisso depois já não dá para estar a fazer coisas materiais, assim, para pôr na parede, não é?”*

"In essence, theatre was about creating a painting that lasted an hour but then disappeared, and this ephemeral aspect—once you're immersed in it, there's no room for creating tangible things to hang on the wall, right?"

(Castro *in* Mourão 2010, 53:20)

Similarly, there has been a growing acknowledgment of Manuel Zimbrow's deserved merit as a co-creator (not only collaborator) of theatre of shadows. Over time, the recognition of a more creative aspect of his contributions - surpassing the notion of a replaceable technician per times attributed to him - increased significantly. Among the most emblematic examples of this ongoing need to remind or emphasize his invaluable partnership, are the mentions made by Lourdes Castro in letters and interviews, plus her persistence in securing sufficient support for both whenever applying for grants and scholarships (such as at *Künstlerhaus Bethanien*, where she had to advocate for funding for a studio apartment for two<sup>89</sup>), or when budgeting for show presentations<sup>90</sup>. On the other hand, as the couple's performative journey evolved, he began to be invited more frequently for interviews (rather than only Lourdes Castro), mentioned with equal prominence on posters, praised for his skills as a lighting designer in the reviews as well as the preface author – of descriptive brochures, grant applications and festival entries<sup>91</sup> -, and essentially, his name became more frequently associated with the term co-creator. Whether due to Lourdes Castro's insistence or a natural maturation in the perspectives of critics and the public, the fact remains that the artist's desire to see her steadfast partner receive the deserved recognition for his arduous, often invisible work, was realized. As she herself would say, "Nobody does anything alone, nothing. [...] 'Manel' is the light, and I am the shadow" (Castro *in* Mourão 2010, 49:40).

Therefore, despite the focus of this investigation being on the artist Lourdes Castro and her specific role in these performative works, it is crucial not to reinforce the stigma of the underrecognition of Manuel Zimbrow's artistic contribution to theatres of shadows. In this regard, it is important to emphasize Zimbrow's merit both in the creative and conceptual aspects of the performances and in his virtuosity and sensitivity as a lighting technician, often responsible for enabling the fantasy, as highlighted by Castro in this excerpt: "I watered and the flowers grew... shadow magic... and from the boss [Manuel

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<sup>89</sup> In a letter dated August 1977, during negotiations for the DAAD scholarship, she emphasized to the director the necessity of including Zimbrow in the arrangements: "But I must first know, before I finally decide, what the situation is with the studio [...] because we would come the two - inseparable shadow and light, as you know" (image 21).

<sup>90</sup> This excerpt from the letter sent to Carlos Wallenstein of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, where she includes the expenses and requirements for the performance, indicates: "I speak in the plural because, indeed, it involves two people, myself as the shadow-actress, so to speak, and Manuel Zimbrow as the light-technician. We always work together, furthermore: the show was pre-formed, set up, and premiered by both of us, in every detail" (image 18).

<sup>91</sup> After all, he was the one who organized into words most of the more conceptual content he and Castro developed about their unique theatres of shadows.

Zimbro], who manipulated" (Castro *in* Mourão 2010, 48:59). Additionally, there is admiration for the harmonious working relationship between Zimbro and Lourdes Castro, believing that the authenticity often highlighted by audiences of theatres of shadows was intimately linked to this deep admiration and collaboration between the two, both in work and in life, reflecting each other as stated by the artist herself: "We were one, not two. In everything we did, like the theatres of shadows" (Castro *in* Pacheco 2022). Just as in balanced ecosystems, light and shadow coexisted in such a sensitive and symbolic manner in these performances because there was a sharing of agency and a humility in the relationship of mutual listening. If it is indeed true that shadows cannot exist without light, similarly, there is no necessity for light in the absence of a 'shadow-body' to project, resulting in a lack of activity on stage, absence of communication, aesthetic experience, interest, theatre, or life.<sup>92</sup>

Despite these advancements in recognition, the truth is that the tour of *Linha de Horizonte* was slightly less significant when comparing the number of performances, the range of locations covered, and the duration in relation to its predecessor, *As Cinco Estações*. Although both productions toured overseas to perform in South America (Venezuela for *As Cinco Estações* and Brazil for *Linha de Horizonte*), visiting a total of 5 different countries (Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, along with the respective American country for each case), *As Cinco Estações* was on stage for about 5 years (1975-1980), with multiple performances each year within this timeframe (except for 1979). In contrast, *Linha de Horizonte* was performed over a span of approximately 4 years (1981-1985) and had a hiatus of two years in its performance schedule, specifically being off the stage during the whole years of 1983 and 1984, which coincides with the period when Castro and Zimbro relocated from Paris to Funchal - as will be discussed next. Furthermore, the second big theatre of shadows production had performances in 11 venues across 10 different cities - including systematic returns to Paris, totalling three seasons -, while the third (and last) one visited only 7 venues each belonging to a different

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<sup>92</sup> In fact, and as we have seen before, Manuel Zimbro's contributions also encompassed the conceptualization of such spectacles of shadows, providing insights on their themes, opining on the nature or sequencing of actions performed, plus it is known that he often helped to solve problems related to transitions and took part on the construction of some of the objects that were used in some of the scenes, among other practical tasks.

city<sup>93</sup>, hence without any return engagements in any of these locations. It's also noteworthy that *Linha de Horizonte* was staged in Portugal only once (although meeting the prerequisite of three minimum performances per stage), which was during the *Exposição-Diálogo sobre Arte Contemporânea* organized by the *Serviço de Animação, Criação Artística e Educação pela Arte* (ACARTE) of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1985, unlike *As Cinco Estações*, which also performed in the cities of Porto and Funchal.

One of the possible reasons that can be pointed out for this phenomenon is the couple's decisive move from Paris to Funchal in 1983 and the consequent withdrawal from major artistic centres. Strongly influenced by a Buddhist philosophy of life that permeated both of them, this choice was made even though Castro acknowledged that Paris offered a much broader range of art market prospects, cultural offerings, contacts, and opportunities in general—especially for her, who had been established there almost continuously for the past 25 years (Pacheco 2022). In the end, they opted for Funchal, with all its tranquility and isolation typical of an island, embracing much of the communal connection with nature and slow living they advocated through their theatres of shadows. When later in life she was questioned about this daring and unpredictable choice in such a high point of recognition and establishment in her career, Castro stated that even though it was initially a Manuel Zimbro's desire to move there, it eventually enticed her because of what this gesture could provide her in terms of quality of life and creative infrastructure:

*“O Manuel queria vir. Queríamos ter um jardim e ver o mar todos os dias, estávamos cansados de Paris. [...] E aguentar lá? Num sétimo andar sem elevador. Eu e o René estivemos sempre nessa casa [sobre o apartamento na Rue des Saints-Pères]. Depois conheci o Manuel e já tivemos uma casa maior, porque fazíamos o teatro de sombras.”*

*"Manuel wanted to come. We wanted to have a garden and see the sea every day, we were tired of Paris. And to endure there? On a seventh floor without an elevator. René and I were always in that house [referring to the apartment on Rue des Saints-Pères].*

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<sup>93</sup> Namely, at the *Château de Pourtalès* in Strasbourg (where it premiered in July 1981), in Venice during activities organized for the *Carnevale* (1981), at the *Neue Alte Oper* in Frankfurt (1982), at the *théâtre d'Osnabrück* (1982), in the *Grande Salle* of the *Centre Georges Pompidou* in Paris (1982), at the Modern Art Center (CAM) of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon (March 1985), and finally, at the Auditorium of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) during the São Paulo Biennial in December 1985 (Marchand 2013; Porta 33 2024).

Then I met Manuel and we already had a bigger house, because we were doing theatre of shadows."

(Castro in Pacheco 2022, n.p.)

Therefore, in a true departure from the anxiety she experienced when she was younger (i.e., before moving to Lisbon), feeling isolated in the place she was born and eager to cross the ocean to explore the world, she came to recognize that it was precisely in this location where all her experiences began. Whether it was the way of life she learned there or the creative leisure that her annual vacation moments on the island allowed her (Nóbrega 1977), it transformed her interpretation of these island characteristics into potentials rather than limitations:

*“Agora vejo que realmente foi muito bom ter nascido na ilha da Madeira porque... bem, eu vim de lá agora de férias e deu-me parece para sempre um sossego e uma tranquilidade que é difícil com certeza de se encontrar quando se nasce numa cidade muito grande. Eu não tenho pressa, eu não tenho pressa de nada, e decerto porque vim de lá.”*

"Now I see that it was really good to have been born on the island of Madeira because... well, I came from there now on vacation and it gave me a sense of peace and tranquillity that is certainly hard to find when you are born in a very large city. I'm not in a hurry, I'm not in a hurry for anything, and surely because I came from there."

(“Um Dia Com... Lourdes Castro” 2024)

In conclusion, although returning to Madeira took the artist further away from the bustling and hectic hub of the Parisian art market where she had spent most of her life, Castro embarked on a new phase of her artistic journey, recognizing tranquillity as an excellent conduit for creation (Nóbrega 1977, n.p.). Engaging in projects such as creating new herbariums, compiling numerous *Álbuns de Família* (many of which remained unpublished), crafting tile panels and tapestries, and notably, cultivating her own garden – which she considered her final and never-ending piece, one that would keep growing and reformulating even when she won't be there to watch (Mourão 2010). Therefore, despite not producing further theatres of shadows after *Linha de Horizonte*, it is notable how her entry into the performative universe left permanent marks on the process and products of her work, placing special emphasis on experience and ephemerality.

## **Chapter IV: Exploring Nuanced Themes in Lourdes Castro's Theatre of Shadows: Towards Future Feminist Investigations**

"The real is positioned both before and after its representation: and representation becomes a moment of the reproduction and consolidation of the real [...] the phantasmatic is also precisely that which haunts and contests the borders which circumscribe the construction of stable identities."

(Butler 1990, 106)

"The stimulus patterns on the retina are not alone in determining our picture of the visual world. Its messages are modified by what we know about the 'real' shape of objects."

(Gombrich, 1984, 242)

After providing detailed descriptions of the three case studies proposed in this dissertation and considering all the documentation found throughout this process, it has been possible to make some general considerations and analyses regarding the genre of theatre of shadows ingeniously created within the collaborative process of Lourdes Castro and Manuel Zimbro. Therefore, an exploration of the nuanced expressions of female solitude and the appreciation of life's simplicity achieved through a thematic management and highly specific quality of movement by Castro will be undertaken. While this discussion hints at a deep dive into the intersection of personal experience, artistic expression, and bodily (re)presentation, it is important to note that despite the feminist alignment at the core of this research and the desire to highlight paths that can be explored in this regard within this body of work, this subsection intends only to point them out rather than delve deeply into them, thus leaving this suggestion for future research endeavours interested in further exploring Lourdes Castro's theatres of shadows through alternative lens.

During her performances, to create the unique ambiance of the theatres of shadows, Castro developed her very own style of movement and a specific way of interacting with lights, sounds and objects/actors on stage. In terms of movement, she elongated the duration of the events projected on the screen by slowly executing all of her gestures and actions, imbuing them with a more meditative, almost hypnotic, quality. This approach not only made it easier for the audience to perceive the gestures executed by her shadow but also enhanced the overall experience, inviting them to breathe and slow down their pace – especially for those who lived immersed in cities' hectic dynamics (*Diário de*

*Notícias* 1977; Sabatti 1978). Working in conjunction with Zimbro – who operated the lights with a technical efficiency and artistic synchrony indispensable for the successful functioning of these performances – she played with scales by moving closer to or further away from the light sources, deforming and interacting with her own contours<sup>94</sup>, and generating diverse scenarios using her ‘shadow-body’ in relation to the shadows of other objects (were those ‘prepared’ or domestic), colours, and sounds – that could be either everyday noises (like the hum of a vacuum cleaner, telephone rings, etc.), or what she called ‘echoes’ of music (which for the artist were equivalent to the shadows of music)<sup>95</sup>.

In doing so, the couple promoted the juxtaposition and interaction between objects and settings from distinct universes, some of which would very rarely coexist so closely (like an ironing board in a forest, for instance). Aided by Zimbro’s precise stage lights operation, Castro fused, manipulated, and reshaped them into something else, often giving them a new symbolic meaning by skilfully repositioning them in relation to the light and adopting a different bodily language in relation to it. Through the creative possibilities provided by the live projection of shadows, she could transform the silhouette of a given object into something completely different from its original form, doing all this in a way that seemed to happen like magic<sup>96</sup>. Demonstrating that within the amalgamation of memories and imagination, there exists a transformative potential capable of imbuing even the most uneventful objects with a sense of astonishment. So, through the interplay of common objects, a dynamic body, keen lighting, and symbolic shadows, Castro and Zimbro crafted a universe that was simultaneously dreamlike and tangible. This transported viewers to a realm that challenged their perception of reality and encouraged introspection and recognition of beauty in the ordinary. Before our very eyes, from the sober proposal of eclipsing details, we witnessed the birth of something uniquely banal yet profoundly transformative. After all, "Lourdes Castro (who abandoned

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<sup>94</sup> In image 6, on the cover of the informative brochure of the performance ‘The Five Seasons’, one can identify a photograph displaying Castro’s ‘main shadow’ ‘drawing’ another (fainter) projection of herself. It’s as if she was not only acknowledging her own image and its limits but also reinforcing it, co-creating, and taking agency over this process.

<sup>95</sup> Despite the alternative nomenclature when referring to the soundtracks of their performances, they were primarily composed of excerpts from classical music by renowned composers (such as Schubert, Chopin, and Keith Jarrett), everyday sounds (like the noise of a vacuum cleaner or a ringing telephone), or experimental electronic compositions by René Bértholo, her first husband.

<sup>96</sup> By looking at image 8, one can witness Lourdes Castro ‘transforming’ a blue plexiglass kettle into a tray for serving tea by simply switching its orientation in relation to the stage lights.

the object to retain only a materialized shadow) allows us to rediscover it by partially concealing it" (Muller 1967, n.p.).

Evidently, this unique perspective has been a part of Castro's artistic vision even before she delved into her theatres of shadows, however, what these experiences helped her with was to develop and implement many of these ideas, ultimately making the body her main working territory. Remarkable is also the realization that such a transgressive mentality and innovative spirit embodied by the artist flourished despite the very conservative Portuguese background from which she came. In fact, during her performances, Castro utilized her own body (even if in the form of a shadow) as the primary medium to convey the experiences she desired, allowing us to witness a subtle, noncommittal process of self-representation. Thus, necessarily traversed by the projection of the feminine body in its daily solitude - one commonly regarded as highly mundane and uninteresting - it slowly reveals different moments where intimacy is usually shared with none other than a few nature scenes and some household utensils. Such mundane elements then assume a unique testimonial importance (both on a material and a symbolic level, given the personification they are imputed with), being the only ones present to validate these hitherto invisible experiences. So, aided by the technology and expressive possibilities of theatre of shadows, she seemed perfectly equipped to metaphorically showcase the fluidity and elasticity that a woman's contours could/can assume while simultaneously revealing to the audience events rarely recorded, extraordinarily elevating the banality of a woman's solitary rituals to the category of those deemed important enough to be displayed to an audience.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that interpretations like this, that is, rooted in feminist perspectives, usually faced significant resistance from the artist. Moreover, as we have seen in the first chapter of this dissertation, it is evident that such resistance was not unique to Castro. Indeed, many artists of her generation refrained from incorporating such political collages into their work, likely out of fear of not being equated with their male counterparts (Oliveira 2019). In fact, for many female artists of the 1960s and 1970s, the fear of making unfair claims or of being relegated to a separate category apart from 'mainstream' art led them to reject or downplay their connections to feminism. However, this reluctance only served to underscore the need for a more inclusive and expansive understanding of art history—one that could recognize the diverse voices and

perspectives that have shaped the artistic landscape. As Pollock (1983) points out, art serves as a form of cultural production and ideology, therefore, anything that challenges hegemonic modes of representation and exposes the typically overlooked and marginalized aspects of society aligns with feminist efforts to create a more representative art world. Furthermore, feminist art does not always manifest as polemical or abject; rather, it is often provisional and serves as a means to explore languages and imageries that can emancipate the body and celebrate the ambiguity (Elkin 2023).

In fact, when a woman appears on stage, her body speaks for itself. It becomes the object of the audience's gaze, capable of evoking desire, neutrality, or abjection, depending on the level of correspondence that her practices and representations fulfil according to the expectations previously established by her interlocutor<sup>97</sup>. Indeed, as Mary Douglas pointed out, it is known that "The social body constrains the way physical body is perceived" (Douglas, 1973, p. 69). Regarding this issue, one can cite Judith Butler's article, "The Force of Fantasy" (1990), in which the author points to the origin of the confusion between what belongs to the domain of the real and what belongs to the realm of the representational. According to her perspective, the real would have no other option but to be read through representation and vice versa, a theory that would feed on the belief in a single reality, an exclusive view of reality where alternative narratives and intermediate spaces could not be represented.

Thus, by presenting herself as this 'shadow-body,' simultaneously independent and adventurous, as well as careful and appreciative of her surroundings, Castro embodies a rare way of relating to the world: one that underscores gratitude and recognition for inanimate objects and nature, while also recognizing the power inherent in slowness, solitude, and domestic rituals. Throughout the performance, she alternates between using objects and the surrounding nature to carry out her daily activities, instrumentalizing but also treating them with proclaimed gratitude. In a unique manner, Castro constructs a subjectivity that can only be perceived in the relationships she forms with these 'things,' or rather, 'shadows of things,' sometimes merging, sometimes juxtaposing their contours with those of her own body without fear of returning to her essential silhouette – never afraid of the eventual consequences of interacting deeply with the *other*. She becomes a

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<sup>97</sup> In order to comprehend and reflect upon the specificity inherent in the corporeality of women during their interaction with the subject-configuration mechanisms in society.

shadow-body that moves unhurriedly but with precision, living a fantastic everyday life—or perhaps it is better to say -, a quotidian fantasy that celebrates her accompanied solitude.

Therefore, we can state that her alleged romanticization or oneiric display of daily life did not stem from any extraordinary portrayals that stray too far from what things were in reality – a fact that garnered some criticism from more conservative journalists and reviewers<sup>98</sup>. It rather stemmed from her own recognition of the spectacular nature inherent in daily rituals and ordinary events. Despite their banality and recurrent occurrence in domestic and private settings, Castro found beauty in them, presenting them in a dramatic and captivating manner, and by doing so, accidentally “making the private public, the domestic political” (Elkin 2023, 23).

Despite its playful and contemplative approach to various subjects, Castro maintained a remarkable honesty and assertiveness in her work. While she often employed minimalist elements, lines, gestures, and resources – which perfectly aligns with her fascination for the themes of shadows, contours, and silhouettes, in the first place<sup>99</sup> - she spared no effort in presenting her truth and expressing her "diaristic indulgences"<sup>100</sup>. In fact, while delving into the domestic, diary-like, personal, and intimate aspects of life—those often veiled and conveniently dismissed as not interesting enough to be elevated to art—her intent was not to denounce a certain sense of confinement. Instead, by rupturing these expectations of boredom or disinterest, she aimed to generate a feeling of surprising liberation and pleasure that can only arise from the underestimated

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<sup>98</sup> In her brief commentary on the performance of the theatre of shadows *As Sombras* at the Neue Galerie Aachen in 1974, the art critic Hiltrud Zantis described it as “rather lacking” and complained that “what was announced as a theatre of shadows ended up being a failed attempt to depict daily events in silhouette”, only to complete with her final statement: “To be very honest, I prefer the artist's paintings” (Zantis 1974, 4). Moreover, another journalist, from the Parisian newspaper *Combat*, Nathalie Godard, despite her generous remarks on the performance, finished her critique by characterizing it as “perhaps too discreet to be considered a spectacle” and suggested that it would be more suitable as a complementary practice to something else, conclusively stating that she preferred to “see it integrated within other artistic practices” (Godard 1974, 12).

<sup>99</sup> As the artist herself used to say “The shadow has everything that the object has and the minimum necessary to be recognized” (Castro *in* Mourão 2010, 27:27).

<sup>100</sup> Such term is known to have been appropriated by Carolee Schneemann in her celebrated feminist performance, 'Interior Scroll' (1975), to expose the exclusion and refusal on being taught she encountered while at university, alongside characterizations such as 'painterly mess' and 'hand touch sensibility', initially used as harsh critiques of her work by NYU's film professor Annette Macdonald Michelson—who often claimed that 'she couldn't look at her films' (Elkin, 2023, p. 10)— they were then transformed into a proudly assumed by the artist as an innovative artistic approach: one that was able to embrace marginalized voices, focus on embodied experiences, and tell alternative (i.e. systematically hidden) stories.

or unseen. By doing that she ended up reinforcing the role of creativity, artistic sensibility, and individual stance in the seemingly impossible task of transforming the mundane into wonder. To achieve this with her theatres of shadows, Castro masterfully decontextualized many personal rituals or, rather, recontextualized them from her unique perspective, extending her interpretation to the audience and fostering empathy. Through her art, she allowed us to access part of her world and invited us to witness her bodily experiences within it, exploring realms typically hidden from view.

Hence, for all the reasons mentioned above, it is essential to acknowledge the extraordinary work Castro accomplishes in portraying her distinctly female universe in an exceptional manner – particularly noteworthy considering how frequently such themes are relegated to the private and inconsequential realm. Here, her portrayal appears very primal, intimate, and domestic, yet, simultaneously, it exudes a sense of the fantastic, liberating, and indomitable.

## Conclusion

*“Aí, na sala às escuras, só iluminada pelo ecrã onde as sombras da vida diária foram projectadas, uma vez acabada a representação, nada mais fica, nada mais que seja preciso lembrar, senão uma efêmera e impalpável imagem... Que mesmo assim... registada pela microscópica noite do globo ocular, projectada no fundo desse pequeno céu forrado de escuro no escuro, sempre a revelar a fotogenia de miríades de palpitações iluminadas pelo minúsculo sol pupilar, assim que as luzes da sala se acendem, a fosfena da fugaz imagem logo desaparece, perdido no choque do deslumbramento.”*

"There, in the darkened room, illuminated only by the screen where the shadows of daily life were projected, once the performance is over, nothing remains, nothing that needs to be remembered, except for an ephemeral and intangible image... Even so... captured by the microscopic night of the eyeball, projected onto the backdrop of that small sky lined with darkness in the dark, always revealing the photogenicity of myriad illuminated pulsations by the tiny pupil sun, as soon as the lights in the room come on, the phosphene of the fleeting image disappears, lost in the shock of the dazzle."

(Zimbro 1992, 170)

The initial objectives outlined for this dissertation were to undertake the collection, analysis, and discourse of data concerning the shadow performances created by Lourdes Castro in increasing collaboration with Manuel Zimbro from 1973 onwards. Subsequently, the intention was to furnish them with an alternative interpretation that would aptly recognize their feminist potential, as perceived by the researcher. Therefore, considering their ephemeral nature (performativity), it became imperative throughout the research process not only to employ traditional methods such as bibliographic surveys of relevant works concerning the author and to conduct comprehensive analyses of the performances under scrutiny<sup>101</sup>, but also to contextualize performance art in the Western artistic panorama, as well as the political and cultural background that circumscribed the condition of the female artists and feminism in Portugal. This contextual groundwork laid the foundation for a nuanced examination of Castro's shadow theatres, elucidating their significance as both artistic interventions and feminist statements. At a later stage, due to the lack of major publications about these, in the study and description of the theatres of shadows it was proved essential to rely more on other types of records, including interviews with the artist, newspaper reports on the shows, personal letters exchanged with institutions and friends, as well as photographic and audiovisual records. So, by foregrounding their feminist undertones and embracing an expansive understanding of performance documentation, this study contributes to a more comprehensive appraisal of

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<sup>101</sup> Which, in this case, was only possible through the acknowledgement of the documentation available as material sufficiently imbued with meaning and 'presence' in itself (Jones 1997).

Castro's legacy, inviting future scholars to continue exploring the rich tapestry of her artistic contributions.

Indeed, from the outset, the intention was to address a significant gap in the scholarly discourse surrounding Castro's oeuvre, particularly her understudied yet profoundly innovative ventures into performance art. The decision to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from insights offered by scholars like Amelia Jones and Griselda Pollock, provided a multifaceted lens through which to analyse the complexities of Castro's theatres of shadows within broader social, cultural, and artistic contexts. Throughout this study, the delineation of the historical and cultural milieu in which Castro's performances emerged served not only to contextualize her artistic evolution but also to illuminate the socio-political forces shaping women's artistic expression during the Estado Novo regime in Portugal and to stress how crucial it was for her—as for many other national artists—to emigrate during this period. However, this research does not fail to highlight how this period and the ideologies it naturalized left marks on society (including on the artist's own way of thinking, having grown and lived in it until the age of 26) that persisted strongly even after the democratic revolution and, to a certain extent, still present remnants of these entrenched and veiled misogyny today.

Moreover, grappling with the ephemeral nature of performance art posed methodological challenges that necessitated innovative approaches to documentation and interpretation. By engaging with Amelia Jones's concept of performance documentation as an active component of the artwork itself, this dissertation sought to transcend the temporal constraints of live performance, offering readers a deeper understanding of the experiential qualities inherent in Castro's meticulous experiments with moving shadows. In fact, as I delved into the intricacies of these events, I was continually struck by the fusion of innovation and tradition, as well as the inherent tension between visibility and invisibility, presence and absence.

At the end, this process proved to be very prolific in discovering how this very *sui generis* form of performance was orchestrated and in validating Castro as a multidisciplinary artist capable of offering highly genuine representations of the feminine universe. Thus, presenting its wonderful quotidian with clarity and time, she gave

relevance to the so-called “diaristic indulgences” proposed by Carolee Schneemann<sup>102</sup> in a much more subtle, but no less powerful way.

It also became clear that Castro saw no reason in separating art from life, just as throughout this investigation it has been proven impossible to separate the woman from the artist. When recognizing her extraordinary work and the prominent position she achieved in the European contemporary art scene—even though she was not born in the most favourable context in terms of society's expectations regarding women and artistic production - it becomes impossible not to relate it to the unique sensitivity and tenacity she possessed as an individual. Indeed, born on an island she learned from it how to make a home in every land, to find in rest and contact with nature the most prolific creative impulse, not to fear what her eyes could not reach yet, and to embrace mistakes, chance, undefinition and transience. So, when she later started contouring the world around her and gathering its shadows, in Castro flourished the awareness shared only by those who finally understand that limits serve not only to inhibit, trap, or circumscribe, but also to give shape, weight and identity.

On a more specific note, as we delve deeper into her trajectory with the theatres of shadows, it becomes increasingly evident that Lourdes Castro possessed a remarkable blend of charisma and diplomacy. Her adeptness at building relationships and showcasing her research interests is manifest in the various connections she formed with fellow artists, curators, and artistic directors, among other key figures in the field, as she worked to establish herself also as a performer. Examples include her bonds with Pierre Restany, Samuel Buri, Graziella Martinez, Jérôme Savary, Karl Ruhrberg, Hansgerd Schulte, Barbara Richter, and Carlos Wallenstein—individuals who played pivotal roles in this particular part of her journey. However, it's important to note that her courage and determination cannot solely be attributed to inherent traits; rather, they stemmed from the imperative to navigate in a male-dominated art world—a requirement that became even more pronounced when she embarked on the challenging path of dematerializing and embodying her own artistic productions. This latter aspect is evidenced by the tumultuous initial reactions to her decision, as well as the obstacles she faced in gaining support and institutional validation. Despite her already established reputation as a visual artist, the

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<sup>102</sup> “The art monster, with her diaristic indulgence and her personal clutter, takes for granted that the experiences of female embodiment are relevant to all humankind” (Elkin 2023, 19).

recognition of the quality of these ephemeral and multidisciplinary pieces, especially on a national scale, was (and still is to a certain extent) very slow to materialize.

In fact, whether transitioning between fields of aesthetic research, artistic mediums, or even countries, Castro was a self-defining woman who had never truly settled in any particular practice or place. Consequently, venturing beyond her comfort zone, or rather delving deeply into it, challenging preconceived notions about herself and her art, she fearlessly embraced change and new beginnings, leaving us with a very diverse and experimentally driven body of work, in her own words: “my work has always been like this: when I knew how to do it, I was no longer interested” (Castro in Pacheco 2022, n.p.). Nevertheless, she conducted one of the most cohesive artistic investigations in Portuguese contemporary art history, remaining focused on the theme of shadows for approximately 60 years, always showcasing their inexhaustible richness.

Lastly, Castro's approach to performance art was pivotal in solidifying her vision of art, as she remarks in this excerpt of "Pelas Sombras" (2010):

*“No fundo o teatro era fazer um quadro que durava uma hora mas depois desaparecia, e este lado efêmero, quando tu estás nisso, depois já não dá para estar a fazer coisas materiais, assim, para pôr na parede, não é?”*

"In essence, theatre was like painting a picture that lasted an hour but then disappeared, and this ephemeral aspect, when you're in it, you can't go back to making material things to put on the wall, right?"

(Castro in Mourão 2010, 53:20)

So, although it is true that, upon settling in Madeira in 1983, Castro ceased to produce new performances and reverted to a more materialistic approach to her art, she admitted that her fascination with this medium's possibilities never faded; quite the contrary, she decided to incorporate it into her everyday life (Mourão 2010; Pacheco 2022). Thus, from tile panels to tapestries and other objects, she increasingly prioritized the aesthetic experience and transformative capacity that a piece could offer over its form. Even her own garden at Quinta do Monte, for example, came to be attributed by the artist as one of her works, referred to as her last and perpetual 'painting,' one that she could never entirely control and that would naturally outlast her, continuously growing, evolving, and changing.

In conclusion, regarding Castro's trajectory, I disagree with a broad characterization of it that appears to suggest a dominance of the "painted thing" over the "woman of the theatre" (Zimbro 1992, 170). I argue that Castro's creative process has always been deeply influenced by the performativity of life, celebrating art's ephemeral and affective qualities long before the emergence of the performances studied here. Furthermore, I contend that it is in her exploration of the theme of shadows and her latent interest in revealing the potential of what is systematically overlooked and underestimated that we can observe her own experience as a woman in the arts mirrored. Therefore, it is significant how, from the moment her body assumes a central role in her creations and – even if unintentionally - reveals a condition of feminine solitude in all its graceful banality, it ultimately led to minor recognition. Indeed, whether at the time of their presentation or even today (as reflected in the limited exploration of such performances within Portuguese academia or museum circuits), these works remain largely invisible. With that said, I hope that after reading this research, new doors will open for the interpretation of this artist's work, and that due credit will be given to her meditative performances. In fact, if this dissertation enabled me to recognize something it was how things can only acquire importance when we commit to witnessing and imbuing them with such quality, after all, "in theater, as in life, everything and nothing is important" (Castro in *Diário de Notícias* 1977, 10).

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## List of Images

There are  
three rooms for this work, each  
different in size and feeling. The rooms are  
nearly transparent. No matter where a person is, he  
is aware of something happening in another room. One room  
has red and white lights in rows along its top, like a used car lot  
at night. The other has blue and white lights. The third has a blue  
globe hanging in its center. There are two large wall collages, some col-  
ored Christmas bulbs seen from behind a wall and two rows of spot lights. Pur-  
ple scrolls are dropped at a certain time. Five longish mirrors are placed around.  
These are looked into also at a certain time. Chairs -- perhaps seventy-five to one  
hundred -- are arranged throughout where guests are to be seated. The guests will  
change seats according to numbered cards. Each guest will sit once in a different room.  
Some guests will also act. Slides will be shown. Tape recorded sounds, produced elect-  
ronically, will come from four loudspeakers. From these there will be heard as well a col-  
lage of voices. There will be live sounds produced. Words will be spoken. Human actions  
will occur of different but simple kinds. In addition there will be non-human actors. They  
will be a dancing toy and two constructions on wheels. The same action will never happen  
twice. The actions will mean nothing clearly formulable so far as the artist is concerned.  
It is intended, however, that the whole work is to be intimate, austere, and of somewhat  
brief duration. These eighteen happenings will take place on October 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10  
at 8:30 PM. We who sympathize with the artist's freedom of expression, who enjoy the  
experience inherent in advanced ideas, who affirm the artist's right -- nay, obligation  
-- to present his vision to the world unfettered have an especial obligation to tender  
moral and financial support to the avant garde. Although sustained to date by cur-  
rent contributions, the event will suffer a large deficit unless it is promptly and  
generously supported by -- you. Only the artist's confidence in your sup-  
port has made this event possible. Send your contribution -- \$2 -- \$5  
-- \$100 -- immediately: it's needed. (No contribution will be soli-  
cited at the performance.) Admission by advance res-  
ervation only. Write: The Reuben Gallery, 61 4th  
Avenue, New York 3, New York; Phone WA 9-8558

Today!

Image 1 - Detail of the invitation letter written by Allan Kaprow in 1959 for the 18 Happenings in 6 Parts, where he includes, as a condition of participation, a prerequisite donation ranging from 2 to 100 dollars. Source: <http://www.bienal.org.br/post/384>.

Herrn  
Prof. Dr. Hansgerd Schulte  
Präsident des DAAD  
Kennedyallee 50  
53 Bonn - Bad Godesberg 1

29. Januar 1976  
R/V

Lieber Herr Schulte,

eben erhalte ich einen Brief von Lourdes Castro, die -  
damals noch als Frau von René Bertholo - bereits ein  
Jahr in Berlin war und nun sozusagen als selbständige  
Künstlerin noch einmal kommen möchte. Den Versuch kann  
man natürlich wagen, aber leider ist sie von falschen  
Voraussetzungen ausgegangen. Sie schreibt, sie habe Sie  
in Paris getroffen und Sie hätten ihr gesagt, die Unter-  
lagen müssten bis zum März vorliegen. Das, verehrter  
Herr Präsident, ist aber nicht richtig, denn im März  
finden ja bereits die Auswahlverfahren statt. Die Unter-  
lagen müssen jeweils bis zum 31. Dezember des Vorjahrs  
in Berlin eingetroffen sein. Sie gehen - wie Sie wissen -  
dann ja nach Bonn, werden dort vervielfältigt und dann an  
die Juroren verschickt. Ich hätte bei Lourdes sehr gern  
ein Auge zugezückt, aber die Zeit ist zu weit fortgeschritten.  
Ich habe ihr empfohlen, sich dann für das übernächste Jahr zu  
bewerben. Darf ich nur noch einmal zur freundlichen Kenntnis-  
nahme die Prozedur wiederholen: Bis Ende des der Jury voraus-  
gehenden Jahres müssen alle Unterlagen (Dias, Kataloge, Fotos,  
Tonbänder, Bücher, etc.) inklusive Bewerbungsbogen vorliegen.  
Ende März des folgenden Jahres findet dann die Auswahlverfahren  
für das wiederum darauf folgende Jahr statt. Modell für dies-  
mal: Einsendeschluss 31.12.1975, Jurysitzungen 22. bis 26.  
März 1976, Einladungen für 1977.

Die Lourdes ist ein bezauberndes Wesen, das ich sehr gern  
in Berlin wüsste, ich sehe aber bei den gestrengen Juroren  
einige Schwierigkeiten, denn immerhin war sie bereits einmal  
ein Jahr hier, hat auch hier Ausstellungen und Vorstellungen  
gehabt, wenn sie damals auch nur in einer Nebenrolle agierte,  
nämlich als Frau von René Bertholo. Vielleicht gibt es trotz-  
dem im nächsten Jahr, d. h. also bei der Jurysitzung im nächsten  
Jahr, eine Chance.

Ich hoffe, es geht Ihnen gut, lieber Herr Schulte, und würde  
mich freuen, wir brauchten einmal keine Dienstpost zu wechseln,  
sondern würden uns endlich wieder einmal von Person zu Person  
sehen können.

Herzliche Grüße  
Ihr

Karl Ruhrberg

Image 2 - 29.01.1976. Letter from Karl Ruhrberg to Mr. Schulte (President of the DAAD) explaining Lourdes Castro's situation, who had misunderstood the deadlines for submitting applications for the scholarship program provided by the institution. In it, he emphasizes the quality of the artist and the willingness to make her residency happen through alternative means. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.

Madame Lourdes Castro  
124 av. d'Italie  
75013 Paris

29.1.1976  
Ru/Vo/Ri/O'D

FRANKREICH

Chère Lourdes,

merci mille fois pour ta lettre du 19 janvier dont je me suis réjoui beaucoup, encore plus du fait que tu es active comme toujours. Je peux dire la même chose de nous ici à Berlin, peut-être c'est un peu trop. L'année passée nous avons effectué un nombre de 96 événements culturels.

Au sujet de ta demande: malheureusement Monsieur le Président s'est trompé un peu. Le matériel pour une sollicitation dans le cadre du Berliner Künstlerprogramm ne peuvent pas être envoyés à Berlin jusque le mois de mars; parce que en mars le meeting du jury a lieu déjà. Les sollicitations doivent être à Berlin avant le 31 décembre de l'année précédente - dans notre cas avant le 31 décembre 1975. A mon regret, des sollicitations qui arrivent plus tard ne peuvent pas être considérées, car tous les papiers sont envoyés à Bonn ou ils seront photocopiés. Après, ils sont distribués entre les membres du jury.

Ce procès a commencé il y a quelque temps. Mais volontiers je vais dire au jury durant le meeting que tu t'intéresses à venir à Berlin dans le cadre du programme. Je pense que cette information trouvera beaucoup de sympathie. Pour le moment, je peux te recommander de nous envoyer - avant la fin de cet an - du matériel le plus informative possible: des photos, diapositives, catalogues etc. Les membres berlinois du jury te connaissent naturellement, mais les participants changent chaque an, de manière qu'il soit mieux d'informer sur ton travail aussi ceux qui ne le connaissent pas bien. Alors, il te reste un peu de temps; je garderai les papiers que tu m'as inclus dans ta lettre pour les ajouter aux autres qui suivent.

J'espère vivement que tu ne sois pas trop décue. J'aurais

(2)

particulièrement aimé vous aider, mais, malheureusement, ce n'est plus possible au moment. Je suis sûre qu'un second séjour à Berlin serait mutuellement profitable pour vous et notre ville. A Bethanien on peut faire quelques choses aussi.

Chère Lourdes, je te salue bien cordialement; il me ferait grand plaisir de te revoir.

Karl Ruhrberg

Image 3 - 29.01.1976. Letter from Karl Ruhrberg to Lourdes Castro explaining the impasse with the deadlines (as described above) but expressing his desire to see her contributing again to the art scene in Berlin and therefore mentioning the possibility of trying to negotiate with Künstlerhaus Bethanien. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.



FUNDAÇÃO CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN

AUDITORIO DOIS

6 de Junho às 21.30 horas  
7 e 8 de Junho às 18.30 horas

## AS CINCO ESTAÇÕES

espectáculo de sombras de

**LOURDES CASTRO e MANUEL ZIMBRO**

Foto Monika Hasse, Berlim  
Orientação Oficina José António B. Pires  
Típ. António Coelho Dias, Lda. — Lisboa



Em 1966 comecei as minhas experiências com o teatro de sombras (em Paris, com Graziela Martinez, no espectáculo «St. Geneviève dans la baignoire») e fiquei entusiasmada com as possibilidades que isso poderia trazer ao desenvolvimento das minhas sombras.

Continuei, contudo, as sombras recortadas em plexiglas e mais tarde «as sombras deitadas» bordadas em lençóis (apresentadas em Lisboa em 1970 na Galeria 111).

A minha estadia em Berlim (72-73) permitiu-me dedicar-me quase exclusivamente ao teatro de sombras. Não é propriamente teatro mas somente aquelas proposições quotidianas que sempre me fascinaram mas que agora se podem mover, como sombras no espaço.

O René Bèrtholo construiu-me o primeiro aparelho para controlo do leque de cores e instalou-me as primeiras luzes.

Com a colaboração de Manuel Zimbros, apresentei o 1.º espectáculo em Anvers, Amsterdam, Aachen, Hanover e estivemos um mês no teatro da Gare d'Orsay Renaud-Barrault, em Paris.

«As Cinco Estações» é o nosso 2.º programa que foi apresentado em Paris pela primeira vez a convite do Festival de Outono 1975, e também no Museu Soto em Ciudad Bolívar, no Museu de Belas Artes em Caracas e no Museu de Arte Moderna da cidade de Paris, ARC 2.

«As cinco estações» estão todas ligadas entre elas e o ano dura uma hora.

Image 4 - *As Cinco Estações* (1977) descriptive brochure/invitation letter. Performance at Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Cover Photo by Monica Hasse. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.



Image 5 - Excerpt from the pamphlet 'Lourdés Castro Galerie Edouard Loed' showing a fragment of Graciela Martinez's play containing shadow theatre in which is possible to see a plexiglass kettle. In the left, it is possible to read: «paysage par deux sources lumineuses avec prélude» avec Samuel Buri au spectacle de Graciela Martinez «Sainte Geneviève dans la Baignoire» (à «la Montagne», Paris 1966). Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.


**TEATRO MUNICIPAL DO FUNCHAL**

14 de julho 1977 às 21,30 e  
15 de julho às 17,30 e 21,30


**"AS CINCO ESTAÇÕES"**

TEATRO DE SOMBRAS DE  
LOURDES CASTRO E MANUEL ZIMBRO

ESPECTÁCULO PATROCINADO PELA SECRETARIA REGIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO E CULTURA COM A COLABORAÇÃO DA CÂMARA MUNICIPAL DO FUNCHAL.



**TEATRO MUNICIPAL DO FUNCHAL**  
**"AS CINCO ESTAÇÕES"**



Contorno de minha sombra - Foto Monika Hassse, Berlin 1973

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Tantôt il lui demandait la permission de lui baiser la jambe, et il profitait de la cir-constance pour baisser cette belle jambe dans telle position qu'elle dessinait nettement son contour sur le soleil couchant!

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

DA ESPESSURA DAS SOMBRAS

O Teatro de Sombras de Lourdes Castro, é mais sombras de teatro, que teatro de sombras. É uma "coisa" que bebendo na fonte de um teatro a Oriente, aperta a mão ao "happening", dá o braço ao da boca de cena, e com o cinema vai às compras para exaltar a respiração de quem acorda e adormece quase todos os dias (quase todos, por que há dias em que é preciso fazer serão para tra- balhar para o teatro).

As sombras - chamemos-lhe assim porque é menos teatral - passam-se em três lugares precisos: atrás, à meio e à frente de um retângulo de pano para tençoil com uma área de mais ou menos seis metros quadrados, suspensão num dos maiores lados por dois ganchos aparafusados a uma ripa de madeira branca. No tecido foi aplicada uma cola que lhe fechando a trama permite a difusão regular de qualquer projecção luminosa, e a invisibi- lidade, pela frente, do origem dessa projecção.

Os tais três lugares precisos fazem parte de um todo, que se pode nomear de "stílo" onde se passa tudo.

ATRAS DO PANO

Lugar que é contido numa área de sete me- tros quadrados atiza a toda a acção feita passar por entre duas lâmpadas eléctricas e o pano. Lâmp- adas e coloridos que por vezes se apagam, para dar lugar a outros meios, na descrição da mesma finalidade.

Sendo a "mise-en-scene" relativamente mi- nuciosa, é deixado à casualidade uma intervenção maior, melhor, sem ser improvisada, a acção é feita sem cadernos de encargo.

O tipo de cola que cola a música à im-agem é daqueles que primeiro se dá num stílo, de- pois no outro, deixa-se sezoar, e depois, então é que cola. Breve: a música não é colada, é compan- nha.

Os alguns objectos são "preparados". São, já em si, sombras que vão engendrar outras som- bras no percurso da sua manipulação. E os que não são, são destemidamente domesticos.

A FRENTE DO PANO

Lugar de quem vê.

Porque são sombras sem referência, movem- se muito lentamente, para que sejam suficiente- mente perceptíveis, daí, muito, muito lentamente as Sombras descrevem tarefas banais que apresen- tam na resolução significados diferentes, ou por- que são (mas esqueçamos) muito importantes ou por que foram escolhidos. E qualquer coisa que é so- sem história, fascinante por ser misterioso, apa-ixonante por ser efemero.

A MEIO DO PANO

Durante todo o espectáculo o Pano acolhe todos esses pontos dos diferentes desenhos em mo- vimento que lá estão a ser projectados. Acolhe e embebe todas essas sombras, não à frente, não atrás, mas a meio dele mesmo "il y a un milieu, il n'y a pas de milieu entre" (Pascal) - e é esse o "stílo" onde se passa tudo".

Se se somar todas as linhas de olhar de quem vê pela frente, mais todas as linhas de quem faz, ou não faz, atrás, obtém-se um resultado que se encontra inscrito nesse meio de espessura infinitamente pequena, e que é igual a uma enorme brecha, que se abre entre dois mundos opostos.

M. Z.

Em 1966 comecei em Paris as minhas experi-ências com o teatro de sombras e fiquei entusi- asmada com as possibilidades que isso poderia tra- zer ao desenvolvimento das minhas sombras.

Continui, contudo, as sombras recortadas em plexiglas e mais tarde "as sombras deitadas" bordadas em lençóis.

A minha estadia em Berlin (72-73) permi- tiu-me dedicar-me quase exclusivamente ao teatro de sombras. Não é propriamente teatro mas somente aquelas proposições quotidianas que sempre me fas- cinaram mas que agora se podem mover, como som- bras no espaço.

O René Bärthold construiu-me o primeiro aparelho para controlo do leque de cores e insta- lou-me as primeiras luzes.

Com a colaboração de Manuel Zimbrou, que deu às cores e às luzes o aperfeiçoamento actual apresentei o 10 espectáculo em Anvers, Amsterdam, Aachen, Hanover e estivei num mês no teatro da Gare d'Orsay Renaud-Barrault, em Paris.

"As Cinco Estações" é o nosso 20º progra- ma que foi apresentado em Paris pela primeira vez a convite do Festival de Outono 1975, e também no Museu Soto em Ciudad Bolívar, no Museu de Belas Artes em Caracas e no Museu de Arte Moderna da ci- dade de Paris, ABC 2.

A Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian ofereceu- nos este ano a possibilidade de trazeremos o tea- tro de Sombras a Portugal que foi apresentado em Lisboa no Auditório Dois desta Fundação, em Junho passado.

"As cinco estações" estão todas ligadas entre elas e o ano dura uma hora.

1950-56-Escola Superior de Belas Artes de Lisboa  
1957-Estada em Munique - 1958-Instala-se em Paris, Bolsetra da Fundação S. Gulbenkian - 1962 -as primeiras sombras (de objectos em serigrafia) depois sombras projectadas de pessoas.

EXPOSIÇÕES INDIVIDUAIS

1955-Funchal - 1957-Lisboa, Galeria Diário de No- ticias, com René Bärthold - 1964-Lisboa, Galeria Divulgação, com René Bärthold - 1965-Munique, Ga- leria Buchholz - 1966-Baden-Baden, Staatliche, Kunsthalle, Paris, Galerie Edeuard Loeb - 1967 - -Londres, Indica Gallery, Amsterdam, Gallery 20 Malmo, Linhamkonstrförening - 1968-Bastileia, Ga- lerie Handschin, Hannover, Galerie Ernst - 1969 - -Colônia, Galerie Reckermann, Essen, Galerie Thelen, Milão, Studio Marconi, Frankfurt, Galerie Lipke - 1970-Amsterdam, Galerie 20 Lisboa, Gale- ria 111 - 1973-Bordéus, Galerie du Fleuve, Berlin, Akademie der Künste, com R. Bärthold.

BIENAIS DE GRAVURA

Ljubljana, Krakovia, Paris, Bradford, Veneza, Fre- drickstad, Tokyo, (premiada na Jugostávia e na Po- tônia).

LE THÉATRE D'OMBRES  
DE  
LOURDES CASTRO ET MANUEL ZIMBRO

A été invité d'été à Berlin, Paris, Anvers, Amsterdam, Aix-la-Chapelle, Hanover, Ciudad Bolívar, Caracas, Lisbonne.

"Les cinq Saisons", leur deuxième programme, ont été présentés pour la première fois au Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris dans le cadre du Festival d'automne 1975.

"Les cinq Saisons sont liées entre elles et l'année dure une heure".

TEATRO MUNICIPAL DO FUNCHAL  
14 juillet à 21.30  
15 juillet à 17.30 et 21.30

THE SHADOWTHEATER  
OF  
LOURDES CASTRO AND MANUEL ZIMBRO

Has been already shown in Berlin, Paris, Antwerpen, Amsterdam, Aachen, Hanover, Ciudad Bolívar, Caracas, Lisbon.

"The five Seasons", their second programme, have been presented for the first time in Paris at the Museum of Modern Art invited by the Festival d'automne 1975.

"The five Seasons are all bound together and the Year lasts an hour".

TEATRO MUNICIPAL DO FUNCHAL  
14 July at 21.30 p.m.  
15 July at 17.30 and 21.30 p.m.

DAS SCHATTENTHEATER  
VON  
LOURDES CASTRO UND MANUEL ZIMBRO

Vorstellungen in Berlin, Paris, Antwerpen, Amsterdam, Aachen, Hannover, Ciudad Bolívar, Caracas, Lissabon.

"Die fünf Jahreszeiten", ihr zweites Pro- gramm, war zum ersten mal im museum d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris vorgezeigt, vom Festival d'automne 1975 eingeleitet.

"Die fünf Jahreszeiten sind alle zusammen gebunden und das Jahr dauert eine Stunde".

TEATRO MUNICIPAL DO FUNCHAL  
14 Juli un 21.30  
15 Juli un 17.30 u. 21.30

Image 6 - Informative fold-out brochure of *As Cinco Estações* performance at Teatro Municipal do Funchal in 1977. Source: MUDAS Archive.

CONSEJO NACIONAL DE LA CULTURA

MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES

*Caracas*

"LAS CINCO ESTACIONES" espectáculo de sombras

Lourdes Castro y Manuel Zimbro

a realizarse en la Sala Experimental del Museo de Bellas Artes - sábado 30, domingo 31 de octubre 1976, hora 7.30 pm.

Nuevo Edificio Museo de Bellas Artes, Plaza Morelos, Los Caobos - Entrada libre.

Tantot il lui demandait la permission de lui baiser la jambe, et il profitait de la circonstance pour baiser cette belle jambe dans telle position qu'elle dessinât nettement son contour sur le soleil couchant!

Charles Baudelaire

#### Del espesor de LAS SOMBRAS

El Teatro de Sombras de Lourdes Castro es más sombras de teatro que teatro de sombras.

Es una "cosa" que bebiendo en la fuente de un teatro de Levante tiende la mano al "happening", ofrece el brazo a la boca del escenario y, como en el cine, va de compras para exaltar la respiración de quien despierta y se duerme casi todos los días (casi todos, pues hay días en que hay que velar para trabajar por el teatro).

Las sombras -llamémoslas así porque es menos teatral- se suceden en tres lugares precisos: detrás, en medio y delante de un rectángulo de paño de lencería, con un área de seis metros cuadrados más o menos, suspenso por uno de los dos lados mayores a dos ganchos atornillados a un listón de madera blanca. Sobre el tejido fue aplicada una cola que, obstruyendo la trama, permite la difusión regular de cualquier proyección luminosa y hace invisible, por delante, el origen de esta proyección.

#### DETRAS del telón

Lugar contenido en un área de siete metros cuadrados útiles a toda acción hecha pasar por entre dos lámparas eléctricas y el telón. Lámparas y coloridos que por ratos se apagan para dar lugar a otros medios, orientados hacia la misma finalidad. Siendo una "mise-en-scene" relativamente minuciosa deja a la casualidad un margen de intervención mayor, o mejor, sin ser improvisada la acción se realiza sin cuadernos de encargo. El tipo de cola que adhiere la música a la imagen es de aquellas que se aplica primero en un sitio, luego en otro, que se deja secar, y es después que pega entonces. En breve: la música no será pegada, es compañía. Algunos objetos son "preparados" Son, ya en sí, sombras que van a engendrar otras sombras en el recorrido de su manipulación, y los que no lo son audazmente domésticos.

Image 7. Informative brochure of the 'As Cinco Estações' performance at Museo de Bellas Artes de Caracas in 1976. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.

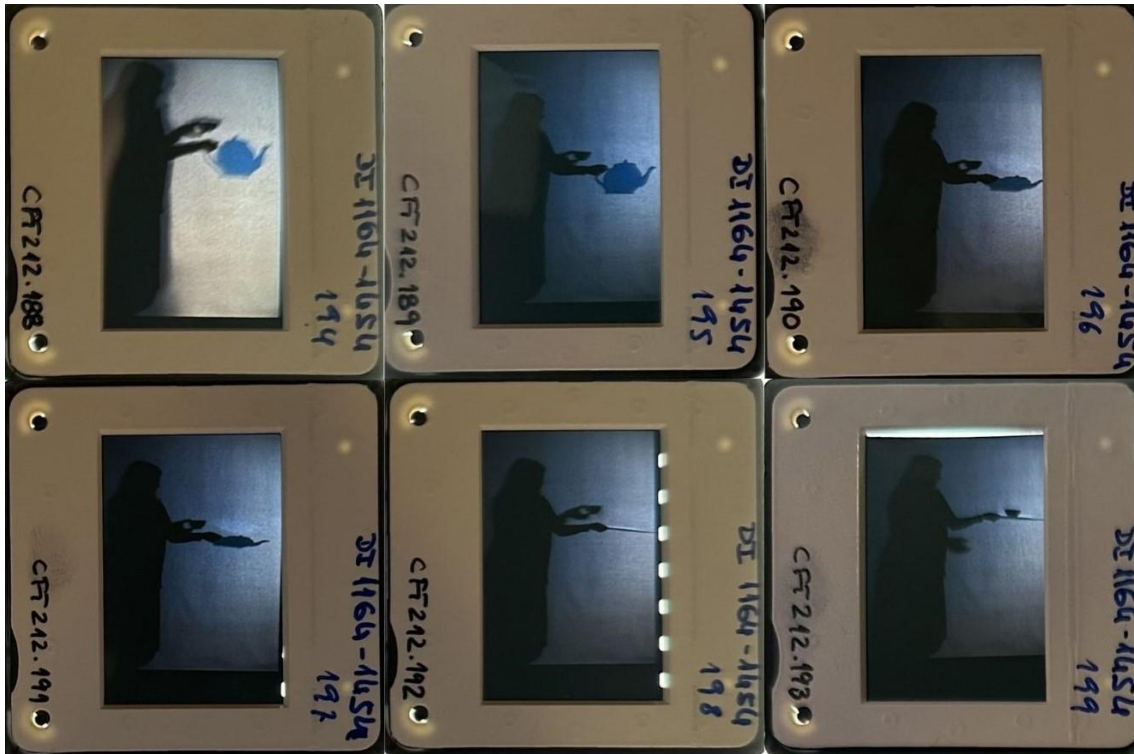


Image 8 - Lourdes Castro transforms a kettle into a tray for serving a teacup during a performance's rehearsal of *Linha de Horizonte* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Modern Art Center (CAM) in 1985. Diapositives by Claire Turin. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.



Image 9 - Lourdes Castro transforms the same stick that makes the 'horizontal line' into a fishing rod and, later, into a flagpole. *Linha de Horizonte*'s rehearsal at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Modern Art Center (CAM) in 1985. Negatives of photographs by Claire Turin. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

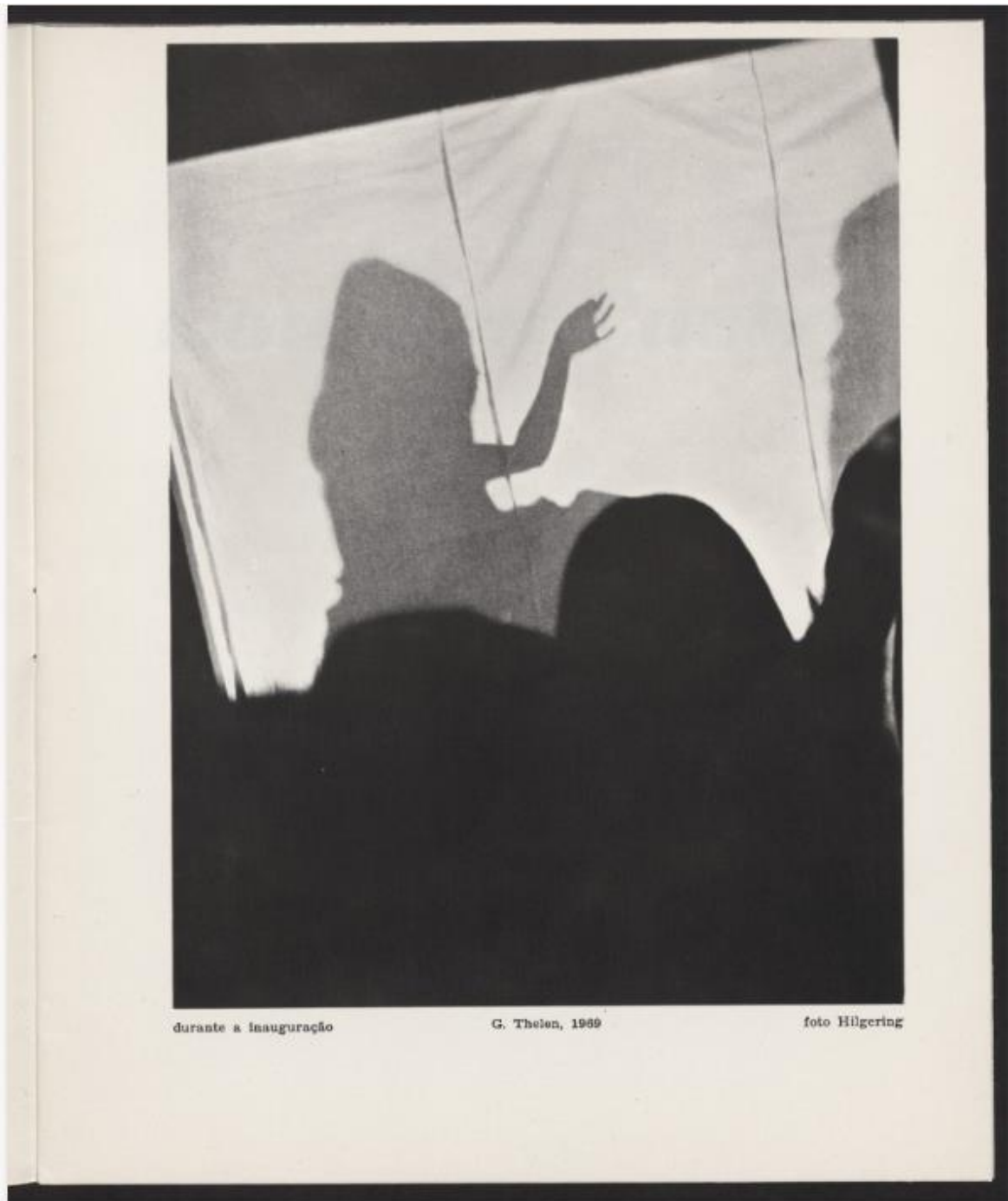


Image 10 – Photo by Hilgering of Lourdes Castro sewing a garment during a shadow theatre performance presented at the opening of her solo exhibition at the Galerie Thelen in Essen, 1969. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive (possibly retrieved from a Galeria 111 catalogue).



Paris 19. 1. 1976

cher Ruhrberg,  
comment ça va? j'ai toujours  
plus au moins de vos nouvelles  
et des activités DAAD par  
"Was ist wann?" in Berlin.  
(moi j'ai déménagé encore une  
fois und même neue Adresse  
ist jetzt:

Lourdes Castro 122 av d'Alsace 75013 Paris

TEL 580 88 44

à part ça, l'année dernière  
j'étais invitée au Festival  
d'automne à Paris et j'ai  
présenté avec M. Zimbro (j'ai  
l'ombre, il est la lumière!)  
un tout nouveau spectacle d'ombres  
"des cinq saisons" (plus perfectionné  
je crois, sans entracte) au musée  
d'art (moderne de la ville de Paris.  
Kurz vor Weihnachten traf ich  
hies Prof. Dr. Schulte qui m'a  
beaucoup encouragé à faire une  
demande de bourse pour Berlin.  
Il m'a dit qu'il fallait présenter  
le dossier à peu près (marché) April  
qu'il appuierait ma candidature,  
qu'il fallait aussi envoyer à part  
des documents, des critiques et j'en  
ai eu de très bonnes dans le monde,  
Tjark, etc.

(Mais au fond ce qui m'est inter-  
ressant ce me serait pas 1 année  
à Berlin mais plutôt 2 ou 3  
semaines pour faire spectacle  
(éventuellement organiser une  
exposition avec). Alors Prof. Dr. Schulte  
m'a conseillé de t'écrire pour me  
renseigner auprès de toi, comment  
je dois faire la demande et  
quelles autres possibilités pourrais-je  
avoir en dehors d'une vraie bourse.

Je t'envoie ici-joint les programmes  
du Festival d'automne et autres papiers.

En Novembre passé, en rentrant  
d'un voyage en Pologne, j'ai été passé  
quarante jours à Berlin u. schnell  
Bethanien angucken. Michael  
Haerdter gesehen. Ich glaube er liebt  
interessiert au deux Schatten-theater. Dieser

neue Programme dauert 1 Stunde  
10 ungeträgt.

À bientôt de te lire  
das beste u. das schönste für 1976  
Je t'embrasse (mit amour)

Lourdes Castro

Image 11 – 19.01.1976. Paris. Letter from Lourdes Castro to Karl Ruhrberg, dated January 1976, in which she discusses the invitation she received to participate in Paris' Autumn Festival, addresses certain critiques she received regarding her work, and inquiries about the feasibility of doing a artistic residency in Berlin. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.

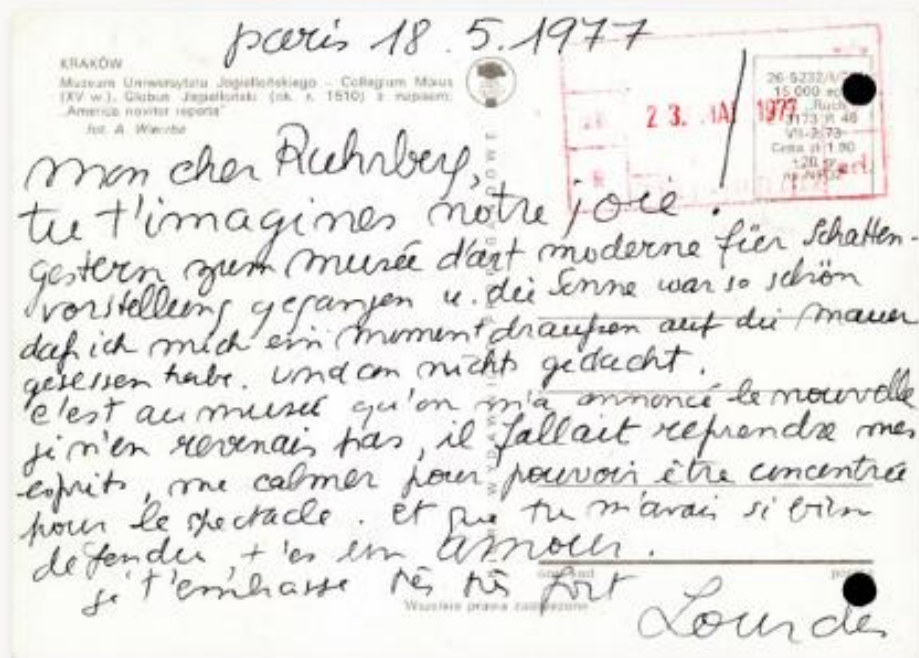


Image 12 – 18.05.1977. Paris. Postcard from Lourdes Castro to Karl Ruhrberg, dated May 1977, in which she celebrates the positive reception at the Musée d'Art Moderne and expresses regret over some unfortunate news, possibly referring to Ruhrberg's departure from his position. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.

Frau  
Lourdes Castro  
124 Avenue de l'Italie

75013 Paris / France

den 18. 7. 1977

012-R/Di

Liebe Lourdes,

vielen Dank für Deine Karte vom 18. Mai, die Du in so fröhlicher Stimmung geschrieben hast. Hoffentlich bist Du auch fröhlich geblieben, als Dich die Nachricht erreichte, daß Du nun doch nicht von der Jury des Berliner Künstlerprogramms hierher eingeladen worden bist. Du hast bis zuletzt sehr gut im Rennen gelegen, aber dann sind leider ein paar Kollegen im letzten Moment an Dir vorbeigezogen. Du weißt ja, daß wir unsererseits die Entscheidung der Juroren nicht beeinflussen können. Wie ich höre hat aber Herr Schulte eine andere Lösung für Dich gefunden. Jedenfalls freue ich mich darüber, Dich auf diese Weise bald wieder in Berlin begrüßen zu können, wenn ich Dir auch den vollen Erfolg bei den Juroren gewünscht hätte.

Herzliche Grüße  
Dein

Karl Ruhrberg

Image 13 – 18.07.1977. Letter from Karl Ruhrberg to Lourdes Castro, dated July 1977, expressing gratitude for the postcard. Despite her not being selected for the Artists-in-Berlin Program, he assures her that he will explore alternative avenues to showcase her remarkable work in Berlin. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.

Paris sábado 19. 2. 1977



Caro Senhor Wallenstein,

recebi hoje o vosso telegrama que agradeço  
quanto às datas convêm perfeitamente,  
mas quanto ao número de espetáculos  
talvez não tivesse explicado bem na  
minha carta anterior. Eu dizia: "as sombras  
não fazem menos que três espetáculos" e  
subentendia em cada sítio, em cada palco  
diferente. O que pensei se percebesse na frase  
que se seguia: "isto porque a montagem,  
a preparação são muito minuciosas e a  
nosso cargo. Há sempre também um ensaio  
geral em cada lugar diferente."  
Porquê esta minha observação de: menos que  
três espetáculos em cada sítio ou palco?  
Quando chego a esse palco, lugar que me é  
estranho, necessito de ter a serenidade de o  
poder vir a fazer meu. Isto em favor de  
uma certa qualidade que mais tarde é  
revelada na maneira como decorre o espetáculo.  
A preparação é extremamente laboriosa e minuciosa  
e dessa maneira tudo está unido.

Portanto o que quero dizer e por experiência,  
é que gostaria na realidade de fazer 3 vezes  
em Lisboa e 3 no Porto.

Sendo por razões económicas, proponho à vossa  
aprovação que se fazendo mais um em Lisboa  
e mais dois no Porto, o preço destes seja  
repressivo, confiando inteiramente no vosso  
critério.

Apesar da vossa decisão gostaria também  
que me falasse brevemente em como pensam  
programa e cartas.

Antecipadamente agradeço a vossa resposta.

Com os melhores cumprimentos

Atenciosamente

Lourdes Castro

P.S. ou será que não tenha de si vela disponível toda essa dia? !  
Um detalhe importante e que não promovesse a vossa, e que  
necessitam pelo menos 4 dias antes do dia do espetáculo  
para a montagem na própria sala.

Lourdes Castro 111 av. d'Italie 75013 Paris  
TEL 580 88 44

Image 14 – 19.02.1977. Paris. Letter from Lourdes Castro to Carlos Wallenstein from Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, dated February 1977, where she explains the minimum request of three performances per stage in order to assure their quality. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

Paris 22 fev 1976



Ex<sup>ma</sup> Senhora

Estimada 383  
Data 10.3.76  
Proc. N.º Div. 175

Como já passou quasi um ano que recebi a vossa resposta (14.4.75) não favorável ao meu pedido de subsídio para o teatro "Les Ombres", sabendo que entretanto recommeceram a atribuir bolsas para o estrangeiro, e como continuo interessada, venho por este modo actualizar o meu pedido.

Por outro lado não sei se a modalidade Bolsa de estudo que me conteria a mesma, não teria mais possibilidade de me ser atribuída. Para isso peço o vosso conselho.

Separadamente envio os últimos programas e documentação.

Estive recentemente em contacto com o Dr. J.-A. França que visitou o meu atelier e pergunta do corrent das minhas actividades e projectos.

Gostaria também de um dia poder apresentar o espectáculo "les cinq saisons" em Portugal para o que necessitaria de ajuda de Fundação C. Gulbenkian. Agradeço a V. Ex<sup>cia</sup> o favor de me informar a que serviço me devo dirigir para tratar desse assunto.

Aguardando as vossas notícias e a decisão do Serviço Internacional envio a V. Ex<sup>cia</sup> os meus melhores cumprimentos

a minha nova direcção:

Lourdes Castro 126 av d'Italie 75013 Paris

Lourdes Castro

Image 15 - 22.02.1996. Paris. Letter from Lourdes Castro to Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, dated February 1976, where she tries (for the second consecutive year) to ask for the institution to subsidize her Shadow Theatre exploration and the presentation of her work in Portugal. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.



Paris 19. 1. 1976

cher Ruhrberg,  
comment ça va? j'ai toujours  
plus au moins de vos nouvelles  
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"Was ist wann?" in Berlin.

(moi j'ai déménagé encore une  
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"Les cinq saisons" (plus perfectionné  
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d'art (moderne de la ville de Paris.  
Kurz vor Weihnachten traf ich  
Herr Prof. Dr. Schulte qui m'a  
beaucoup encouragé à faire une  
demande de bourse pour Berlin.  
Il m'a dit qu'il fallait présenter  
le dossier à peu près (mars/avril)  
qu'il appuierait ma candidature,  
qu'il fallait aussi envoyer à part  
des documents, des critiques et j'en  
ai eu de très bonnes dans Le Monde,  
Figaro, etc.

(mais au fond ce qui me  
resserait ce ne serait pas 1 année  
à Berlin mais plutôt 2 ou 3  
semaines pour faire le spectacle  
(éventuellement organiser une  
exposition avec). Alors Prof. Dr. Schulte  
m'a conseillé de réfléchir pour me  
renseigner auprès de toi, comment  
je dois faire la demande et  
quelles autres possibilités pourrais-je  
avoir en dehors d'une vraie bourse.

Je t'envoie ici-joint les programmes  
du Festival d'automne et autres festivals.

En Novembre passé, en rentrant  
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par Kurz à Berlin et schnell  
Bethanien angucken. Michael  
Haerdter gesehen. Ich glaube er bleibt  
weiterhin am dem Schattentheater. Dieser

neue Programm dauert 1 Stunde  
10 unperfekt.

à l'endroit de te lire  
das beste u. das schönste Tier 1976  
Je t'embrasse (mit amour)

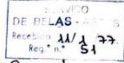
Lourdes Castro

Image 16 – 19.01.1976. Paris. In this letter to her German colleague Karl Ruhrberg (from DAAD), Lourdes Castro discusses a myriad of topics, such as the fact that *As Cinco Estações* (1975-1980) is already a larger show (lasting one hour and fifteen minutes) and is more refined compared to *As Sombras* (1973-1975). She also comments on the positive reviews that this show received when it was in Paris (specifically referring to the newspapers *Le Monde* and *Figaro*). She talks about meeting with the president of the DAAD (Mr. Schulte) in Paris and that he seemed interested in her returning to Berlin to continue her research there (something she shows interest in, but also comments that if she were to go, she would like to stay for a minimum of 2 or three semesters - not only to perform some shows but also to develop her theatre itself, the ideas and techniques). Given this, she questions her friend about what he thinks would be the best alternatives for her, perhaps something alternative and not just a scholarship in a stricter sense. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.



Image 17- During a performance of *Linha de Horizonte* (1980-1985), Lourdes Castro's shadow overlaps a hydrangea flower and a yellow square of plexiglass. This would later reveal itself to be a book or some form of herbarium as the artist flipped its pages, unveiling new colours of plexiglass adorned with parts of other plants. Photograph by Claire Turin. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

Paris 7. janeiro 1977



caro Senhor Carlos Wallenstein,

Pego desculpa não ter respondido logo à sua carta de dezembro, mas acertei-me de Paris por duas vezes, - que "perturbou" meu correio.

Agradeço-lhe muito as suas notícias assim como à Fundação C. Gulbenkian pela possibilidade que nos oferece de ir a Portugal apresentar o espectáculo de sombras, desejo que tenha tido muito.

Quanto aos dois pontos de que me fala interessa-me unicamente a apresentação das sombras.

Estou emendada a mostra - las aqui, mais uma vez, integradas no plano da exposição "Mythologies Quotidiennes", em Abril próximo, exposição esta que se prepara para inaugurar as novas salas do Museu de Arte Moderna de la Ville de Paris, não se sabendo ainda, por esta razão, a data exacta de abertura. Propunha que a inauguração a Portugal fosse logo a seguir a esta manifestação, mas foi em Abril - Maio

Aí necessitamos apenas de uma tomada normal 220 V e dum magnetofone, a nossa música de acompanhamento está numa banda tipo profissional.

Além de alguns objectos simples em madeira que se construiria no próprio sítio.

Despesas: as sombras "cobram" 2.000 NF por espectáculo e não fazem custos que não. Isto porque a montagem a preparação são muito minuciosas e a nosso cargo, há sempre também um ensaio geral em cada lugar diferente.

Desejando mais espectáculos estudar-se-ia um preço conjuntamente.

Nós gostaríamos de oferecer alguns espectáculos se a Fundação C. Gulbenkian estiver interessada em convidar alguma de liceus, escola de Artes Dec. p. ex. etc.

O espectáculo "As cinco estações", que dura 1 hora 1/4 sem intervalo, não foi feito para crianças, especialmente, mas não foi feito para uma criança não possa ver. No entanto só a partir dos 12 anos mais pequenos e que se podem apertar realmente do que se passa.

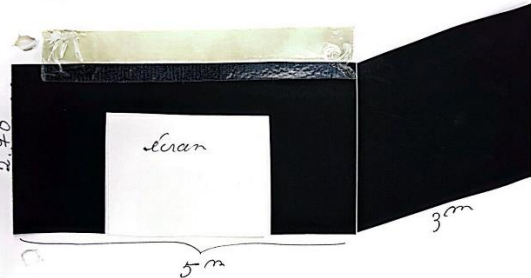
Medidas do espaço onde achamos:

largura 5 metros mínimo

profundidade 3 " "

altura 2,70 " "

6 écran made 3<sup>m</sup> x 2,20, transportam-se enrolado, é leve e fácil para suspender.



É preciso fechar o espaço completamente para que a luz não passe através senão do écran centram-se utilizar panos pretos opacos.

Em Berlim p. ex. como se tratava dum palco normal, a cortina do próprio teatro serviu para tapar lateralmente.

A sala não convém ser muito grande, mas conheço a sala mais pequena de Fundação, que medidas tem aproximadamente?

Transporte - penso que o mais prático seria de comboio, visto não possuir carro, para levarmos connosco todo o material: écran, luzes, objectos, guardanapo.

Talvo no plural porque com efeito se trata de duas pessoas, eu que sou a sombra-actriz, digamos assim e o Manuel Zimbro a luz-técnica. Trabalhamos sempre juntos, mais: o espectáculo foi programado, montado e estudado por nós os dois em todos os detalhes.

Costumamos incluir nas despesas a estadia, mas em Lisboa porque temos alojamento gratuito, apenas pediríamos uma ajuda.

Creio que dum momento geral se tudo. Faltava falar do cartaz, programa, etc que nós próprios nos poderíamos incumbir de fazer.

Com os meus melhores cumprimentos e desejos de Bom ano novo

Lourdes Castro

Image 18 - 07.01.1977. Paris. In this invaluable letter addressed to Carlos Wallenstein of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lourdes Castro addresses various practical and logistical details regarding the performance. These range from infrastructural and technical requirements to proposed dates, fees, transportation, target audience, accommodation, and so forth. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

AUTORIZAÇÃO DE PAGAMENTO NO ESTRANGEIRO  
OVERSEAS PAYMENT AUTHORISATION

Ao Serviço de Finanças  
To Finance Department

Escritório Lisboa  
Office

Data 4 Julho 1980  
Date

Pedimos o favor de preparar o seguinte  
Kindly arrange the following

Pagamento a Delegação de Paris  
Payment to

Importância FF 8.000,00 (Oito mil francos franceses).  
Amount

Particulars of Transaction Importância respeitante a um subsídio  
concedido à artista LOURDES CASTRO, para  
o registo, em vídeo, do espectáculo do  
Teatro de Sombras "As 5 Estações".

Confirmation Copy

BELAS ARTES

N.º do Subsídio 130, 131 Classe C/6.1112 Assinado  
Grant Ref. N.º 132/80 Class Signed

Conferido A. H. ANDRADE Autorizado  
Checked Pelo Serviço de Finanças For Finance Department Authorised

ns/  
[Signature]

For Finance Department

§ Instructions issued by ..... to ..... by letter dated .....

Mailed 8.7.80

Signed by .....  
(Signatories to initial)

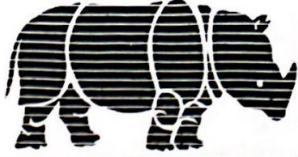
§ PAR Office hereby authorised to effect transaction

AP. N.º

§ Delete as necessary For Finance Department

Image 19- Authorization for payment abroad in the amount of 8000 French francs signed by the Fine Arts Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to finance the video recording of the shadow theatre production *As Cinco Estações* by Lourdes Castro. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

# Les FILMS du RHINOCEROS



Paris, le 16 Juillet 1980

Mario BARROSO *cinéaste*  
~~76 rue des Plantes qu'fois~~  
~~75014 Paris~~ *à l'expérience -*  
*- filmé gratuitement.*

FACTURE N° 80/536

achat de 60 m de Kodak 7247 ..... 80,00 F

développement et tirage ..... 240,00 F

---

320,00 F

TVA 17,6% 56,32 F

---

Total TTC 376,82 F

réglé ce jour en espèces

DARVAS & MARTYR - PARIS

*depuis barro*  
~~jaeger~~ ~~CASTRO~~  
*Lourdes Castro*

S.A.R.L. au Capital de 330.500 F  
 6, RUE DES MARTYRS, 75009 PARIS  
 TÉL. 281.03.05  
 R.C. Paris B 310 997 309

Image 20 - Invoice sent by Lourdes Castro to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, detailing only the material expenses incurred in the production of the film *As Cinco Estações*, accompanied by a note stating that the cinematographer Mario Barroso would not need to be compensated, courtesy extended from his part. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

Funchal 20.8.77

très cher Ruhrberg  
mille mercis für Deine très chère Lettre.  
In Paris, in Mai, war ich wirklich "hochföcklich"  
als ich erfahre daß ich das Berliner Stipendium  
bekommen hatte. Ich hab's bestimmt nicht  
gut verstanden oder war unsere Freunde  
so dergleichen groß et communicative daß  
Prof. Schulte uns damals vielleicht nicht  
klar klar erklären konnte ...

In Lissabon gerade als wir das Schattentheater  
in der Fondation Gulbenkian spielten, bekam  
ich nun die wahre Nachricht.

(Wir hatten so ein Erfolg, 3 ganz volle Stühle,  
sehr gute Kritik in den Portugiesischen Zeitungen,  
daß meine innere Ruhe sich gut stützen  
konnte).

Nun mußte ich zuerst wissen, bevor ich mich  
endlich entscheide, wie es mit Atelier ist  
und dies möchte ich nun gerne von Dir  
direkt genau benachrichtigt werden.

(parce qu'il faut bien faire nos calculs,  
parce qu'on viendrait à deux - insupportable  
ombre et lumière, comment ça va.)

Wie ist es in Berlin, kann ich mit einem

Atelier in Belarion umsonst ausrechnen?  
Ich verstehe nämlich nicht gut was  
Atelierzuschuß bedeuten soll.

Wenn es von Faturus abhängig ist, bist mir  
bitte wissen wann es für die DAAD möglich  
ist, denn wir können, ab den 1. Dezember,  
irgendwann anfangen.

In Oktober haben wir noch Schattentheater in  
Porto, erst danach rentrée à Paris, Bitte  
antworte vorher, ja?

ESTRADA MONUMENTAL 259  
FUNCHAL MADEIRA PORTUGAL

Einmal mußt Du uns auf dieser Insel  
besuchen, der Sommer ist mir sehr warm  
und die Vegetation envoutante.

très bon été!

sehr herzlich

Lourdes

Image 21- 20.08.1977. Funchal. Letter from Lourdes Castro to Ruhrberg celebrating her attainment of the DAAD's alternative scholarship and the success of "As Cinco Estações" (1975-1980) at Gulbenkian. She also raises a few inquiries about accommodation in Berlin, emphasizing the importance of including Zimbro in the arrangements. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.

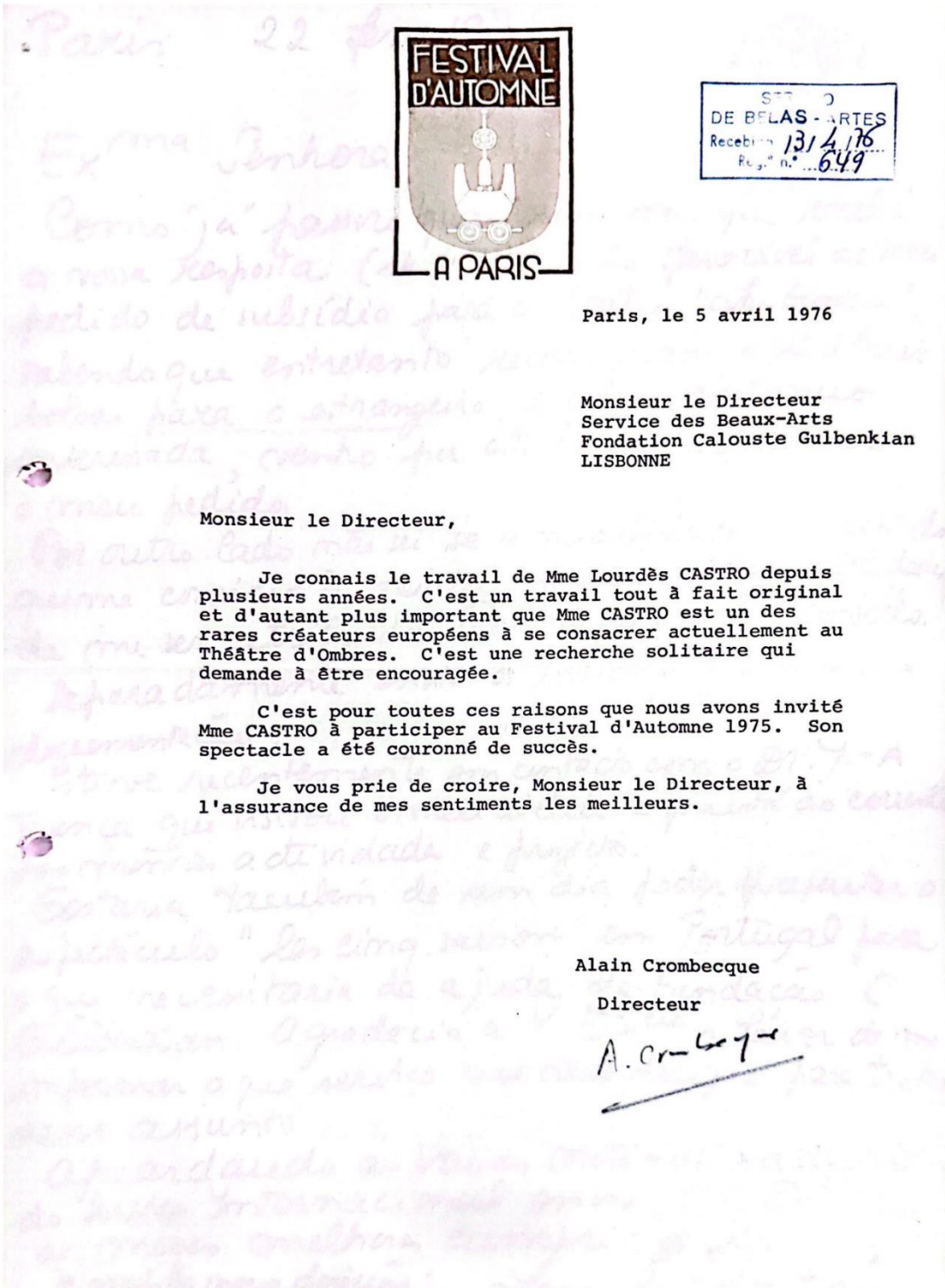


Image 22 - Recommendation letter sent by the director of the Autumn Festival in Paris to the director of the Fine Arts Department of the Gulbenkian Foundation. It highlights the strength of her career, the success of her new work, and the importance of investing in her experiments with Theatre of Shadows, which is a rather solitary area of research in Europe and therefore even more significant. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

AUTORIZAÇÃO DE SUBSÍDIO Nº 122/77

SERVIÇO BELAS-ARTES CATEGORIA TEATRO

RUBRICA ORÇAMENTAL SUBSÍDIOS/TEATRO

NOME TEATRO DE SOMBRAS - LOURDES CASTRO

MORADA 124, Av. d'Italia 75013

PARIS

VALOR DO SUBSÍDIO ESC. 440880 (quatrocentos e quarenta escudos e oitenta centavos)

FINS DO SUBSÍDIO (com valores discriminados):

Reforço da verba votada para a iniciativa

DESPACHO DE : Dr. Pedro Tamen, de 26.10.77

ACTA Nº: \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVAÇÕES: Por transferência da rubrica Subsídios/Teatro para a de  
Iniciativas/Teatro

Lisboa, \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_ de 19 \_\_\_\_\_

4 Novembro 77

O DIRECTOR DO SERVIÇO

17/786

Image 23 – Authorization of subsidy granting an additional allocation of funds voted for the initiative 'Teatro de Sombras - Lourdes Castro' in the amount of 440.80 escudos. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

Paris 5, XI 1980



Orcamento para uma série de  
diapositivos com destino ao  
Centro de Arte Moderna da  
Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian  
sobre o programa "as cinco estações"  
do Teatro de Sombra de Lourdes  
Castro e Manuel Zimbro (com  
uma cópia para nós)  
que serão realizados pela fotografia

Claire Turyn  
6 rue Mendelssohn  
6<sup>ème</sup> étage D  
75020 Paris

7.000 F

Poco o favor que esta quantia seja enviada diretamente  
para: Turyn, rue Mendelssohn, 6<sup>ème</sup> étage D, 75020 Paris.

Despesas com a experiência filme  
sobre o mesmo programa  
realizada em julho em Paris

376.82 F

junto envio a respectiva factura que já foi  
paga por mim

Lourdes Castro  
124 av. d'Italie  
75013 Paris

Com os melhores cumprimentos  
subsero-me atentamente

Lourdes Castro

Image 24 – Correspondence from Lourdes Castro addressed to the Fine Arts Service of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, outlining the budgets for a series of slides produced for the performance *As Cinco Estações* (1975-1980) by photographer Claire Turyn, along with expenses related to the 'film experience'. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.

*Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian*

*Serviço Internacional*

*Lisboa*

PC/CV  
Inf. N.º 219/78  
Proc.º Div/78

INFORMAÇÃO - PARECER

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PROGRAMA DE CULTURA PORTUGUESA EM MUNIQUE

(Novembro-Dezembro 1978)

1. No ofício em que a Secretaria de Estado da Cultura solicita a colaboração da Fundação para as actividades previstas nos pontos 1, 2, e 10 ("Exposição de Pintura e Escultura Portuguesas Contemporâneas", "Exposição de Gravura Portuguesa Contemporânea" e "Teatro de Sombras"), integradas no programa em título, o Administrador Senhor Roberto Gulbenkian exarou, em 26 do mês findo, o despacho que se transcreve:

" ..... . Ao Dir. do Serviço Internacional e aos Directores dos S. Belas Artes e de Exposições com o pedido de informação conjunta para habilitar o C.A. a uma deliberação. "

2. Acerca deste assunto já V. Ex.ª. despachara, em 13 do mesmo mês, nos seguintes termos:

" Dr. Pedro da Cunha  
De acordo com conversações havidas com o Pintor Nikias Skapinakis, o S.I. poderá assumir o encargo com a apresentação em Munique, do "Teatro de Sombras", de Lourdes Castro.

Tal apresentação chegou a estar prevista para a Bienal de Veneza, mas não pôde ser concretizada.

O programa anexo foi enviado pela SEC ao Senhor Presidente, solicitando a comparticipação da Fundação nas diversas iniciativas previstas.

Do nosso lado, e caso o Senhor Presidente dê o seu acordo ao programa, subsidiaremos a referida apresentação. Para tal, deverá o S.I. entrar em contacto com Lourdes Castro perguntando-lhe se está interessada em participar na "Semana" e, em caso afirmativo, quais os encargos previstos para tal efeito."

3. Em cumprimento do despacho supra, o Serviço tentou entrar em contacto com Lourdes Castro, tendo sido informado que esta se encontrava ausente no estrangeiro, ou em Paris ou na Alemanha.

Image 25 – Report on the Portuguese Culture Program in Munich, mentioning that the Exchange Service may assume the responsibility for the presentation of theatre of shadows in Munich, but also noting the difficulty in contacting the artist to confirm her participation in the event. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.


INFORMAÇÃO - PARECER

4. Em face do que precede, o signatário pediu ao Arqtº. Sommer Ribeiro, que se deslocou recentemente a Paris, o favor de consultar Lourdes Castro quanto à matéria constante da parte final do citado despacho de V. Exª., tal não tendo, porém, sido possível uma vez que a referida Senhora também se não encontrava naquela cidade.

5. Por despacho de V. Exª., de 26 de Maio p.p., foi concedida à SEC, para a apresentação na Bienal de Veneza, do "Teatro de Sombras" de Lourdes de Castro, um subsídio de Esc. 73.000\$00 (Setenta e três mil escudos) importância esta que, pelos motivos que são do conhecimento de V. Exª., não chegou a ser utilizada.

6. Assim, tendo em conta os termos do despacho do Administrador Senhor Roberto Gulbenkian e de V. Exª., julga-se que a eventual comparticipação do Serviço Internacional no Programa de Cultura Portuguesa em Munique, deverá ficar dependente da posição que, acerca do mesmo, vier a ser tomada pelo Conselho de Administração e, caso essa posição seja favorável, do resultado da consulta a fazer a Lourdes Castro quanto à apresentação do seu "Teatro de Sombras".

Lisboa, 10 de Agosto de 1978

  
(Pedro da Cunha)

Madame Lourdes Castro  
124 Avenue d'Italie  
Paris 75013  
Frankreich.

den 18. Januar 1978  
012/RI/NS

Liebe Lourdes Castro,

Ihre wunderschöne Karte hat mir viel Freude gemacht. Natürlich begrüßen wir mit Ihnen die schöne Möglichkeit einer Einzelausstellung, die Sie unbedingt wahrnehmen müssen. Ende April/Anfang Mai scheint mir sogar noch eine bessere Zeit zu sein; im Augenblick überschlägt sich alles (jeder will im Januar und Februar sein Stipendium beginnen), und etwas später hat sich die Hektik hoffentlich ein bisschen gelegt, so dass mehr Zeit zum Planen und Überlegen ist.

Also keine Sorge - wir erwarten Sie im April/Mai.

Viele herzliche Grüsse

Ihre

Barbara Richter.

Image 26 – Letter in which Barbara Richter expresses satisfaction that Castro has rescheduled her arrival in Berlin for late April/ early May, believing it to be a more suitable date for her reception and with a higher likelihood of availability to accommodate her in one of Bethanien's studios. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.

Frau  
Lourdes Castro  
c/o Künstlerhaus Bethanien  
Mariannenplatz 2  
1000 Berlin 36

den 7. September 1978  
012 - Ri/Ro

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Liebe Lourdes,

Herr Dr. Schmied bittet mich, Ihnen mitzuteilen, dass es gelungen ist,  
Ihren Aufenthalt in Berlin noch um zwei Monate zu verlängern. Damit geht  
die Stipendienzeit also definitiv am 31. Januar 1979 zu Ende.

Wir hoffen, dass diese Lösung Ihren Plänen entgegenkommt und sind

mit den besten Grüßen

Barbara Richter

Evt. 2 weitere Monate  
gratis Aufenthalt  
im Atelier in Bethanien

Image 27 – Letter from Barbara Richter of DAAD informing Lourdes of the success of her request for an extension of the scholarship, advising that it will definitively conclude only on January 31st. Source: Künstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.



Image 28 – By the end of *Linha de Horizonte* (1980-1985), still within the setting of the village festival with the colourful flags, Lourdes Castro executes a bow as a shadow, without revealing the true source of the shadow projection. Source: MUDAS Archive.



Image 29 - Lourdes Castro wearing a translucent blue raincoat during a rehearsal for *Linha de Horizonte* (1981-1985). Slides captured by Claire Turin. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.



Image 30 - Lourdes Castro adjusting a mast with colourful and translucent flags during a rehearsal for *Linha de Horizonte* (1981-1985). Slides captured by Claire Turin. Source: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Archive.



Tantôt il lui demandait la permission de lui baiser la jambe, et il profitait de la circonstance pour baiser cette belle jambe dans telle position qu'elle dessinât nettement son contour sur le soleil couchant!

Charles Baudelaire

### De l'épaisseur des OMBRES

Le Théâtre d'Ombres de Lourdes Castro est plus ombres de théâtre que théâtre d'ombres.

C'est une "chose" qui, s'abreuvant à la source d'un théâtre à l'Orient, tend la main au happening, donne le bras à l'avant-scène et va faire les courses avec le cinéma, pour exalter le souffle de qui se réveille et s'endort presque tous les jours (presque tous, car il y a des jours où il faut veiller afin de travailler pour le théâtre).

LES OMBRES -appelons-les ainsi parce que c'est moins théâtral- se passent en trois lieux déterminés : DERRIERE, AU MILIEU et DEVANT un rectangle de drap blanc, d'une surface de six mètres carrés à peu près, suspendu par un de ses longs côtés à deux crochets vissés sur une latte de bois blanc. Sur le tissu a été appliquée une colle qui obstruant la trame, permet la diffusion régulière d'une projection lumineuse, et rend invisible, par DEVANT, l'origine de cette projection. Les trois lieux déterminés font partie d'un tout que l'on peut appeler "le lieu où tout se passe".

#### DERRIERE l'Ecran

Lieu qui est contenu dans une surface de sept mètres carrés utiles à toute l'action qui se passe entre deux lampes électriques et l'Ecran. Lumières et couleurs qui parfois s'éteignent, pour faire place à d'autres moyens, orientés vers la même finalité.

La mise-en-scène est relativement minutieuse, mais laisse au hasard la possibilité d'une intervention plus ou moins importante : sans être improvisée, l'action est réalisée sans cahiers de char...

Le type de colle qui fait adhérer la musique à l'image est de celles qu'on pose d'abord à un certain endroit, puis à un autre, qu'on laisse ensuite sécher, et c'est alors qu'elle colle. Bref : la musique n'est pas collée, elle est compagne.

Quelques objets sont "préparés". Ce sont déjà en eux-mêmes des ombres qui vont engendrer d'autres ombres dans le parcours de leur manipulation. Et ceux qui ne le sont pas, sont hardiment domestiques.

#### DEVANT l'Ecran

Le lieu de celui qui voit.

Parce que ce sont des ombres sans référence, elles se meuvent très lentement afin d'y être suffisamment perceptibles ; très, très lentement, les ombres décrivent des taches banales qui se résolvent en des sens différents, soit parce qu'ils sont (mais nous l'oublions) très importants, soit parce qu'ils ont été choisis. C'est quelque chose qui est seul, sans histoire, fascinant parce que mystérieux, passionnant parce qu'éphémère.

#### au MILIEU de l'Ecran

Durent tout le spectacle l'Ecran accueille tous les points des différents dessins en mouvement qui s'y trouvent projetés. Il accueille et absorbe toutes ces ombres, non DEVANT, ni DERRIERE, mais en son MILIEU.

"Il y a milieu, il n'y a pas de milieu entre" (Pascal)  
Tel est le "lieu où tout se passe".

Si on additionne toutes les lignes du regard de celui qui voit par DEVANT, et toutes les lignes de celui qui fait, ou ne fait pas, par DERRIERE, on obtient un résultat qui se trouve inscrit dans ce MILIEU d'une épaisseur infiniment petite, et qui est égale à une énorme brèche qui s'ouvre entre deux mondes.

M. Z. 1974

Image 31 - Document explaining the purpose of theatre of shadows and its 'three places' of action: in front of the screen, behind the screen, and in the middle of the screen; dated 1974. It is known that the 'M.Z.' stands for the probable authorship of Manuel Zimbro. Source: Kunstlerhaus Bethanien Archive.

