

Volume 2, No. 1scopio Magazine AAI- Exploring Contemporary Realities

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Issue description

With this Open Call "**Exploring Contemporary Realities**", we launched the annual major theme of interest for **scopio Magazine AAI – Exploring Contemporary Realities, Volume 2**, and initiated a new collaboration with the project Contrast: Multidisciplinary network of artistic initiatives in Art, Architecture, Design and Photography through **SCOPIO & CONTRAST International Conference**.

The call had as responsible Editors academics / artists coming from both scopio Magazine AAI and the Contrast project and this rich editorial team ensured the necessary peer review work through the U. Porto OJS platform.

scopio Magazine AAI is, in this way, the official publishing academic periodical for International Conference SCOPIO & CONTRAST and the submissions are both for the Conference and its 2nd volume in partnership with Contrast addressing the theme Exploring Contemporary Realities.

Scopio Magazine AAI is transitioning to continuous publication to better align with the dynamics of Open Access electronic publishing, moving away from the constraints of its previous model geared towards traditional print formats. This shift aims to expedite the dissemination of research to the community, offering immediate benefits to both readers and authors by ensuring quicker access to new findings. The adoption of a continuous publication strategy enhances the open review process by reducing the time from submission to publication and by boosting the visibility of individual contributions, thus fostering greater engagement and dissemination within the scholarly community.

"**Exploring Contemporary Realities**" aimed to explore the use of photography and other means of visual representation as forms of artistic research, documentation, and analysis of different configurations on the transformation of the physical environment and how it is understood and shaped by a diverse field of study, practices and cultures. This means, besides other things, to better understand through photography and film the relationship between culture and space and explore how culture, beliefs, behaviours, and practices, interacts with and shape the physical environment of different territories and their architectures, cities and landscapes, as well as to acknowledge contemporary discourses and usages of landscape concepts^{[III](#)}.

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Issue Discription

Exploring Contemporary Realities

Pedro Leão Neto

Scopio Architecture, Art and Image

Exploring Contemporary Realities

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Issue Description

Exploring Contemporary Realities

Pedro Leão Neto

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This means that submissions that are accepted after peer review are released online for open review and once the issue is complete, the submissions receive traditional consecutive page numbering as part of the annual issue/volume that is then complete and released.

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1. See the discussion of key conceptions of landscape circulating as part of the recent discourse i.e. *landscape as a fundamental building block, a communicative medium, and a realm of imaginative constructs.* "Vera Vicenzotti. "The Landscape of Landscape Urbanism." *Landscape Journal* 36, no. 1 (2018): 75–86. <https://doi.org/10.3368/lj.36.1.75>. <https://lj.uwpress.org/content/wpjl/36/1/75.full.pdf>.

Social transformations are linked to changes in the inhabited place, and recent history has revealed the speed with which space changes. These transformations have been so radical that regular documentation about the impermanence of the place has become urgent. In fact, places are uncertain spaces and to represent them visually is to preserve their understanding, recent life experiences such as the gentrification of large cities or the health crisis have imposed profound changes on contemporary life models and, consequently, allowed the creation of previously unthinkable photographs. This is where the "Exploring contemporary realities" is located, artistic projects and documentary projects that operate from the expanded field of architecture, art and design from its actual materialization to the experiences of the place; exploring different levels of privacy, scales and urban landscapes. Focusing also on the exploration of the discursive space that operates in broader systems: sociocultural, political, historical and even technical.

If we accept the image as a kind of visual language², disseminated and received in different geographic points, this call extends this dialogue, opening up to the integration of different looks of cultural identities from other regions, places and countries; the specificity of the place as a way to increase our understanding of society and the territory. The objective is to encourage the use of images for the construction of artistic projects that promote critical views on the transformation of the physical environment as a result of the way they are perceived and experienced in their multiple facets. In summary, the aim is to take advantage of the current role of the image as a way of expanding knowledge with a particular focus on photography, recognized as a privileged means of expression and research for the understanding of architecture and urban landscapes and for the construction of the imaginary; between document and fiction; reproduction and manipulation; analogue and digital visual representation as a means of crossing different disciplines, blurring artistic boundaries.

2. Nathan Jurgenson – *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media*, Verso, 2019, p. 13–14



**About the published content on each
section: Exploring Contemporary Realities**

Ana Miriam Rebelo

Maria Neto

Pedro Leão Neto

Scopio Architecture, Art and Image

Exploring Contemporary Realities

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About the published content on each section: Exploring Contemporary Realities

Ana Miriam Rebelo, Maria Neto and Pedro Leão Neto

Abstract:

Exploring Contemporary Realities: Photography, Ethics, and the Production of Knowledge examines how contemporary photographic practices contribute to critical understandings of culture, space, and society within the editorial framework of scopio Magazine AAI and the CONTRAST III project. The essay analyses four key contributions: Joana Caetano's "An Ethics of Seeing," which interprets Gerda Taro's Spanish Civil War images as "photoscapes" oscillating between utopian aspiration and dystopian testimony; Paul Landon's "The Resonance of Abandonment," which reflects on the Vilnius Sports Palace as a modern ruin embodying memory, vulnerability, and failed utopian promise; Dária Salgado and Sérgio Tavares's "Trees as Visual Thinking," which foregrounds trees as agents of visual, sensory, and ecological knowledge in the urban landscape; and Lukas Sander's unfinished, a site-specific video walk interrogating Zurich's Manegg district as an emergent, corporately branded urban environment in flux.

Through these case studies, the essay demonstrates how photography extends beyond representation to become a tool of knowledge production. In dialogue with theoretical perspectives from Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Walter Benjamin, and Michael Marder, the works highlight photography's capacity to act ethically, to mediate cultural memory, to articulate ecological imaginaries, and to destabilise dominant narratives of urban development.

The integration of these contributions within scopio Magazine AAI reflects the broader mission of CONTRAST III, which fosters interdisciplinary collaboration across art, architecture, and design while situating photography within global debates such as the European Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus. By bridging artistic practice, pedagogy, and research, the project affirms the role of photography as a transversal and interdisciplinary language, capable of confronting contemporary urgencies and nurturing alternative futures. Ultimately, the essay positions visual practice as a privileged medium for generating expanded critical knowledge and constructing new imaginaries of the built and inhabited world.

Keywords: Visual language, Cultural boundaries, Exploring Contemporary Realities Photography, Ethics

Ana Miriam Rebelo is a photographer, researcher and professor in the field of visual arts and visual culture. She graduated in Fine Arts at École d'Enseignement Supérieur d'Art de Bordeaux (2005). She holds a Master in Contemporary Artistic Creation from the University of Aveiro (2019) and a PhD in Design from the University of Porto (2025), funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia. She is currently a teacher and researcher at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto. She is a member of the Center for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism (CEAU) and Research Institute for Design, Media and Culture (ID+). Her artistic and scientific production, disseminated through communications, publications and exhibitions, focuses on the production, perception and representation of urban space, with an emphasis on informal dynamics of production and use of public space.

Maria Neto is an architect, university professor, and researcher with a PhD in Architecture on refugee camps in protracted situations, awarded by UAH+ICHaB-ETSAM (2022). With international experience in humanitarian action, she has collaborated with UNHCR and the British Red Cross in supporting refugees in Kenya and the UK. A recipient of the Fernando Távora Prize, she has been an invited speaker at the Venice Architecture Biennale, the 6th anniversary of Casa da Arquitectura, and was selected for the Lisbon Triennale Millennium bcp Universities Award, 2022. She is currently coordinating housing projects for the reception and integration of refugees and migrants in Fundão, one of which was selected in the Promove competition by the La Caixa Foundation/FCT.

Pedro Leão Neto is a licensed architect from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP, 1992), a master's degree in Urban Environment Planning and Design (FAUP-FEUP, 1992), a PhD in Planning and Landscape (University of Manchester, 2002) and a postdoctoral degree (FAUP, 2018). He is a professor and researcher at FAUP, teaching courses in Photography and Communication in Architectural Design (FCPA I&II) and Photography of Architecture, City and Territory (FACT). He is the coordinator of the Architecture, Art and Image (AAI) research group and of scopio Editions, and is editor-in-chief of the scientific journal Sophia Journal. His field of research focuses on the universe of Architecture, Art and Image, particularly the intersection between artistic documentary photography and architecture.

Exploring Contemporary Realities: Photography, Ethics, and the Production of Knowledge

Ana Miriam Rebelo, Maria Neto and Pedro Leão Neto

The editorial theme Exploring Contemporary Realities constitutes the conceptual structure of *scopio Magazine* AAI's second continuous volume, integrating the collaborative framework of the SCOPIO & CONTRAST International Conference and its open call. This volume initiates a strategic collaboration with the project Contrast: Multidisciplinary Network of Artistic Initiatives in Art, Architecture, Design, and Photography, reflecting shared objectives and interests: to create spaces where visual practice becomes a mode of knowledge production, bridging the artistic and academic spheres.

This partnership echoes the aims of the pedagogical research project CONTRAST III, which foregrounds photography as both interpretative and transformative. By situating artistic research at the intersection of architecture, art, and design, the project nurtures a platform for debate and critical reflection on contemporary challenges—from transforming public spaces to the sociopolitical urgencies shaping everyday life.

Four Ways of Seeing: Ethics, Ruin, Ecology, and Transition

Photography as Ethical Testimony: Utopian Readings of Gerda Taro

Joana Caetano's article *An Ethics of Seeing: Utopian Readings of Gerda Taro's PhotoScapes* critically analyses photography as a political testimony and forwards an interesting interpretation combining ethics and aesthetics. Situated between documentation and symbolism, Taro's images of the Spanish Civil War show what Caetano terms "photoscapes", which are visual fields where solidarity, violence, and the possibility of a transformed future coexist. This dual reading—utopian and dystopian—situates photography as an ethical act, demanding both remembrance and responsibility from its viewers.

Caetano draws here on Barthes' reflections about the punctum (1982) and Sontag's explorations of the ethics of war photography (2004) are highly resonant. Like Berger (2013), Caetano underscores photography's potential to foreground the agency of those photographed, resisting both voyeurism and romanticisation. Placed within the editorial vision of Exploring Contemporary Realities, Taro's work exemplifies how images can produce knowledge beyond representation.

Resonance and Ruin: The Vilnius Sports Palace

Paul Landon's *The resonance of abandonment* turns to a different yet equally powerful dimension of contemporary realities: modernist architecture's material and perceptual afterlife. Through photography and video, his exploration of the Vilnius Sports Palace reveals the uncanny persistence of sites marked by utopian ambition yet consigned to ruination.

Drawing on Benjamin's (1986) theorisation of ruins and Augé's (1995) "non-places," Landon situates the Sports Palace as both a relic of socialist modernity and a liminal space of memory. The ruin becomes a physical testimony and a "resonant" site, where viewers oscillate between loss and possibility. In this sense, photography functions as Huhtamo (2011) describes it as a "media archaeology," re-presenting the past in the present while opening speculative futures.

Trees as Visual Thinking: Ecological and Sensory Knowledge

In *Trees as Visual Thinking*, Dària Salgado and Sérgio Tavares focus on the agency of non-human elements within the urban environment by positioning trees as "visual thought," exploring how their mutability, sensoriality, and imagistic charge reshape human perceptions of place.

Here, the phenomenological insights of Merleau-Ponty (1999) on perception intersect with Marder's *Plant-Thinking* (2013), which insists on the philosophical agency of vegetal life. The project's synesthetic approach also draws from Chion's (2016) work on audiovisuality, as photography, moving image, and sound coalesce into a multisensory landscape. By proposing trees as mediators of affect and meaning, Salgado and Tavares open a dialogue with Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* (2003), where natural forms catalyse new imaginaries of dwelling.

unfinished: Urbanism in Transition

Lukas Sander's *unfinished* examines Zurich's Manegg district as an emergent site of contemporary urban transformation. The project synchronises embodied experience with mediated perception through a site-specific video walk, inviting participants to inhabit an urban space branded "Greencity critically."

Here, the logic of corporate-driven sustainability intersects with Deleuze's time-image (2006), where cinema exposes temporal multiplicities and spectral futures. By combining imagery, interviews, and conjectural narratives, *unfinished* questions how urbanism builds and erases memory. The project remains deliberately open-ended, resisting closure and aligning with Benjamin's notion of history as unfinished fragments (1986).

CONTRAST III: Networks, Pedagogy, and Imaginaries

By integrating these essays into *scopio Magazine AAI* we are exemplifying the broader mission of CONTRAST III, which places photography at the centre of interdisciplinary debate across architecture, art, and design. As the CONTRAST editorial asserts, the project responds to the cultural, social, and political transformations of the 21st century, while cultivating a collaborative network between higher education institutions in Portugal and beyond.

In this sense, Caetano, Landon, Salgado, Tavares, and Sander embody CONTRAST's central objectives. Their works confront urgent issues—war and ethics, ruins and memory, ecological entanglements, urban speculation—while opening interpretive and pedagogical spaces simultaneously. Moreover, their methodological diversity (photography, video, sound, performative walks) reflects CONTRAST's commitment to transdisciplinarity and to creating hybrid forms of knowledge.

Conclusion: Toward Expanded Critical Knowledge

When analysing these four contributions together, we see how they structure and explore a diverse set of approaches through which we can comprehend and rethink contemporary realities:

- Caetano's ethics of seeing situates photography as a site of political responsibility;
- Landon's ruin photography interrogates architectural memory and utopian residue;
- Salgado and Tavares expand visual practice into ecological and sensory registers.
- Sander destabilises urban narratives by foregrounding corporate logics and open-ended futures.

What unites them is an insistence that photography is not merely a representational tool but a form of critical inquiry. Barthes (1982) argued decades ago, as did also Sontag (2011), that photography oscillates between document and imagination, testimony and fiction. These essays extend that insight by showing how the image generates knowledge across ethics, ecology, and urbanism, offering tools to rethink how we live and transform our environments.

Thus, it is easier to comprehend the importance of CONTRAST III and its mission, which is to position photography as a transversal, interdisciplinary language, able to interlink several areas and respond to global challenges while cultivating pedagogical, artistic, and social connections. By integrating diverse critical voices, the project fosters shared imaginaries that both confront contemporary urgencies and nourish the possibility of alternative futures. In doing so, *scopio Magazine AAI* and CONTRAST do more than curate visual practices—they create an expanded field of critical knowledge, where art and research converge to reimagine the realities of the present.

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**Drawing and photography international
contest (DPIC)**

Fátima Vieira

Inês Nascimento

Pedro Leão Neto

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Drawing and photography international contest (DPIC)

Fátima Vieira, Inês Nascimento, Pedro Leão Neto,

The first edition of the DPIC international contest, Architecture, Art and Image – Utopia 500, was held in 2016 and was aimed at 1st, 2nd and 3rd Cycle students and young researchers from any higher education or research institution. Since its first edition, DPIC has shown an enormous capacity to capture the interest of a significant number of students from different countries and fields of study as a result of the collaboration between the Centre for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism of U.Porto's Faculty of Architecture (CEAU/ FAUP) and the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies of U.Porto's Faculty of Arts and Humanities (CETAPS/FLUP).

At present, the *scopio Magazine AAI publication* integrates the International Drawing and Photography Contest (DPIC) – Architecture, Art and Image – UTOPIA, interconnecting the universes of Architecture, Art and Image with the Utopian desire for a better world and for spaces that provide a better quality of life. Important ideas present in the DPIC are opening the Universities to the Civil Society through diverse submitted projects, showcasing the multifaceted richness of activities, experiences and architectures.

The DPIC call focuses on the theme of "Utopia" and invites participants from the realms of Architecture, Art, and Image to submit two distinctive images: one portraying a critical representation of an existing space and another presenting an idealized, utopian vision of the same space. The objective is to provide innovative solutions to the issues identified in the initial depiction.

The highlight of the call is the identity of university spaces, encompassing teaching and work environments and their connection with the surrounding cities. This call was open to academic communities, both domestically in Portugal and internationally, and while individual applications were accepted, the contest strongly encouraged the formation of multidisciplinary teams.

The participants were invited to creatively explore the potentials of Drawing and Photography, individually or as a team, and share their critical views and utopian visions of the spaces (and respective dynamics) that characterise the institution concerned, by exposing facets that were, until now, invisible or forgotten. We expected to receive strong utopian visions of these educational spaces; in these forward-looking works, drawing and photography should be understood as tools of imagination and critical thinking used to materialise ideas of Architecture, as well as the experiences they may provide¹.

The aim was to encourage participants to challenge standardised thinking patterns and idealise

novel educational institutions spaces and advance forward-looking visions able to materialise the impossible and make us want to perfect reality². We were also open to utopian visions that could interact and create tensions with the critical view of a dystopian and contemporary reality. This disruptive, but also constructive encounter between the two visions may create a new perception of reality that is able to fuel a discourse and propose operational paths towards the transformation of the represented spaces.

The *scopio Magazine Architecture, Art and Image (AAI)*, which integrates this contest in partnership with the UTOPIA 500 project, plays a vital role as a platform for disseminating, discussing, and reflecting upon Architecture, Art, and Image through the lens of Utopia³. The project promotes initiatives that disseminate and encourage critical and global analysis of the practices and disciplines of Art and Architecture, with a greater focus on the world of Image, while maintaining a dialogue between these three universes. This contest is one of those initiatives, encouraging participants to explore photography and drawing as means of crossing borders and dislocating boundaries, and propose Utopian visions of a given reality that scrutinise different problems and subject areas, namely in the universe of Architecture and Art. The contest, thus, promotes a comprehensive understanding of Architecture as a practice that operates, on the one hand, in real spaces, exploring new spatial codes and forms and influencing our perception, and, on the other hand, within more comprehensive systems, such as artistic, sociocultural, technical, political and historical spheres.

The DPIC Contest promotes an understanding of image, drawing and photography as analytical and critical thinking tools that can be used to represent and understand architecture, its transformations, and the way it embodies different identities and cultural cosmoeses. The challenge is to use Image as an artistic tool to explore new project ideas and simulate space. The contest invites the authors to use Image, and their imagination, to express critical views and forward-looking visions of urban spaces and architectures beyond their physical limitations.

The highlight of 2024 DPIC's continued to be on identity of University spaces, encompassing teaching and work environments, and their connection with the surrounding cities. The call was open to academic communities, both in Portugal and Internationally.

2. See besides, others Colomina, Beatriz, Esther Choi, Ignacio González Galán, and Anna-Maria Meister. "Radical Pedagogies in Architectural Education." *The Architectural Review* – Thinkpiece., September 2012. <https://www.architectural-review.com/today/radical-pedagogies-in-architectural-education>

3. Many authors could be called upon for writing about architecture and utopia, just to make a case in point, Nathaniel Coleman conducted research and written extensively about these matters: Nathaniel Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture*, 1st ed. (Londres: Routledge, 2005), 1.

1. See Neto, Pedro Leão; Vieira, Fátima. "The universes of Architecture, Art and Image and Utopia". In *DPIC: ARCHITECTURE, ART AND IMAGE – UTOPIA 500*, 7–10. Porto, Portugal: scopio Editions, 2019.

Selected Submisison and authors

"Multiplying Uses Beyond Surfaces"	Thales Lucena Calasans
	Thales Lucena Calasans is a final-year Architecture and Urbanism student at UFRJ. He has been involved in research on urban narratives through cinema, student organizing via FeNEA and CAFAU, and hands-on experience in restoration and technical studios. His work focuses on playful, critical approaches to space and heritage.
"The Journey of the Future"	Rita Soares
	Rita Soares is a second-year architecture student at the University of Minho. With a background in Science and Technology, she discovered a passion for architecture as a more fulfilling path. Creative and driven, she participated in the DPIC UTOPIA 500 Design and Photography competition.
"Edén de la colmena entra las montañas de Piedra"	José Demian Zamarripa Salazar, Santiago Rafael Soto Padilla
	José Demian and Santiago Rafael are architecture students at the University of Guanajuato, Mexico. José also studies violin at the university's juvenile music school, with prior training in Silao's House of Culture. Both explore creative intersections between architecture, art, and music.
"Do terraço à piscina"	Jaime Peña
	Jaime Peña is an architect from Ecuador, now based in Porto to deepen his studies in photography. He combines experience in architectural design and visual communication, with award-winning work in architectural and cultural photography. His approach bridges architectural thinking and visual storytelling.
"Metro invades FAUUSP"	Henrique Munhoz Clesca, Ludmilla Zemella, Victoria Vernarecia Reis
	TFAUUSP architecture students Victoria Vernarecia, Ludmilla Zemella, and a member of the Urban Studies in Brazil Research Group engage in critical research on urban theory, peripheral landscapes, and Latin American dialogues. They collaborate with professors such as Mariana Fix and Fábio Mariz Gonçalves, and contribute as tutors in key undergraduate courses. All three are or have been members of Coletivo Cobogó, a student-led group focused on the political dimensions of architecture and technology. Their involvement also spans the student council, graduation committee Equador, and extracurricular internships in landscape design and institutional infrastructure. Together, they represent a strong commitment to academic research, political engagement, and collaborative learning within FAUUSP..

"Roots of time: Memories and generations under one roof"	Flávia Oliveira, Francisca Carneiro, Rafaela Silva
	Flávia Oliveira, Francisca Carneiro, and Rafaela Silva are second-year architecture students at Lusófona University of Porto. Flávia and Francisca come from a background in Science and Technology, while Rafaela completed her secondary studies in the Arts in 2021/22. Together, they bring diverse academic foundations to their architectural education. Their shared experience at Lusófona fosters collaborative learning and exploration of design through multiple perspectives. Each contributes a unique lens shaped by their prior academic paths.
"Nuclear Paradise"	António Lopes, Rafael Mangelot, Pedro Pereira, Tomás Ramos
	António Lopes, 20 years old, 2nd year architecture student, Rafael Mangelot, 28 years old, 2nd year architecture student. Pedro Pereira, 20 years old, 2nd year architecture student. Ruben, 22 years old, 2nd year architecture student. Tomás Ramos, 20 years old, 2nd year architecture student, all students at Universidade Lusófona of Porto.
"The FAUP Chairs"	Bruna Pereira, Laura Cunha, Lourenço Vieira
	Bruna Pereira – Architecture student of the second year at Lusófona University in Porto, Laura Cunha – Architecture student of the second year at Lusófona University in Porto, Lourenço Vieira – Architecture student of the second year at Lusófona University in Porto.
"The Degradation"	João Carneiro, Tiago Passo, Rafael Pereira, Guilherme Meira
	João Carneiro, Tiago Passo, Rafael Pereira, and Guilherme Meira are second-year architecture students at Universidade Lusófona.
"Sustainable world"	Matilde Carvalho, Marta Dias
	Matilde Carvalho and Marta Dias are architecture students at University Lusófona Porto



"Multiplying Uses Beyond Surfaces"

Thales Lucena Calasans



"The Journey of the Future"

Rita Soares.



"Edén de la colmena entra las montañas de Piedra"

José Demian Zamarripa Salazar, Santiago Rafael Soto Padilla



"Do terraço à piscina"

Jaime Peña



"Metro invades FAUUSP"

Henrique Munhoz Clesca, Ludmilla Zemella, Victoria Vernarecia



"Roots of time: Memories and generations under one roof"

Flávia Oliveira, Francisca Carneiro, Rafaela Silva



"Nuclear Paradise"

António Lopes, Rafael Mangenot, Pedro Pereira, Tomás Ramos



"The FAUP Chairs"

Bruna Pereira, Laura Cunha, Lourenço Vieira



"The degradation"

João Carneiro, Tiago Passo, Rafael Pereira, Guilherme Meira



"Sustainable world"

Matilde Carvalho, Marta Dias



About the jury's evaluation

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Drawing and photography international contest

About the jury's evaluation

Ana Miriam Rebelo, Maria Neto, Pedro Leão Neto

The 2025 edition of the Drawing and Photography International Contest (DPIC) | Space and Identity of Universities again revealed the expressive breadth and conceptual richness that characterise this initiative. The Jury's collective assessment highlighted how this year's submissions explored contrasting visions—ranging from subtle utopian transformations to incisive dystopian critiques—while interrogating the social, political and spatial realities of contemporary academic environments. Just as in previous editions, the projects that obtained the highest scores distinguished themselves by achieving a dynamic equilibrium between conceptual clarity, critical reflection and the strength of their visual representation. Yet, what particularly marked the 2025 call was the tension between discreet, almost imperceptible gestures and radical, provocative interventions—a tension that many jury members described as both poetic and politically resonant.

Conceptual Diversity and Critical Tensions

Across the works, the Jury identified a powerful spectrum of interpretations of "space and identity". Some proposals imagined optimistic futures rooted in ecological sensitivity and social justice, while others embraced dystopian metaphors to expose structural fragilities within academic institutions. This diversity was not perceived as contradictory but as enriching—creating a zone of intellectual friction where utopia and dystopia coexist as tools for critique, speculation and architectural imagination. This plurality was emphasised by several Jury members, who highlighted how lightness and subtlety coexist with radicality and provocation, generating a space "simultaneously poetic and political".

1st Prize

"Multiplying Uses Beyond Surfaces"

Author: Thales Lucena Calasans

The winning proposal (68 points) stood out for its quiet yet incisive reimagining of the built environment. Its utopian gesture operates through subtle transformations—almost invisible, “as if the utopia had always been there but only intuited”, in the words of the Jury. Drawing on architectural references with rigour and delicacy, the project reinterprets the building without erasing its identity, offering new forms of inhabiting and perceiving space. Its conceptual maturity is matched by an elegant visual strategy, reaffirming the potential of minimal interventions to trigger profound re-readings of everyday spaces



Honourable Mentions

"Metro invades FAUUSP"

Henrique Munhoz Clesca, Ludmilla Zemella, Victoria Vernarecia

Awarded an Honourable Mention (67 points), this project was praised for its radical and provocative gesture, articulating architectural representation with social and political criticism. Revisiting Artigas' democratic ideals, the work confronts contemporary segregation through a bold, incisive intervention that transforms drawing into an instrument of urban and civic reflection.



Honourable Mentions

"The degradation"

João Carneiro, Tiago Passo, Rafael Pereira, Guilherme Meira

Also highly scored (64 points), The Degradation was distinguished for its ability to construct powerful critical commentary from a nearly unaltered image. Its quiet yet forceful denunciation exposes the precarious conditions in which disciplinary futures are built. Minimal in gesture but profound in meaning, it demonstrates how subtle manipulation can intensify institutional critique.



The Jury of DPIC for 2024

AEFAUP
Ana Miriam Rebelo (Editor / ID+ / CEAU – FAUP)
Inês Nascimento (Guest Jury)
Maria Neto (Editor / CEAU / FAUP – UBI)

Criteria and Evaluation Process

As in previous editions (see scopio Magazine article) , the Jury emphasised coherence between:1. the concept (idea)2. its rationale (written explanation)3. the visual formulation (image/diptych)Utopia, speculation and critical imagination remained central to the evaluation. Projects that articulated these layers without compromising clarity or depth naturally emerged at the top of the ranking.The 2025 Jury—composed of practitioners from architecture, design and the visual arts, alongside AEFAUP as the student representative—ensured a multifaceted and rigorous evaluation proces

Final Considerations

The 2025 edition reaffirms the vital role of speculative practices—drawing, photography and hybrid media—in interrogating and reimagining institutional space. The works submitted demonstrate that students and emerging practitioners continue to engage critically with the cultural, ecological and political dimensions of academic life.The coexistence of subtle utopian visions and forceful dystopian critiques offers a broad field for reflection, illustrating the trans-formative potential of image-making in projecting alternative futures.The Organisation congratulates all participants for their creativity, commitment and critical insight, and looks forward to the continued evolution of DPIC as a reference platform for dialogue between architectural edu-cation, artistic research and contemporary societal challenges.

Jury Ranking

"Multiplying Uses Beyond Surfaces"	Thales Lucena Calasans	68
"Metro invades FAUUSP"	Henrique Munhoz Clesca, Ludmilla Zemella, Victoria Vernarecia	67
"The Degradation"	João Carneiro, Tiago Passo, Rafael Pereira, Guilherme Meira	64
"Nuclear Paradise"	António Lopes, Rafael Mangenot, Pedro Pereira, Ruben [surname omitted in file], Tomás Ramos	61
"Roots of Time: Memories and Generations Under One Roof"	Flávia Oliveira, Francisca Carneiro, Rafaela Silva	61
"Per.me.á.vel"	Ana Lima Torres Matos Andrade, Jéssica Filipa Pinto Teixeira, Rui Alexandre de Mendonça Rodrigues Salgado Ramos, Sofia Monteiro Santos	55
"Eden of the Beehive Among the Stone Mountains"	José Demian Zamarripa Salazar, Santiago Rafael Soto Padilla	53
"Sustainable World"	Matilde Carvalho, Marta Dias	52
"From the Terrace to the Pool"	Jaime Peña	50



SCOPIO & CONTRAST OPEN CALL

**An Ethics of Seeing:
Utopian Readings of Gerda Taro's
PhotoScapes**

Joana Caetano

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An Ethics of Seeing: Utopian Readings of Gerda Taro's PhotoScapes

Joana Caetano

Abstract:

The paper explores the intersections of photography, ethics, and utopian thinking through a critical reading of Gerda Taro's photographs of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Being the first to be systematically covered by professional photojournalists, this war generated images that shaped cultural memory and political imagination across Europe and beyond. Within this historical and cultural frame, I propose an "ethics of seeing" grounded in a utopian mode of interpretation.

Drawing on theoretical perspectives from Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, and John Berger, I define photoscapes as visual fields where political struggle, human suffering, and aspirations for a transformed future converge. Photography is double-fold since it is a cultural artefact and a political instrument, so it is read here as documentation and as an active force that constructs meaning, provokes ethical reflection, and calls for engagement. Utopian thinking, functioning as a "lens over the lens," enables photographs to be seen simultaneously as records of historical fact and as prompts for critical and imaginative interpretation.

The paper develops this argument through two case studies of Taro's work. Photoscape I | Revealing Hope starts by examining her early images of militias and civilians in revolutionary Spain, which reveal a utopian sense of possibility where camaraderie, determination, and joy are present. Photoscape II | Reporting Destruction turns to her later photographs of devastation and civilian casualties, where shattered architecture and mutilated bodies blur the boundary between human and urban landscapes.

By placing hope and destruction in productive tension, Taro's photoscapes illustrate how photography functions as both memory and prophecy: anchoring historical events while opening critical perspectives on the present and future. Utopian reading thus becomes a methodological tool that resists cultural amnesia and challenges the inevitability of war.

The paper concludes that Taro's work should be understood as a photojournalistic record and an enduring platform for ethical and political engagement. Being testimonies of resistance and reminders of loss, Taro's photoscapes make us reflect on the role of visual culture in shaping memory, political imagination, and the ethics of intervention.

Keywords: Resonance, Architecture and Memory, Soviet Modernism, Urban Flânerie, Photographic Encounter

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Introduction

George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, first published in 1938, depicts his experience as a volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. It became the most influential narrative of the conflict in the Anglophone world, although still somewhat controversial as to its possible impact on the popular understanding of foreign politics in the aftermath of World War II and the consequent Cold War. Controversy aside, the Spanish Civil War is perhaps the European conflict of the twentieth century that gathers the most consensual opinion. As the first major stand against authoritarian regimes, the Spanish Civil War was an exceptional moment in European Culture. Though militarily unsuccessful and marked by utter bloodshed, it mobilised intellectuals, artists, journalists and photographers from European and American countries to travel to Spain to report on the war, fight against the nationalists and provide medical assistance to the war's wounded. This localised conflict captured, indeed, the world's attention not only due to the news reports, but fundamentally to the photographs that accompanied them, since the Spanish Civil War was the first war to be covered by professional photographers. Drawing from this specific historical context, this paper explores the intersections of photography, ethics, and utopian thinking through a critical reading of Gerda Taro's photographic work to propose an "ethics of seeing". Through a utopian reading of Taro's "photoscapes" – a term I created to define visual fields where political struggle, human suffering, and aspirations for a transformed future coexist – I aim to illustrate how these photoscapes may be a powerful tool in shaping cultural memory and instigating political activism.

In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, inspired by Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*, Susan Sontag reflects on how photographs of civilian casualties of the Spanish Civil War were rhetorical tools to "reiterate", "simplify", "agitate" and "create an illusion of consensus"¹. As described, one of the photographs depicted a bombsite: part of a building was destroyed, and human bodies were scattered nearby. It was difficult to see whether the victims were men, women or children. They were piles of flesh among the rubble. "To be sure," Sontag claims, "a cityscape is not made of flesh. Still, sheared-off buildings are almost as eloquent as bodies in the street. (...) Look, the photographs say, this is what it's like. This is what war does. And that, that is what it does, too. War tears, rends. War rips open, eviscerated War scorches. War dismembers. War ruins"². In fact, it is the combination of these two elements – the cityscape and the human landscape, which I call photoscapes – that really makes spaces and times subversive and utopian, a complex web of meanings. As a photograph is a sociopolitical document, so is utopia an instrument to decode it. Imagine that utopia is the lens we place over the camera to add a new layer of significance and, simultaneously, the filter we use to peel off a layer of encrypted meanings.

1. Sontag 2004, page 7/91.

2. Sontag 2004, page 89/91.

Utopia is the tool that allows us to zoom in and analyse the present depicted in the shot, as well as the key to zoom out and frame the crystallised moment in time in the greater scheme of things – the historical and social contexts.

There are historical moments in which photography, as a sociopolitical document, is particularly fertile in multiple meanings: the revolutionary periods. In this paper, I propose to reflect on iconic works of Gerda Taro during a particularly subversive political event in twentieth-century history, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and decode new meanings in her photoscapes of hope (photoscape I) and of destruction (photoscape II). In order to do that, however, it is necessary to understand what the ethics of seeing entails and what makes it different from the mere act of seeing.

Utopian Thinking: A Lens Over the Lens (Theoretical framework)

Since its development, and especially due to its democratisation, photography has become the means of cultural and historical record par excellence³. Photojournalism, which proved to be key in recording, incriminating, and later justifying the Second World War, by divulging the crimes against Humanity in the Nazi camps, started, in fact, during the Spanish Civil War. It was the first war to be "covered" by professional photographers, whose work was then published in newspapers and magazines in Spain and abroad. I perceive it, therefore, as a utopian instrument to fight against cultural amnesia and manipulative propaganda. Illustrative of built architecture (cityscapes) and social architecture (human landscapes), photography, which is by its nature an anthology of images, becomes a social anthology: an encyclopaedia of cultural performances, moulded by historical events and driven by a subversive quality. An artefact. Photography's transformative power becomes more evident when it portrays disarranged or deconstructed spaces, when the status quo is suspended or contested. As Susan Sontag wrote: "In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe"⁴. They are a kaleidoscope of images that form an anthology of miniatures of reality. They are pieces of the world.

3. Photography has been essential in recording and witnessing subversive and/or clandestine cultures, namely silenced communities and hidden spaces. For instance, Sebastien Lifshitz's collection of vintage portraits from the early twentieth century, *The Invisibles* (2014), demonstrates how photography was a medium to celebrate queer relationships during a time when gay couples were forced to remain in the obscurity of the closet. This collection also proves that it was possible to find domestic happiness and tranquillity within the home, although facing social, political and legal discrimination. *Loving: A Photographic History of Men in Love 1850s-1950s* (2020) by Hugh Nini and Neal Treadwell is another great example. This anthology assembles photographs from the nineteenth century and originated from all around the world (Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, France, Germany, Japan, Greece, Latvia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Serbia).

4. Sontag 2011, page 5/153.

Whereas photography is a technology, a cultural artefact, and a method to convey meanings, utopia is a way of seeing or unseeing those meanings, and the two elements combined allow for new opportunities to see or create new meanings. As we will come to understand, such is Gerda Taro's Spanish Civil War work: not a mere (neutral) historical record but an enduring platform for ethical and imaginative engagement. To better understand how utopian thinking may then be perceived as a lens over the camera's lens, I selected three main axes of analysis to inform the ethics of seeing, co-opting one of Sontag's expressions:

1. Time: instantaneous/retrospective/prospective;
2. Space: situated/articulated;
3. Identity: critical/creative.

While photography appears to be intimately connected with "discontinuous ways of seeing", as Sontag puts it, utopian thinking is, on the contrary, a holistic way of understanding⁵. The instant moment is at the same time frozen in a forever present, inscribed already in the past, but connected to a future already happening. The instant photographed is, therefore, part of a continuum which is both pictured and absent. In other words, photographs are relics of the past, traces of history, but they are also pieces of a collective memory we want to – and must – preserve and keep alive as if it were a prophecy. In these cases, a prophecy we should prevent from happening again, rejecting the idea that war is inevitable (time)⁶.

Thus, the photography situates and utopianism contextualises, turning the photographed into something that is both localised and transcendent. It puts oneself in relation to the world. It articulates and makes one empathise because context is everything. While photographs isolate, utopianism connects all these disconnected instants depicted in those shots (space). And, as John Berger states, "in life, meaning is not instantaneous. Meaning is discovered in what connects, and cannot exist without development". Therefore, we need a narrative. "Without a story, without an unfolding, there is no meaning. Facts, information do not in themselves constitute meaning"⁷. Utopian thinking provides this narrative.

5. Sontag 2011, page 117/153

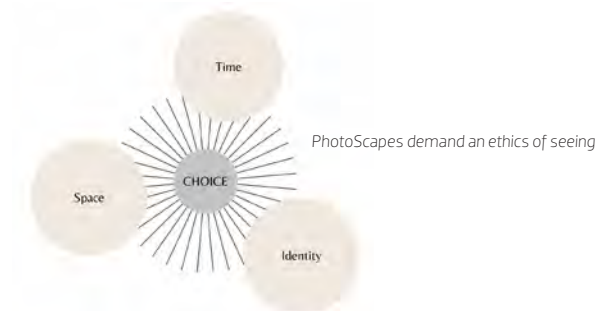
6. John Steinbeck, in *Once There Was a War* (1958), states: "Perhaps it is right or even necessary to forget accidents, and wars are surely accidents to which our species seems prone. If we could learn from our accidents it might be well to keep the memories alive, but we do not learn. In ancient Greece it was said that there had to be a war at least every twenty years because every generation of men had to know what it was like. With us, we must forget, or we could never indulge in the murderous nonsense again".

7. Berger 2013, page 74/223.

Moreover, reading the photograph by resorting to the utopian lens also allows us to be critical of what is depicted, critical of it (not necessarily in a pejorative way) and creative, whether aesthetically or politically (identity). Indeed, we should perceive photography as a utopian instrument due to its factual and metaphorical value, as an object of analysis which is at the same time a partial reproduction of the real (historical events, for instance) and a "negative" creator of new, sometimes, hidden cultural and political meanings. This aspect leads us to photography's most aesthetic – and personal – dimension, which Roland Barthes described as "the embrace of the subjective".

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes poetically illustrates this idea by saying that "in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes". To interpret a photograph demands, according to Barthes, to perceive these two layers of significance in a photograph, which he called 1. the Stadium, meaning what is depicted articulating it in all its complex context ("The Stadium is a kind of education"); and 2. the Punctum, the detail of the photograph that captures our gaze, and our imagination and invites subjectivity. (The Punctum reveals what Brian Dillon, in a review for the Guardian, called "Barthes sensibility".) A utopian reading of photoscapes is, hence, a narrative, a journey that goes beyond what is depicted.

Although photographs are normally used to construct or illustrate "unilinear" thoughts, as if chronologically coherent, in fact, this journey, this narrative, of photoscapes is very much like a memory; and, as John Berger points out, "memory is not unilinear at all. Memory works radially, that is to say with an enormous number of associations all leading to the same event". Berger describes this notion with a star-like shape. Inspired by Berger's idea, I placed the key elements of analysis in this star-diagram fashion to illustrate the "ethics of seeing" I propose:



8. Barthes 1982, page 36/85.

9. Barthes 1982, page 36/85.

At the heart of this ethics lies the notion of choice, an action inherent to the process of taking a photograph. As John Berger puts it, it is the moment the photographer consciously or unconsciously thinks: "I have decided that seeing this is worth recording"¹⁰; since, as Berger concludes: "Photography is the process of rendering observation self-conscious"¹¹. It is the choice of the photographer to take a photograph in a specific moment, in a specific location, to transmit a message that unites the three axes (time, space and identity). But where are all these elements inscribed? I propose the photoscapes, which are cityscapes and the human landscapes depicted in Gerda Taro's war photographs. Why these two dimensions of spaces? Because, traditionally, architecture is perceived as either a utopia or a dystopia materialised, a dream or nightmare made of stone, imagination in concrete. However, for the purposes of this article, it is the organic dimension of the architectural landscape – as an extension of human beings – that most interests me. How architecture seems to envelop either to protect – as a womb – or to destroy – as an avalanche – highlights the human experiences depicted¹².

10. Berger 2013, page 32/226.

11. Berger 2013, page 33/226.

12. In "Architecture: Constructing Concrete Utopias" (2017), Petra Čeferin claims that "architecture – insofar as it is practised as a creative practice – is always, already, utopia realised" (137). The relationship between architecture and utopian thinking has a long tradition epitomized by the conceptualization of ideal cities by Classical and Renaissance thinkers, such as Plato, Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella. From these mental maps to geographic sites was but a step and several attempts to fulfil utopia through stone and mortar came to life. Robert Owen's New Lanark (Scotland), José Ferreira Pinto Basto's Vista Alegre Factory (Portugal), Le Corbusier's partially built Cité Frugès (France) and Lúcio Costa's planning of Brasília (Brazil) are a few examples of these "concrete utopias". There are also architectural elements understood as dystopian both in fictional societies (e.g. Francis Bacon's Salomon's House) and in real ones (e.g. prisons, asylums and reformatories). Jeremy Bentham's panopticon inspired Michel Foucault's theory of the supervised society which denounced surveillance, order and discipline as tools of social control. These utopian/dystopian social architectures indicate how essential and ambivalent architecture and space are. They may be, at the same time, contemporary and transtemporal, in the sense that they are a reaction to their context. For the purposes of this article, however, it is the destruction of the architectural landscape and the way architecture may be (or reflect) a continuation of human experience that most interest me. In "Refectories and Dining Rooms as 'Social Structural Joints': On Space, Gender and Class in Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed", Mariana Oliveira, Miguel Ramalheite Gomes and I delved into the relationship between social spaces and power dynamics in Le Guin's critical utopia. For more information on architecture and utopian thinking, see "The Tectonic Structural Joint: Joining Architecture and Utopian Thinking" section (2019, 73–75).

Photoscape I – Revealing Hope (Early war and revolutionary optimism)

*To remember is, more and more, not to recall a story
but to be able to call up a picture.*

Susan Sontag (Regarding the Pain of Others, 2004)

Gerda Taro (1910–1937), an anarchist Jewish–German photographer, is considered the first photojournalist to be killed while "covering" a war. After being arrested in Germany for distributing propaganda against the Nazi party, she fled to Paris, where she came to meet Robert Capa, who became her professional and life partner. She was the greatest promoter of his work, writing to agencies to divulge his photographs and modelling for him. She also took photographs.

The transformative moment for both Taro and Capa was the Spanish Civil War. The photograph of a guerrilla man being shot, starting to fall back with his arms stretched upwards, attributed to Capa¹³, has become the international symbol of the conflict and the resistance against fascism. Taro travelled twice to Spain during the war to find two very distinct countries. In 1936, Spain was a space of transformation and hope. She had arrived just after the battle of Barcelona, in which Republicans had vanquished the Nationalists. Taro photographed the militias, the men and women of the resistance, invigorated by the victory and the justice of their cause.

On her first visit to Spain, also her first experience as a photojournalist, Taro took photos very dissimilar from the ones which come to mind when we think about the Spanish Civil War. Very different photos from those evoked by Virginia Woolf, illustrated the horrible memories of Orwell, inspired Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* novel, or Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* mural.

For this case study, I selected a set of six photographs by Taro that predate the bloodiest battles. They depict militia women training for battle, such as the famous photograph of the militiawoman kneeling on the sand, training her aim, in heels; they represent the camaraderie between militia men and women; and, especially, they illustrate the joy and determination of both militias and civilians. Analysing these photographs by resorting to the ethics of seeing, they stand out as transtemporal, portraying an instantaneous moment from the past that still resonates a century after (time axis).

13. The authorship and authenticity of this photograph has been highly disputed though. Some critics believe that the photograph was in fact Taro's and might have been staged.

They depict not only a specific historical Spanish context but also illustrate the web of international support from individuals and professionals who marched to help them (space axis). These photographs could not be perceived in any way neutral, since they are read as a political statement, not only an aesthetic one. The way the women are photographed in training or in uniform, and the civilians smiling, leads us to a pre-determined conclusion: this is the good cause, they are all in agreement, they are all mobilised in this fight against fascism (identity axis).

These Taro's photoscapes of militiamen and women training in cityscapes yet to be annihilated by the fascist weaponry are a memorial to hope; they were embodiments of revolution. These human bodies and urban spaces become subversive spaces. They are testimonies of those who fought against totalitarianism, men and women who stood shoulder to shoulder, preparing for battle. Like in death, there were no gender distinctions. Women fought in trousers and heels, sharing in the responsibility of the cause and also the joy. Taro's photographs are, thus, a synecdoche, representing all the hopeful resistance, a thread through the maze of those people's determination and blood, those men and women, young and old, native and foreigner, all brothers and sisters, fighting for a common cause: freedom.

Co-opting Berger's words and applying them to Taro's photoscapes here, Taro made a choice. She decided that she was testifying was worth recording. The degree to which she believed this was worth looking at could be judged by all that she was willing to show. We are arrested by the camaraderie and the shared goal of those photographed; we are captured by that intimacy, that experience unheard and unphotographed before. These photographs not only reflect the behaviour of those fighting against the fascists but are themselves radical weapons of and for the resistance – they are utopian instruments for change. Until it all changed...



Three Republican militawomen, probably Barcelona © ICP International Center of Photography

Man and child in militia outfit, Barcelona © ICP International Center of Photography



Three Republican militawomen, probably Barcelona © ICP International Center of Photography

Recruitment and training of the new People's Army, Valencia © ICP International Center of Photography

Photoscape I I– Reporting Destruction (Later war and civilian suffering)

This morning's collection contains the photograph of what might be a man's body, or a woman's; it is so mutilated that it might, on the other hand, be the body of a pig. But those certainly are dead children, and that undoubtedly is the section of a house. A bomb has torn open the side; there is still a bird-cage hanging in what was presumably the sitting room ...

Virginia Woolf (*Three Guineas*, 1938)¹⁴

Whereas, in 1936, Taro had revealed a utopian photoscape, of men, women and children animated by the possibility of change and the justice of their cause; on her second trip to the war zone, Taro encountered a desolate Spain. Utterly destroyed by the fratricidal conflict, Taro's photoscapes changed completely. She registered the dead civilians and their obliterated homes, whose flesh and mortar were so entangled together that they became part of the same mass. She gave presence to the shapeless: the refugees trying to escape the city and the corpses overflowing the morgues. These were the human and the city-maimed bodies described by Virginia Woolf. These were the photographs that came to evoke the Spanish Civil War for posterity.

There is a disturbing paradox in the act of photographing: its essence of non-intervention. Susan Sontag asserts that "Part of the horror (...) of contemporary photojournalism (...) comes from the awareness of how plausible it has become, in situations where the photographer has the choice between a photograph and a life, to choose the photograph. The person who intervenes cannot record. The person who is recording cannot intervene"¹⁵. As mentioned before, what connects all elements of the ethics of seeing, and of utopianism as a lens over a lens, is "choice". To choose what, who and when to photograph. This also implies that recording something implies inaction on the part of the recorder. However, many might say that recording is, in itself, an intervening act. To report, to denounce, horrors is to intervene.

14. Virginia Woolf's connection with the Spanish Civil War was deeply personal. Julian Bell, her nephew, was an example of a young foreign volunteer who moved to Spain to help the fight against the fascists. Increasingly supportive of the socialist and anti-fascist movements, the young English poet enlisted in 1937. His parents and aunt dissuaded him from taking arms, so he worked as an ambulance driver on the Republican side instead. Only one month after travelling to Spain, Julian Bell found himself in the midst of battle, driving an ambulance for the British Medical Unit attached to the International Brigades at the Battle of Brunete. He was hit by bomb fragments on a road outside Villanueva de la Cañada, sustaining a massive lung wound. He later died in a military hospital at El Escorial. He was only 29.

15. Sontag 2011, page 11/153.

The set of photographs selected for Taro's destruction photoscape depicts – and at the same time – creates horror in the audience. Taro's unapologetic portrayals of women lying in the morgue and corpses scattered among rubble humanise the reports of war and their nameless casualties. Side-by-side with other voiceless victims – the unhoused, the refugees, the widows and the orphans – Taro's photographs of the dead remain at the same time timeless (time axis) and universal (space axis). Could these photoscapes – that at the time moved so much – be compared to the images we see every day on the news? Although today we are constantly being accosted by graphic images of war and destruction, that was not the case at the time. Publishing photographs of dystopian photoscapes was not only a subversive act but a hopeful one. It was an act filled with the conviction that such photographs and reports would instigate popular condemnation and pressure foreign governments, forcing them to act. That was certainly what intellectuals, writers, journalists, and photographers believed would happen.

However, could it not also trivialise violence? Turn it less powerful, less painful, to see? Turn us impervious and indifferent to the suffering of others? Apathic, in fact, as Sontag seems to denote in *Regarding the Pain of Others*? As she states, "Photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses. A call for peace. A cry for revenge. Or simply the bemused awareness, continually restocked by photographic information, that terrible things happen"¹⁶. But if we are becoming every day more and more indifferent to the pain of others, where does it lead us? Could photographs, such as Taro's photoscapes, still move in any way? Sontag continues, "An ample reservoir of stoicism is needed to get through the great newspaper of record each morning, given the likelihood of seeing photographs that could make you cry. [However,] the pity and disgust (...) should not distract you from asking what pictures, whose cruelties, whose deaths are not being shown"¹⁷. This aspect highlights the critical element of the utopian lens (identity axis). Photographs are threads, as I alluded, to a maze of meanings. Always look for what lies beyond the surface, because photoscapes are multilayered, and even the most horror-provoking ones may instigate bold constructive action or, at least, critical questions.

Indeed, Gerda Taro's photographs are windows to a time and space remote from us, and yet they depict a reality that seems atemporal and transtemporal. The memories of war that these images evoke are universal and, in a way, also anonymous. That is what an ethics of seeing should prevent: photographs should haunt us, especially photoscapes such as these. The suffering portrayed should engulf us and move us to action, and, from an ethics of seeing, we should move to an ethics of intervening.

16. Sontag 2008, pages 11–12/91.

17. Sontag 2008, pages 11–12/91.



Crowd at the gate of the morgue after the air raid, Valencia, Spain © ICP International Center of Photography



Corpses in the morgue after the bombing, Valencia, Spain © ICP International Center of Photography



Body, La Granjuela, Cordoba front, Spain © ICP International Center of Photography

Children amid rubble of bombed buildings, La Granjuela, Cordoba front, Spain © ICP International Center of Photography

SCOPIO & CONTRAST OPEN CALL

Seeing Back to Act Forward (Conclusion: ethics of seeing and acting)

Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it.

George Orwell (1946)

By reading Gerda Taro's photoscapes and by putting hope and destruction in a productive tension, in this article, I propose an "ethics of seeing" that remains open-ended, acknowledging that the interpretation of such photographs continues to shift with time, context, and the engagement of their audiences. This last element is key. Taro's photoscapes benefited from but also fed upon a large engagement from the public, who were deeply mobilised by this political conflict.

The Spanish Civil War was a pivotal moment in European History. It was a stage for the art of war and the science of killing. It was also a test of the limits of foreign policy and international apathy. A dress rehearsal for the Second World War. A boost in confidence for the autocratic regimes. On the other hand, it is touching to look back and see the web of international solidarity formed by individuals – volunteers from every art and every part – who travelled to Spain and tried to do something while powerful political agents did nothing.

Writer Ernest Hemingway and reporter Martha Gellhorn travelled to Spain and became two of the most ferocious mouthpieces of the conflict, denouncing its atrocities. Gellhorn was a close friend of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, to whom she would write and correspond assiduously. In a letter to the First Lady, Gellhorn wrote: "If the madman Hitler really sends two divisions to Spain my bet is that the war is nearer than even the pessimists thought". In 1937, Gellhorn (and Hemingway) was in Spain filming a documentary with Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens about the war and submitting pieces of war correspondence about the people of Madrid to Collier's magazine. The documentary was shown at the White House in early July, and on a thank you note to Eleanor Roosevelt, Gellhorn described the impact the war had had on herself: "I am so glad you let us come because I did want you to see that film. I can't look at it calmly, it makes it hard for me to breathe afterwards". During the first months of 1938, she embarked on a tour to raise funding and awareness about the war and became very ill. However, in March, she was once again en route to Spain.

Aboard RMS Queen Mary, she wrote: "The news from Spain has been terrible, too terrible, and I felt I had to get back. It is all going to hell... I want to be there, somehow sticking with the people who fight against Fascism... I do not manage to write anymore, except what I must to make money to go on living".

This was the conflict that most mobilised individuals from Europe and North America based only upon ethical and political principles, either to fight or to report. One of those individuals to join the war effort and to die on the battlefield – in the aftermath of the Battle of Brunete – was Gerda Taro herself. As reported in *Le Soir* (27 July 1937) and then relayed in the *Belfast Telegraph*:

During the fighting at Brunete on Sunday [25 July] Mlle. Taro rallied a retreating group of militia, and persuaded them to return to occupy one of the trenches, where they withstood an intense bombardment for an hour. When forced to retreat, Mlle. Taro jumped on the running board of a car. An insurgent tank rushing up to the lines emerged suddenly from a side road and collided with the car. Mlle. Taro was rushed to hospital at Escorial seriously hurt and given blood transfusion, but died yesterday morning.¹⁸

She was only 26, and her final act was not one of seeing and recording, but one of acting and intervening. Taro's political activism went further than what the lens of her camera could encompass and register, and she felt compelled to intervene, as her obituary testifies. Curiously, in 2017, a photograph of hers joined the photographs of those anonymous people whom she had forever captured¹⁹, for hers was a paradigmatic case of cultural amnesia.

When a photograph of a young, anonymous woman on her deathbed at a hospital in Spain went viral, the woman was identified as Gerda Taro, the almost forgotten partner of Robert Capa, who also took photographs during the Spanish Civil War and died there. For many decades, many of her photographs were, in fact, attributed to Capa (although most likely not intentionally on his part). Her works were either lost or usurped, and so, she was doubly erased from cultural memory. Similar to the victims that she tried to immortalise in her photographs, who were made invisible by a fascist dictatorship, so was she almost made a shadow. Thanks to the incredible work of conservation and dissemination that the International Centre of Photography is doing, we finally have access to Taro's works. Her photographs are, in fact, both relevant and revolutionary testimonies of the fearless and unhesitant approach to early photojournalism.

18. "Woman Journalist Killed". *Belfast Telegraph*. 28 July 1937, page 4.

19. See the photograph of Gerda Taro being treated by Janos Kiszely, a volunteer doctor from Hungary published by the Guardian here: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/19/deathbed-photo-of-war-photographer-gerda-taro-discovered>. Photograph: Picture supplied by John Kiszely

Furthermore, her work humanised war and its abstract casualties, as the Morgue's photographs are a great example of. On the other hand, Taro also represented the intimacy, camaraderie and beauty of a cause, exemplified by iconic (and aesthetically sophisticated) images such as the woman militia in heels.

Gerda Taro's photoscapes, as I called them, are time, space and identity capsules: a combination of multiple layers of meaning that invite critical thinking and the imagination to fill in the gaps. As John Berger and Susan Sontag constantly called attention to, we should see beyond the instant. That instant is relational, ambiguous and pervious to interpretation. The fact that the photographer became one of the nameless victims of the conflict she was covering is just another layer of meaning and tragedy. However, when injustice and violence demand confrontation, what else can we do but act? Martha Gellhorn, in one of the letters to Eleanor Roosevelt, wrote something that illustrates both Taro's photoscapes and her fate. Unburdening herself by the lack of a place where she could fit in and the difficulty of writing while other people faced the horrors of the war, Gellhorn said: "now maybe the only place at all [to be] is in the front lines, where you don't have to think, and can simply (and uselessly) put your body up against what you hate". Like Martha Gellhorn's words still shock us, so should Gerda Taro's photoscapes still haunt us and compel us to act against injustice.

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SCOPIO & CONTRAST OPEN CALL

**The resonance of abandonment:
visiting, photographing, and filming the
Vilnius Sports Palace**

Paul Landon

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Exploring Contemporary Realities
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The resonance of abandonment: visiting, photographing, and filming the Vilnius Sports Palace

Paul Landon

Abstract:

The Sporto rūmai, the Vilnius Sports Palace, is an indoor arena in Vilnius, Lithuania built in 1971 and a remarkable example of brutalist architecture. The arena was closed in 2008 for safety reasons. Plans to renovate the building have so far failed leaving the site as a modern ruin.

In my visual art practice, I engage with modern urban space, looking for and exploring sites that resonate with collective memory and utopian promise. I use, and experiment with, audiovisual documentation of these sites. Cities and architecture are experienced perceptually — how we see and hear and how we move through them. My attraction for the Vilnius Sports Palace stems from what I see as its resonant qualities. It demands our attention, but we are not sure why. This resonance is expressed by the site's own vulnerability as a tragic ruin or an abandoned opportunity for community participation. It also resonates through the visitor who might be sensitive to the Palace's architectural and social potential seemingly rendered obsolete. The uncanny familiarity of the structure leaves the visitor uncertain in what they might consider meaningful in their experience of the site.

This essay reflects on a photo and video exploration during which I captured and recorded digitally the site of the Palace. These files are inscriptions of the visual, aural and temporal presence of the site at two moments in time (in 2012 and 2023). They capture moments of the changing site in the recent past that will resonate into the future.

Keywords: Resonance, Architecture and Memory, Soviet Modernism, Urban Flânerie, Photographic Encounter

Paul Landon explores in his research and visual art practice the neglected spaces of modernity. These explorations are transcribed through processes of recording, editing, and reconstruction. His work is structured through the physicality and perception of architecture and landscape, positing these as sites inscribed with forgotten promise. He completed a DFA at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. Landon works in Montréal as a visual and media arts professor at UQAM.

Flânerie and Serendipity: Encountering the Palace

Walking through the city, we make use of indicators recognized in the natural and built environment to navigate. Hills, rivers, bridges, church spires, historical buildings, street signs and prominent advertising help us know where we are and where we are going. While our attention is focused on these elements to find our way, the peripheral vision of our wandering eyes will be drawn to elements of the landscape that beckon us. Our unconscious attention will take note of architectural and urban details that resonate with our imagination and with our collective and individual memories.

Elina Mikkilä, researcher in creative-critical writing, while developing a concept of "creational writing," notes how the (creative) thought process is influenced by the bipedal mobility of the author. Mikkilä suggests that this moving thought process opens up a metatextual understanding of the author's surroundings: "the metatextual engagement mirrors the insights gained by many prominent authors and philosophers while taking their thoughts for a hike, stroll and/or a city flânerie."¹

In the historic centre of Vilnius, the familiar European cityscape of medieval buildings and new developments under construction is interrupted by the crumbling Sporto rūmai (Vilnius Sports Palace) on the north bank of the Neris river. When I unexpectedly came across this structure in the summer of 2012, its curved roof and its glass façade recalled to me the USSR Pavilion that I saw when I visited Expo 67 as a child in Montréal.

While in her essay "The Art of 'Creational Writing': Unlocking Insights Through Creative-Critical Fusion," Mikkilä focuses on textual contradictions and revelations in the urban environment, the manner in which these discoveries are manifested and present themselves serendipitously to the urban walker coincides with the unexpected appearance of the Palace during my first visit to Vilnius. The sighting was, to quote Mikkilä, "the unintentional observation of something not sought for; a random occurrence that turns out to be a novel and surprising discovery."²

Memory, Meaning, and Political Conflict

The Vilnius Sports Palace, built on the former site of the Sznipiszok Jewish cemetery, was opened in 1971 and closed in 2008. It is remarkable for its striking modern architecture and innovative wave roof shape. Still standing when I returned to Lithuania in the autumn of 2023, its future is uncertain, a structure that I understand to be threatened by the all too familiar colliding forces of capital investment and cultural preservation. The site occupies a historic place

1. Elina Mikkilä, "The Art of 'Creational Writing': Unlocking Insights Through Creative-Critical Fusion," *Journal of Creative Writing Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 541.

2. Ibid., 539.

of memory for the Jewish community who wish that its inviolability be respected. Also, in the specific context of Lithuania, an uncomfortable relationship with Soviet era architecture would also seem to be a challenge to the Palace's preservation.

In her article "Ways of Seeing Architecture and Landscape in the Voids of Presence: The Case of a Health Resort on the Adriatic Coast of Croatia," Jasna Galjer writes of the photographic project undertaken by Wolfgang Thaler in 2011 of an abandoned resort in the former Yugoslavia. She notes how the deterioration of the building in the photographs echoes the erasing of a way of life that existed under a previous regime and the loss of the memories of that paradigm: "This deconstruction of visual portrayal is analogous with the disintegration of the system of former values, ranging from the loss of the social role of architecture, the destroyed beauty of architecture merged with the landscape, to the erasing of memories of personal experience of places."³

As Galjer remarks, this brings into question the dependence of certain types of architecture on precarious social structures and "the variable and unstable relationship between architecture and the social environment."⁴

My engagement with the Sports Palace stems from what I see as its resonant qualities. It demands our attention, but we do not know why. This resonance is expressed by the site's own vulnerability as a tragic ruin or an abandoned opportunity for community participation. It also resonates through the visitor who is vulnerable to the Palace's potential qualities rendered obsolete. The uncanny familiarity of the architecture leaves the visitor questioning what they consider meaningful in their experience of the site; to this North American, it resembles modern architecture from the Cold War West while at the same time seeming to exemplify tendencies of the late Soviet period in architecture and community planning in eastern Europe.

The architecture and landscaping of and around the Palace are emblematic of a Zeitgeist of a past in living memory of the 1970s and 1980s. The site, in the heart of historic Vilnius, resonates with a deeper time. The cemetery of Vilna Jews in Sznipiszok was in operation from 1592 until 1831 and the resonance of such a place of remembrance and spirituality is deeply felt by many.

Sonic Memory, Material Resonance

In his book *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*, the media historian Siegfried Zielinski proposes a concept of deep time and considers how ancient developments in philosophy, theology and technology are undercurrents in the sea

of media we are having to navigate today.⁵ In the book's second chapter, Zielinski looks to the archaeology of technologies of musical intonation and amplification. Describing the massive pipe organs installed in the great cathedrals of Europe and the acoustic chambers inserted into baroque palaces, Zielinski claims that palatial and religious architecture is materially linked to early forms of sonic media and to developments in aural experience.

With its high roof and dense structure, the Sports Palace embodies the elements of aural resonance that Zielinski proposes. Built as an arena for presenting sporting events, concerts were also often held in the Palace. The resonance of these events could continue to be felt in the concrete, glass and metal of its architecture. Residents of Vilnius that I met in 2023 recounted their memories of attending events at the Palace before its closing, including a memorable concert by the American experimental rock group Sonic Youth held there in 1989.

The site also holds memories of more recent tragic events. A public funeral for the victims of the January Events (partisans who died fighting Soviet armed repression in 1991), was held there in January 1991. Also, perceptible from the site, looking across the Neris, are the traces of where a footbridge once abutted the shoreline. It was explained to me that these are the remains of a bridge that was under construction in the 1980s. It was reportedly used after an event before it was completed, and it collapsed injuring several people.

Geopolitical events condition our reception of architectural degradation. Lithuania's proximity to the ongoing Russian invasion of the Ukraine resonates in the architecture from what the locals refer to as the 'Soviet times.' The Palace's current state of degradation is the symptom of multiple forces at play including that of speculative capitalism. The Ukrainian poet Polina Baitsym's recent reflections on Soviet architecture in her homeland could help to inform our reception of this architecture today. Her poem "Non-Exigent Spaces" from 2022 reflects on the disorienting transformation of historically resonant architecture into sites of speculation:

"Enduring in their non-exigency, they grow covered in the ornaments of indifference.

With amplifying belligerence,

seekers of land to develop, of shopping malls to impose, ally with the government

for the property vengery

and thrive on the heritage of remissness.

'It's business par excellence,' many deduce in the universal parlance of bewilderment."⁶

3. Jasna Galjer, "Ways of Seeing Architecture and Landscape in the Voids of Presence: The Case of a Health Resort on the Adriatic Coast of Croatia," *Studies in Eastern European Architecture* 15, no. 2 (2023): 58.

4. Ibid., 42.

5. Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

6. Polina Baitsym, "Non-Exigent Spaces," *Ukrainian Poetry Review*, 2022.

Topoi, Memory, and the Photographic Encounter

The striking, yet seemingly obsolete, architecture of the Palace situates it in the “fluctuating and controversial” utopian paradigm of contemporary architecture.

Christina Contandriopoulos reminds us that the term “utopia,” originally coined by Thomas More in the 16th century, connotes somewhere beyond place, “from the Greek words for no-place (ou-topos) and good-place (eu-topos).”⁷

The resonating elements of the Sports Palace could also function as other interpretations of “topoi” that have temporal rather than spatial connotations. The concept of the “topos” (plural “topoi”) come from conventions in literature that recur over time. Referring to Ernst Robert Curtius, the media-archaeologist Erkki Huhtamo identified in mass media “phenomena that (re)appear and disappear and reappear over and over again and somehow transcend specific historical context.”⁸ Wanda Strauven suggests that topoi could function like Aby Warburg’s concept of *Nachleben*, the “afterlife” or temporal unconscious of image types that have persisted since antiquity. This sense of seeing something new that is also anchored in the past is a symptom of our modern condition rooted in the “mix of optimism and anxiety that surrounds all forms of modernity.”⁹

Tom Gunning identified this phenomenon as a “(false) impression of experiencing a past experience.”¹⁰ According to Strauven, this sense of seeing something new that is also anchored in the past is a symptom of our modern condition rooted in the “mix of optimism and anxiety that surrounds all forms of modernity”.

The concept of the topos recurring over time also lends itself to a reconsideration of the photographic document. As a moment captured in time that can be shared and reviewed repeatedly and over a long period, a photograph possesses a temporal resonance. What is shown in the images that I captured of the site is not the Sports Palace as it was designed or when it first opened to the public, nor the ruin that could be seen at the time of this writing, but rather two moments in its history and in my encounters with it.

7. Christina Contandriopoulos, “Utopian Paradigms in Contemporary Architecture,” *Journal of Architectural Theory* 18, no. 3 (2013): 3.

8. Erkki Huhtamo, “From Kaleidoscomaniac to Cybernerd: Notes toward an Archaeology of the Media,” *Leonardo* 30, no. 3 (1996): 300, quoted in Wanda Strauven, “Topoi in Media Archaeology,” *Media History* 22, no. 2 (2016): 232.

9. Wanda Strauven, “Topoi in Media Archaeology,” *Media History* 22, no. 2 (2016): 232.

10. Ibid.

I photographed and made some videos of the site, not as documentation of it, nor as elements for a future artwork. I tried to capture the structure’s presence and resonance. In some ways these photos and videos were taken only for me, as notes about a place that remained (and remains) enigmatic. I now share a selection of these images in an attempt to consider the site as emblematic of a resonance of displaced potential and of a blurring of collective memory and cultural signification.

Stillness, Distance, and the Refusal to Enter

Cities and architecture are experienced perceptually; we see, smell, feel and hear them as we move through them. While photography and videography are limited to audiovisual form of perception, they offer the potential of capturing the temporal qualities of built space; moments capturing and freezing time become an archaeology of both the place and its buildings and the people who visit these.

I first visited Vilnius in 2012. In the photographs and videos that I made of the Sports Palace that summer, its initial state of degradation is captured; boarded-up windows and crumbling concrete are in evidence, yet the structure is intact and can be approached (but not entered). The photos and videos I shot in 2012 and 2023 bear witness to the emptiness of the no longer functional space; its architecture designed for a flow of spectators and participants is strikingly still. In the videos, that stillness is accentuated by the lack of human movement. Cars pass in the distance. The wind blows the leaves and birds sing. A solitary figure crosses the plaza.

In October 2023, I led a walking group of local and visiting artists and researchers to visit the Palace and to discuss its cultural and social resonance. By this time the Palace was surrounded by a security fence and wooden hoarding covered in graffiti. Windowpanes had been removed and vegetation had grown through the concrete.

Before the walk, I spoke to a younger resident of the city about my project, about leading a group to the site. She said that she knew of the building well and then asked me if we would be able to enter it during the visit. I replied that we would not. “Boring,” she responded, and declined to participate in the walk.

The photographs of the site are all taken from the outside. I made no attempt to penetrate the fence surrounding it. The architecture does not reveal its inner configuration and histories. Likewise, the photographs themselves are hermetic, revealing only the outside appearance of this building. The Palace is presented as it was experienced, as an uncanny apparition in a somewhat familiar landscape.

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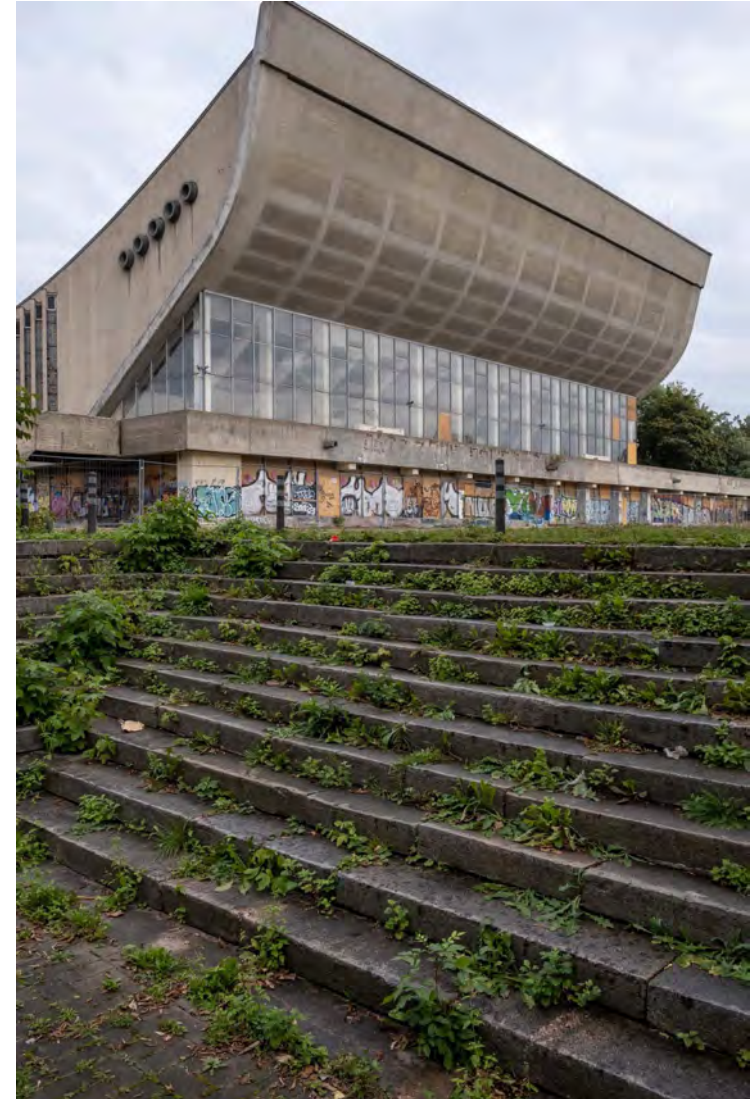
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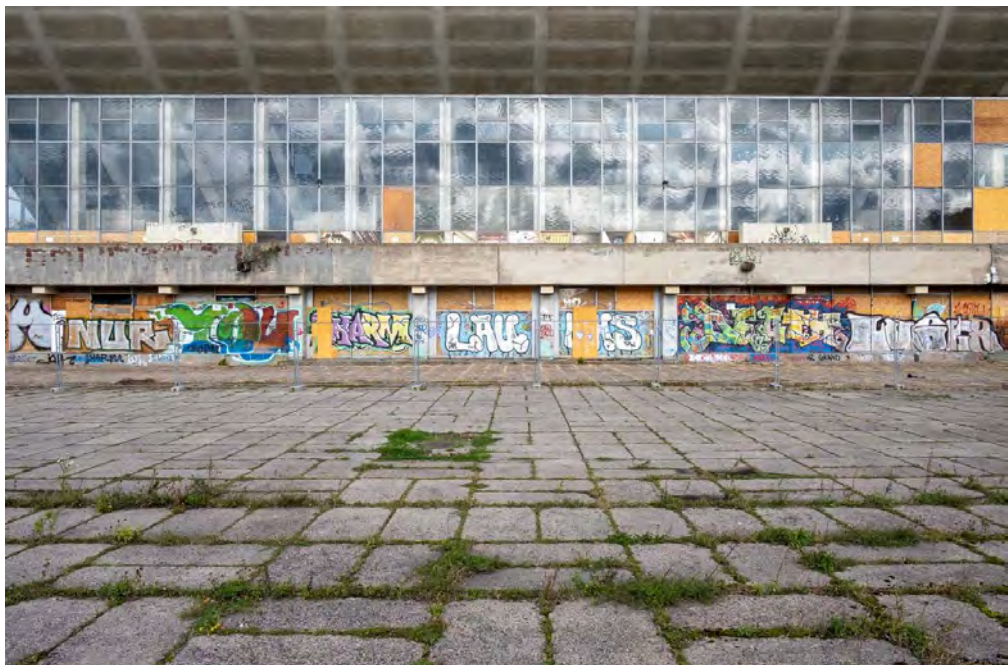
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SCOPIO & CONTRAST OPEN CALL

Trees as Visual Thinking

Dária Joana Teixeira Salgado
with Sérgio Tavares (sound/music)

Scopio Architecture, Art and Image
Exploring Contemporary Realities
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Trees as Visual Thinking

Dária Joana Teixeira Salgado
with Sérgio Tavares (sound/music)

Abstract:

The work forwards an aesthetic and sensory reflection concerning the presence of trees in our contemporary landscapes, namely in urban contexts, conceiving them as “visual thought.” Their materiality, mutability, and imagistic charge shape the individual and collective experience of places, transforming the perception and experience of space. The project starts by observing the differences between spaces inhabited by trees and those whose absence is noted, exploring at the same time the implications of this presence in constructing the urban imaginary. The work falls under the theme “Exploring Contemporary Realities,” articulating an artistic journey and a theoretical essay anchored in photographic representation as a research tool. In addition to photography, audiovisual and sound capture are used, exploring the relationship between still images, moving images, and sounds, in a synesthetic approach that prioritises the perception and affective experience of the landscape. The research focuses on the changing effects caused by trees: the visual impermanence generated by light and wind, tonal and chromatic variations, the metamorphosis of shadows, the movement of leaves and trunks, and the sounds of other living beings that inhabit them. These elements will be collected and analysed in a dynamic between sound and silence, noise and natural melody, allowing for the creation of visual and sound compositions, eventually integrated into installations. Inspired by Aby Warburg and his expression “the external cause of the image”, where wind is a vehicle of emotion and pathos, the essay proposes an approach in which the body, in interaction with the landscape, actively participates in the redefinition of places. Accordingly, the sensitive mediation between body and space becomes the core of an artistic process, and by doing so, it reveals the uniqueness of trees as agents of transformation and meaning in the contemporary urban environment.

Keywords: Trees, Urban landscape, Sensory perception, Photographic representation, Spatial transformation

Dária Joana Teixeira Salgado holds a PhD in Contemporary Art from the College of Arts of the University of Coimbra. Designer, artist, and higher education professor. She is an integrated researcher at the Arnaldo Araújo Study Center in the Art and Critical Studies Research Group and a member of the Association of Moving Image Researchers. Since 2005, she has developed projects in the areas of drawing, photography, and video, participating in festivals, performances, exhibitions, and conferences. <https://www.cienciavita.pt/en/EF12-6F92-55EE>

Sérgio Tavares is a bass musician born in Porto, where he lives. He studied at ESMAE, holds a master’s degree in music education and a bachelor’s degree in bass. He teaches bass and has participated in various improvised music/jazz projects and multidisciplinary collaborations with artists from diverse fields such as dance, video, and poetry. <https://sergio-tavares---0.webnode.pt>

In their material concreteness and changing appearance, trees reveal a universe of transformation of places, shaping the personal and collective experience of the territories we inhabit. The tree, in its corporeal and visual power, guides reflection toward the senses, toward the way it transforms our presence and experience in space. As an aesthetic response, the aim is to draw attention to the transformation, modification, and, most importantly, the difference and relationship between places inhabited by trees and those devoid of them.

To respond to the thematic challenge “Exploring Contemporary Realities,” the research will be directed toward the imagery of trees in contemporary urban landscapes, projecting the development of an artistic work accompanied by a theoretical essay framed within the field of photographic representation as a tool for artistic research. Photography, but also its exploration alongside audiovisual media (including still and moving images and the sound dimension), as visual and sound research resources centered on the perceptive, sensory, and affective experience of the landscape in the urban context, will be the means to be used in the search for and exploration of different forms of artistic research, enabling the construction of different discursive spaces – series of works whose results will be highly dependent on the procedural resources (between image and sound collection).

As a starting point for the collection, we will seek to identify the expression of these places through the effects of change, the perceptive and sensory transformation that the presence of trees imposes, exploring their visual impermanence provided by the influence of light and wind. What might we find? Variations in the treetops, resulting from the movement reflected in the visual effect of changes in lighting, which necessarily include the effects of changing shadows, as well as chromatic variations with their tonal and saturation differences. But also, the effects of the wind passing through the leaves and the swaying trunks, as well as the sounds of other living elements that inhabit the trees. These and other elements can be collected and analyzed in a dynamic between sound/silence and sounds/noises, elements that constitute these soundscapes and that can add value to the images or serve as material for the creation of a sound installation.

It will be through the imagery of trees, from the glimpse of its uniqueness (trees as visual thought), that we intend to consider the dynamic connections between place and the changing effects that trees provide. Therefore, reflecting on an effective/aesthetic and synesthetic experience of an active body operating in a participatory dynamic. Or, to paraphrase Aby Warburg, working on “the external cause of the image”¹. This expression Warburg uses to refer to the wind as a vehicle of affection and *pathos*² through which we access the most intimate reasons for the body’s movement as it reacts to stimuli. The body will be redefined with the concept of landscape of these places in a dialogical process of resignification. In the end, the mediation of a body in space as a natural result of incorporation.

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2. Greek word for suffering, emotion and intensity.

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Trees-As-a-Visual_thinking

Visual Essay

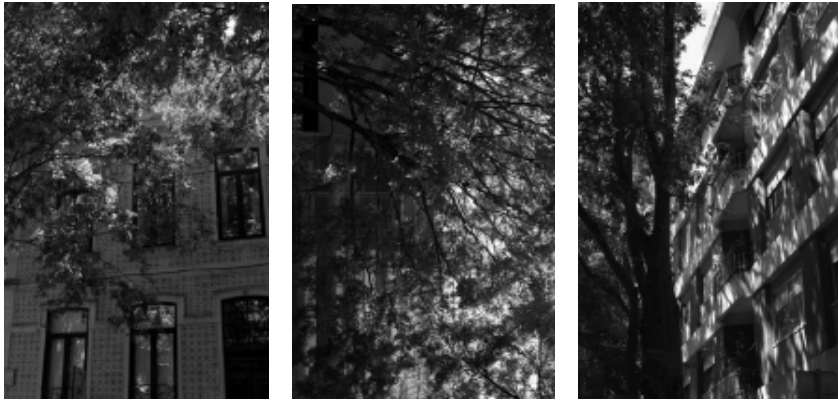
Exploratory Possibilities: Reflecting on Trees in Urban Landscapes

Through a suggestive collection of images and sounds, resulting from forays or wanderings through the city of Porto, in contexts that we can relate to the idea of forested areas, this visual essay proposal, which is also intended as an exhibition, installation, and experiment, seeks to develop careful and thoughtful attention to the presence of trees (in the form of experiences), as well as the emotions these experiences can evoke, resulting from this individual and/or collective connection with places. The project seeks to create meanings worked in diverse times and spaces with poetic repercussions, a meaning where emotion and political participation unite. An active participation that both invokes the senses, the sensory, the well-being and connection of individuals, as well as social responsibility in the city.

Problematize the physical relationship (presence) of trees in urban spaces, or what it means to be a tree in cities and how it affects us, established the starting point for a photographic and sound collection and study. How can their erect bodies reclaim their status as living elements – beings that create habitats of total affection – actants of cities that, in their isolated appearances, enhance places and spaces, making themselves known through their visual expressiveness – which is life and movement?



Series_ In the city_light/shadows_foliage (imag. 12_13_14_15)



A proposal established through the combined relationship of visible and invisible elements in a movement articulated between plant elements (trees, soil, and subsoil), atmospheric elements (light, wind), and psychic elements (emotion) in an urban context where the boundaries between the natural and the artificial intersect. The images address the frame of reference, the movement of leaves, the diffuse overhead light, and the luminous, formal, and chromatic changes and transformations of the places. Sound transcends the frame of reference, addressing the invisible, the apparent stillness and silence of these beings, and therefore the listening and vibration we can feel before their (subterranean) presence – their communication system.



Triptych
From inside | the window

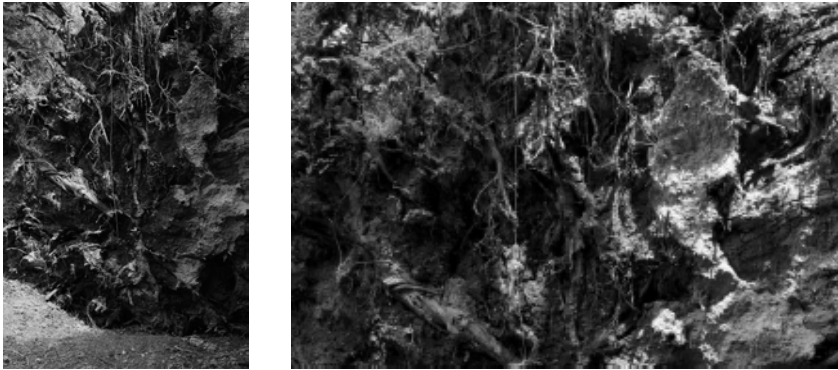


Two exploratory dimensions are projected – the immeasurable plane, the invisible and inaudible dimension of the trees, represented by the roots (the microrhizae system – a system of nourishment, communication and survival), in its relationship with the measurable plane, in which the physical, palpable body joins and connects the subterranean and the surface – with the visible, the arboreal structure, the trunk, the treetops, and their changing effects provided by light and shadow. To return to the immeasurable plane, in which the work begins to be perceived by the physical and psychic senses of the audio-spectator – the experience of the place, or what it is to be and be in the presence and company of the trees, through the sonic dimension that aids in the totalized perception of space, assertively reproducing the experience of it.

The sonic dimension mirrors the experience of visible and invisible duality through the audible and the inaudible. The audible anticipates and amplifies the sensations that resonate with the eye, which seeks and complements the origin of the sound in the landscape by incorporating animated and resonant elements. In the inaudible dimension, sonification aims to provide continuity to what is invisible – to the subterranean, to the roots – where a networked system of internal communication operates.

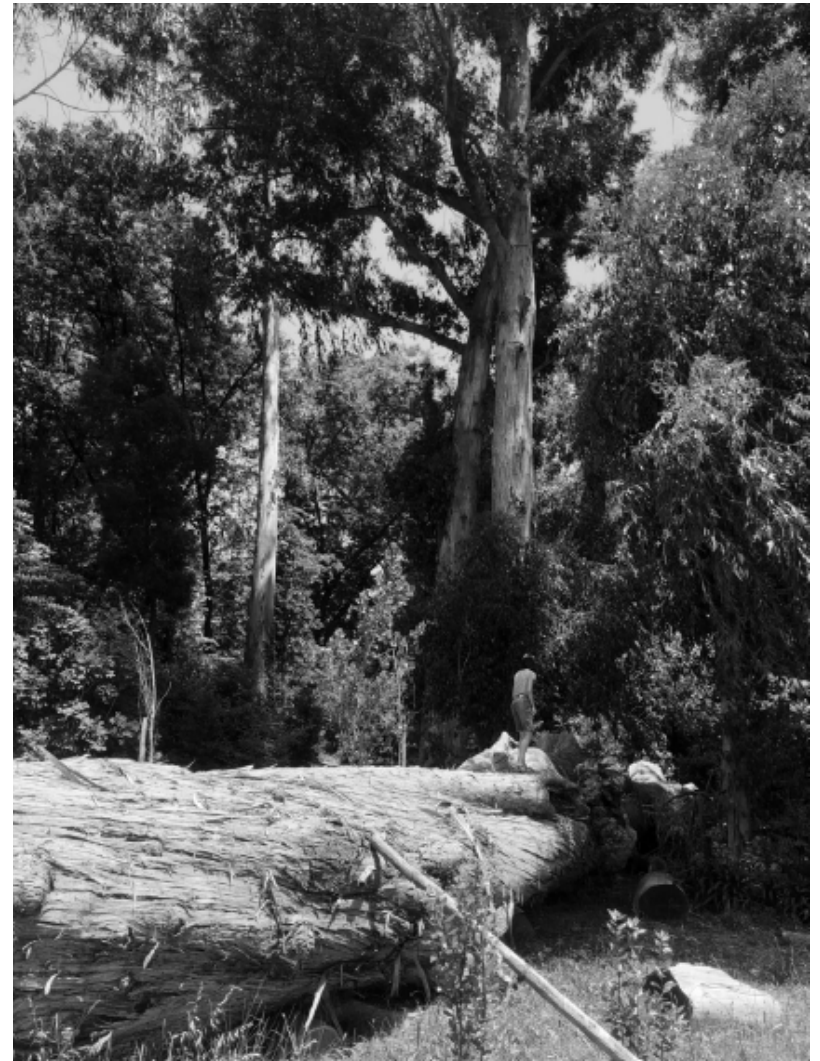
I am a tree

The trees' survival in their relationship with other trees. A nourishment system that ascends, structurally connected (trunk) to the treetops, where the sun's energy, carbon, and water absorbed by the roots are transformed into sugar. Therefore, we work with the idea of microrhizae (starting from the bottom up, from the inside out), of silence, of the inaudible (interior-roots) to the audible (exterior-trunk-canopy), through the speculation or sound imagination that we can intuit and create based on the mechanisms of survival propagation networks and communication and nourishment networks.



Among the trees, particularly in larger gardens, we perceive acoustic ecosystems that allow for a greater auditory range. We notice their presence when they break the silence with the stirring of the wind, hearing the creaking of trunks or the rustling of leaves. Or, by contrast, when they restore silence by creating acoustic barriers, establishing boundaries between wooded areas and urban areas. Thinking about borders is usually an exercise in geography. We are also interested in identifying the more diluted and permeable sonic boundaries that result from the existence of these green barriers and understanding how we adapt to and sense these acoustic gradients.w

From the roots



... to the fall of a trunk



a tree body

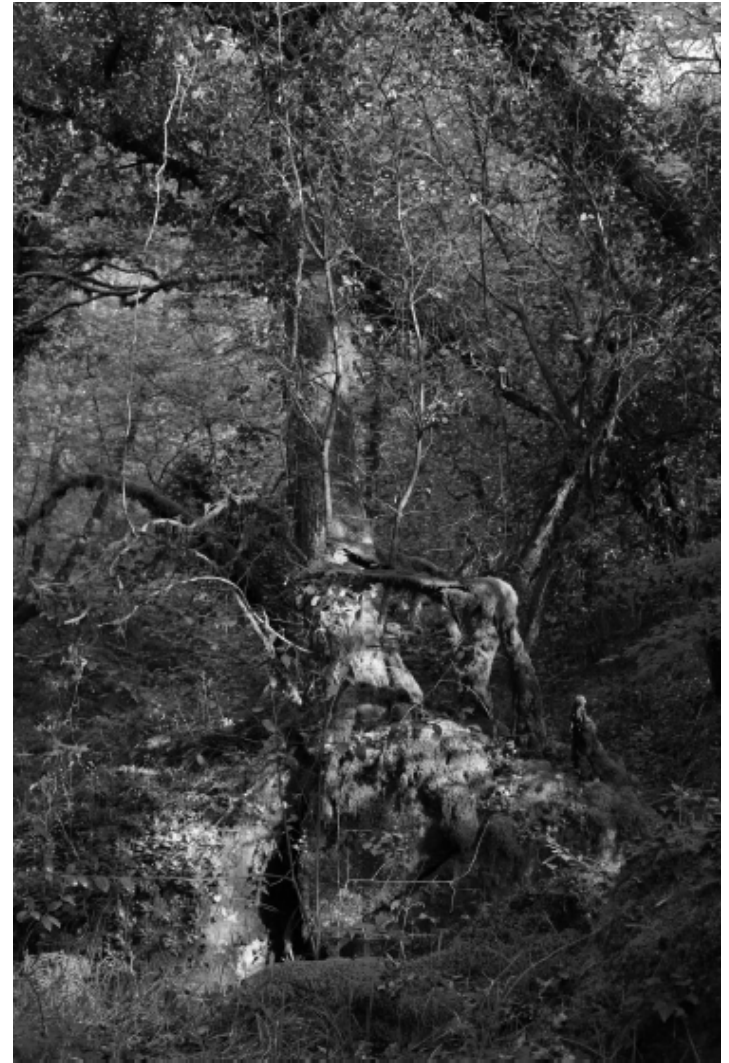
n the research and collection process, we sought, through compositional relationships of montage and manipulation of soundscapes, to materialize and spatialize the relationship between the visible and invisible, the inaudible and the audible. Returning to the idea of silence, and possibly how we understand it after Cage in its radical impossibility and simultaneously in its openness to the immanent sonic space, we approach Louis Khan, whose architectural work was based on the dialogue between silence and light, in a synthesis and blending of the visible and inaudible. For him, silence was the potential, that which had not yet taken shape and therefore gives space to the imaginary, to connection, and to discovery. As we can see in his book *Silence and Light*, through his words:

I put this on the board: Silence – and – Light. Silence is not very, very quiet. It is something which you may say is lightless – darkless. These are all invented words. Darkless – there is no such a word. But why not? Lightless; Darkless. Desire to be; to express. (...) But one can say, light to silence, silence to light [draws two curved arrows], has to be a kind of ambient threshold and when this is realized, sensed, there is inspiration.⁵

⁵ Luis I. KAHN, *Silence and Light*. (Zurich: Park Books, 2013), 26.



In the forest



between silence and light



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

unfinished

Lukas Sander

Scopio Architecture, Art and Image
Exploring Contemporary Realities
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unfinished

Lukas Sander

Abstract

unfinished is an artistic project, a site-specific video walk created for the newly built district of Manegg in Zurich, Switzerland. Co-produced with Gessnerallee Zurich, the work premiered in May and June 2024, with further presentations anticipated in 2025. The project centres on a single-shot, steadycam video that traces a continuous walking route through the evolving urban landscape. Audience members receive the video on tablets and, equipped with headphones, follow the filmed path on location, synchronised in movement, position, and perspective with the onscreen walker. The site—Manegg—is a recently developed district on the grounds of a former paper factory, now demolished and replaced by mixed-use residential and commercial buildings. Marketed as “Greencity”, this territory presents a still-emerging, ecologically branded urban environment, shaped by corporate narratives of sustainability. The film draws on in-depth research and interviews with residents and planners, offering commentary on the space's material, aesthetic, and socio-ecological textures. Through voiceover and image, it constructs a reflective and at times spectral narrative, layering memory, presence, and potential futures. By integrating archival imagery and animation, the film envisions past industrial functions alongside speculative projections of urban transformation. The soundscape heightens the immersive experience, inviting a critical reading of the processes of urban development. *unfinished* positions Zurich–Manegg as a case study of peripheral expansion in European cities, revealing how contemporary architecture often generates generic environments driven by corporate logics. The project remains open-ended, inviting new modes of seeing and inhabiting spaces in flux.

Keywords: ·Site-specific , Urban transformation, Spectral narrative , Corporate sustainability, Peripheral expansion

Biography

Lukas Sander was born and grew up in Berlin. Before and during his studies at the HfG Karlsruhe and the Zurich University of the Arts, he worked in various departments such as camera, scenography and editing for documentary film and cinema as well as assistant set designer at the Schauspiel Frankfurt and the Zurich Opera House. He was an associated artist in the Artistic Fellowship Program of the Zurich University of the Arts, for which he was mentored by Prof. Dr. Barbara Gronau. Since 2008 he has been working as a scenographer, lighting designer and video artist – first in Germany and since 2012 mainly in the independent scene in Switzerland with Timo Krstin, Philippe Heule, Teresa Vittucci, Mbene Mwambene and many others. In his own productions, he realizes site-specific projects, installations and video walks – most recently at the Bern Biennale, the Palazzo Trevisan in Venice and at the Gessnerallee Zurich. An interest in space is a driving force and recurring motif in his work. The aesthetic aim of these works is to formulate new site-specific strategies that open up a high degree of sensitivity to their surroundings, both in their creation and in the experience they create for the audience. He has held teaching positions at the ZHdK, the UdK Berlin and the HfG Karlsruhe. He works and teaches as a research assistant at the ZHdK in the Master Theater program and lives in Zurich.



videowalk with tablet and headphones drone shot of Zurich Manegg



videowalk perspective in residential area of "Greencity" | filmstill of animation with cityview and virtual forest overlay



videowalk perspective on final construction site of "Greencity"



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

Blind man's bluff with open eyes

Johanes Binotto

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Blind man's bluff with open eyes

Johanes Binotto

Abstract

The text reflects on the experience of participating in Lukas Sander's video walk, comparing it to the childhood game "Blind Man's Bluff." In the game, being blindfolded transforms familiar surroundings into an unstable and disorienting landscape where the central question shifts from "Where are the others?" to "Where am I?" The author argues that Sander's work induces a similar disorientation, paradoxically enacted "with open eyes." Guided solely by a disembodied voice through headphones, the participant navigates urban and semi-hidden spaces, experiencing uncertainty, vulnerability, and a regression to a childlike state of dependence and unsteady movement. The loss of auditory self-awareness intensifies the destabilisation, prompting even attempts to record one's own footsteps as a form of reassurance or self-preservation. Throughout the walk, reality becomes ambiguous: sounds blur between environment and recording; spaces feel at once familiar and estranged. By the time the participant returns to the starting point, the landscape is unchanged, yet the experience has altered the self. The text thus explores how Sander's work transforms perception, orientation and identity through deliberate sensory displacement.

Keywords: ·Site-specific , Urban transformation, Perception, Orientation, Sensory displacement

Biography

Johannes Binotto is a professor of cultural and media studies at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts and a senior lecturer at the University of Zurich. He is also an experimental filmmaker, video essayist, and senior researcher who leads the Swiss National Science Foundation-funded project "VideoEssay". His work focuses on the intersection of film theory, philosophy of technology, and psychoanalysis.

You all know the children's game called "Blind Man's Bluff": You get blindfolded and then you have to try to catch the other players. But if you can remember playing it, you will also remember, how this game made not just the other children invisible but how it turned your whole surroundings into a puzzle. The room through which you stumble and grope on your search for the others becomes an endless labyrinth. The sofa and the chair must have been moved as they no longer seem to stand where they always stood. The lamp is in my way and the rug is a trap laid out for me. All distances between the things have shrunk to mere cracks or they have suddenly expanded to an unsurmountable abyss. Everything is different and I've become an alien in my own world. The question where the others are hiding is getting replaced by a much more unsettling question "Where am I?"

To enter Lukas Sander's video walk means to enter a game of blind man's bluff – but one that is all the more confusing as you play it with open eyes. I can see the street before me clearly but I don't know my path as it will only be mapped out for me by the voice I hear through my headphones. Am I really supposed to enter that door? Have I gone too far or not yet far enough? I become a child again, a toddler even, who only recently learned to walk. I move through buildings and parking lots, I cross fences and gates. I pass apartments with lit windows and people looking out, eyeing me suspiciously and I follow a beaten track up the hill, next to the motorway. I do this all because a voice in my head tells me so – a gentle psychosis. There are times I am so tempted to take off my headphones because an anxiety rises in me that I will lose myself slowly and completely. I've once read that people will eventually go crazy when trapped in a completely soundproof room. I begin to wonder if the same is true when you can no longer hear yourself. Is this grumbling noise I can make out in the background just part of the pre-recorded soundtrack or is coming in right now from the motorway behind those thick concrete walls? I breathe hard but I don't hear it. As if to secure myself I start to make my own audio recording with my phone, while I walk. What a weird idea to record my steps on gravel, grass and concrete. Like an audio backup for recovering myself afterwards so that I could listen to where I had been while I was lost. The voice in my headphone tells me about that huge building on the left. A flickering light is signalling to me but I cannot decipher the code. Yet, as I slowly return to where I began I do not want my trip to end. As the voice in my head fades away I keep standing under those trees to where it had led me last. I have returned to the place where once I was.

But I am no longer the same.



videowalk perspective in residential area of "Greencity" | filmstill of animation with cityview and virtual forest overlay



videowalk perspective on final construction site of "Greencity"



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**The Melancholy of Images:
Reassessing the Value of Photography**

Delfim Sardo

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The Melancholy of Images: Reassessing the Value of Photography

Delfim Sardo

Abstract

This essay reflects on the contemporary crisis of photography, not as a question of identity but of relevance, within a landscape oversaturated by images and dominated by smartphones and social media. It traces photography's shifting role, from vernacular practices to artistic experimentation, highlighting how democratized technologies and mass production have blurred distinctions between professional and amateur image-making. Against this backdrop, the resurgence of analogue processes, photobooks, and material experimentation underscores photography's enduring value as a medium of reflection rather than redundancy. The argument proposes that photography's future lies in its capacity to balance representation with material presence, editing rigour, and embodied experience, demanding new forms of teaching and critical practice. Photography must thus reclaim its significance through conscious, epistemological image production.

Keywords: Contemporary Photography, Self-portraiture, Appropriation, Narrative Expression, Artistic Autonomy

Biography

Since 1990, Delfim Sardo has been dedicated to curating contemporary art and writing essays on art. He is a Guest Professor at the College of Arts and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Coimbra. Sardo served as the General Curator of the Lisbon Architecture Triennale in 2010. Between 2003 and 2006, he was the Director of the Exhibition Centre at the Belém Cultural Centre in Lisbon. Sardo founded and directed the magazine Pangloss. From 1997 to 2003, he worked as a consultant for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. In 1999, he was the Commissioner for the Portuguese Representation at the 48th Venice Biennale. In 2010, he co-curated the Portuguese Representation at the Venice Architecture Biennale. Until 2020, he was an Advisor for Visual Arts at Culturgest under the direction of Mark Deputter. Sardo's published works include *Júlio Sarmento*, *Catalogue Raisonné*, *Edições Numeradas*, Vol. I (MEIAC, 2007), *Jorge Molder* (Caminho, Lisbon, 2005), *Helena Almeida*, *Pés no Chão*, *Cabeça no Céu* (Bial, 2004), *Abrir a Caixa* (Caixa Geral de Depósitos, 2009), and *A Visão em Apneia* (Babel, 2011).

Essay

One of the main questions currently facing the world of image production, particularly in photography, is its relevance—more explicitly, its raison d'être within a landscape marked by total saturation.

*In a global context where the most widely used device in contemporary societies is the smartphone and where images are predominantly published on social networks—where the vertical format has been adopted to match the standardized scrolling format—photography appears to be experiencing a crisis comparable to that which painting underwent, not when photography was invented, but when image-making became commonplace with point-and-shoot cameras, such as Sony's 1964 Handycam. A seminal exhibition like *The Photographer's Eye*, conceived by John Szarkowski for the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1966, which juxtaposed vernacular photography with images created by Photographers (with a capital P), would have no place today because the flow of images has exhausted the possibility of judgment. Moreover, the radical democratization of devices precludes any comparative overview, and the field of authorial photography has absorbed all the paraphernalia of technical errors, indecisions, and a vernacular passion that has intensified since the 1950s, from the nomadic gaze of Robert Frank to the conceptual functionality of Ed Ruscha, Dan Graham, or Andy Warhol.*

Curiously, if, in the first instance, the primacy of technology was the response found by authors—whether through the advent of digital media or the possibilities afforded by large-format prints, which imported into photography a corporeality that previously belonged to painting (or to communication, as was the case with the Russian avant-gardes from the early 1920s)—the widespread use of high-resolution portable image-capturing techniques, coupled with the capacity for image storage, has produced a contrary and unexpected effect: a nostalgic return to analogue techniques, a renewed sensitivity to the sophistication of printing (as evidenced by the resurgence of platinum printing, for instance), and a renewed importance of the photobook, often in the form of an artist's book, with all the multiplicity of possibilities that such a format can entail.

On the other hand, the disassociation of photography from the notion of an "exemplary image", mainly through the use of seriality, has introduced into the photographic universe—especially since the 1970s—a notion that the image is always a system of interdependencies, blurring the epistemological boundaries of the photographic field or subsuming it into the broader realm of artistic image production.

Photography is thus undergoing a profound crisis, but not one of identity (which has long been examined and pondered by practitioners and commentators alike), but one of relevance: Why is it important to produce new images?

The answer can only be addressed by producing images that consciously strive to exist on the fine line between their representational quality, their interrogation of the relationship with the viewer, and how they deal with the physical, material, and embodied melancholy of their presence. In this sense, the path for photography can only reside in the complexity of the material production process of the image, which, to justify its existence, must be the outcome of an epistemological process of editing that might culminate in images whose scale, medium, hapticity, or required distance transform them into relevant images.

Frequently, the subject matter of images consciously produced within a creative or artistic context is hardly distinguishable from the radically automated images of the smartphone. Sometimes, even their aesthetic, or indeed their technical-representational quality, may be indistinguishable.

The field of photography must, therefore, be approached from the perspective of its destiny as a material image, as an imagistic procedure that confronts, through its precise scale, its exact pagination in a book, the rigour of its editing, and the materiality of its presence, an engaged viewer.

It is in this sense that the teaching of photography is fundamental—not (or not only) as a historically transversal inquiry into the procedures that can generate images, but as an education towards an economy of relevance for each image, requiring a shared reflection on the equation that anything can be photographed, but the image is not a representation of that thing—it is the result of a process of choices and subtleties that define a relationship.



Exhibition of the Contrast project at the Portuguese Centre of Photography (2024)



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**Photography as a Language:
Between Concept and Expression**

Pedro Neto, Olívia Marques da Silva

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Photography as a Language: Between Concept and Expression

Pedro Neto, Olívia Marques da Silva

Abstract

This essay reflects on the contemporary crisis of photography, not as a question of identity but of relevance, within a landscape oversaturated by images and dominated by smartphones and social media. It traces photography's shifting role, from vernacular practices to artistic experimentation, highlighting how democratized technologies and mass production have blurred distinctions between professional and amateur image-making. Against this backdrop, the resurgence of analogue processes, photobooks, and material experimentation underscores photography's enduring value as a medium of reflection rather than redundancy. The argument proposes that photography's future lies in its capacity to balance representation with material presence, editing rigour, and embodied experience, demanding new forms of teaching and critical practice. Photography must thus reclaim its significance through conscious, epistemological image production.

Keywords: Contemporary Photography, Self-portraiture, Appropriation, Narrative Expression, Artistic Autonomy

Biographies

Pedro Leão Neto holds a degree in Architecture from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP, 1992), a Master's degree in Urban Environment Planning and Design (FAUP-FEUP, 1992), a PhD in Planning and Landscape from the University of Manchester (2002), and a postdoctoral qualification from FAUP (2018). He is currently a Professor and Researcher at FAUP, where he leads the courses Photography and Communication in Architectural Design (FCPA I & II) and Photography of Architecture, City, and Territory (FACT). He also serves as the coordinator of the research group Architecture, Art and Image (AAI). He oversees the scpio publications, acting as Editor-in-Chief of the scientific journals Sophia Journal of Architecture, Art and Image and scpio Magazine Architecture, Art and Image. He is involved in several research projects funded through competitive grants and is the Principal Investigator (PI) of Visual Spaces of Change (VSC), funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), as well as Contrast: Multidisciplinary Artistic

Initiatives in Art, Architecture, Design, and Photography (funded by DGartés – Projects for Creation and Publishing). His research focuses on the intersection of Architecture, Art, and Image, particularly in the domain of artistic documentary photography and its relation to architecture. Within this field, he has published around 40 books, with notable works including Another Approach on the Works of Álvaro Siza: Contemporary Documentary Photography on Portuguese Architecture and the CONTRAST series-I, II and III. Additionally, he is the author and co-author of over 100 scientific articles, with a particularly distinguished contribution in the chapter "About Education in Architecture: Towards an Integrative Pedagogy in the Teaching of Communication Strategies for Architectural Design and Photography," published in Towards a New European Bauhaus—Challenges in Design Education: EAAE Annual Conference—Madrid 2022, Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024. He has curated numerous exhibitions and coordinated international competitions and conferences, particularly in photography and architecture. Notably, he is the driving force behind the international conference series Sophia Journal Architecture, Art and Image. It is now in its tenth edition, which brings together dozens of research centres, scholars, and authors from national and international contexts.

Olívia Marques da Silva holds a PhD/MPhil and MA in Photography from the School of Arts and Design at the University of Derby (UdDerby), between 1995 and 2001, United Kingdom (UK) and graduated in Philosophy from FLUP. She was awarded grants from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (FCG) and the Portuguese Photography Centre (CPF) of the Ministry of Culture. She combines her academic activity with artistic expression as a photographer, participating in various solo and group exhibitions and film productions as a photographer. She is an integrated member of ID+|IMAD at ESMAD/IPP. She collaborates with IFUP, CEAU/FAUP, Audiovisual Studies at the University of Santiago de Compostela and eCPR/South Wales University. Member of ELIA (International Association of Art Schools) Her connection to the Polytechnic of Porto began in 1992, where she was department director and coordinator of bachelor's and master's degrees in the areas of Photography, Audiovisual, and Cinema. President of ESMAE's Technical-Scientific Council. She is currently President of ESMAD/IPP. She teaches on the UA's Doctoral Programme in Artistic Creation, on the Masters in Photography and Cinema at ESMAD/IPP and is a member of the Coordinating Board of IPP's Culture Centre.

Essay

It is with great satisfaction that we present this editorial for the third volume of the CONTRAST collection, a collaborative project centred around the universe of Photography, Creation, and Education, intersecting with the multidisciplinary fields of Architecture, Art, and Design¹.

We aim to highlight the richness and importance of this project within the interdisciplinary context of higher education in Photography. Furthermore, we seek to reveal the potential of photography as an interpretative and expressive tool capable of engaging with diverse realities.

The CONTRAST project emerges as a response to the cultural, social, and political transformations of the early 21st century. It is presently focused on fostering a network of artistic collaboration and initiatives between higher education institutions in Portugal, where photography holds a significant presence.

One of CONTRAST's main objectives is thus to promote critical reflection and debate on pressing contemporary issues through photography. In this sense, we are interested in drawing attention to the project's potential to relate the European Green Deal to everyday realities and thus be aligned with the objectives of the New European Bauhaus. By examining themes such as housing, public spaces, and gender issues, CONTRAST offers an essential insight into the complexities of contemporary societies. It helps to revitalise confidence in the future among diverse audiences, especially younger ones. In this scenario, photography is not just a recording tool but an instrument for analysing, problematising and reinventing visible realities, bringing new insights into city space and life.

This interdisciplinary approach forms one of the central pillars of the project, which not only strengthens the teaching of photography across the involved institutions but also broadens the scope of reflection on photographic imagery as a means of understanding and transforming reality. It brings together a diverse range of visual strategies that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, enabling a rich exchange of knowledge and practices. These photographic works capture the identities of a specific time and place², addressing both past and future concerns. The project thus stimulates debate on the role of photography in constructing new imaginaries, bridging disciplines, and fostering synergies between various universities, courses, and local communities.

¹ Funded by DGARTES and led by the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto – CEAU, AAI (FAUP), in joint coordination with the School of Media Arts and Design of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto – ID+, IMAD (ESMAD/P. PORTO), and the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto – I2ADS / ID+ (FBAUP), the project involves nine additional higher education institutions – AR.CO, DARQ, DCAM, EA.UCP, ESAP, FBAUL, FEUP, IPT, and UL.CUP.

² Silva, Olívia Marques da. "Olívia Silva". Documentalismo Fotográfico e Território In Neto, Pedro. ed. 2013. Scopio Projects: Topografias a Norte ed. 1, ISBN: 978-989-976-99-39. Matosinhos, Portugal: Cityscopio Associação Cultural. Norte pp.13

It is also essential to mention the internationalisation efforts developed through collaborations with institutions such as the Society for Artistic Research (SAR), which reinforces CONTRAST's commitment to education, research, and the dissemination of interdisciplinary photographic knowledge. Integration with the Research Catalogue (RC) platform enables the multimedia publication and documentation of student and artistic research projects, extending the reach and impact of these photographic endeavours. This digital infrastructure provides students and researchers new tools for exploring and presenting their photographic projects, strengthening the bond between academia and civil society. Structurally, CONTRAST operates on two primary fronts: the online platform and editorial support. The online platform serves as a dynamic space for interaction and dissemination, offering access to photographic projects, videos, and digital books. Its bilingual nature enhances the internationalisation of the project, ensuring a global reach and maximising the impact of the content produced. This platform not only brings together courses and students from participating institutions but also broadens access to the general public, promoting critical dialogue across various disciplinary fields.

The editorial branch is equally essential, producing both physical and digital publications that bring together reflective texts and images on photographic projects in higher education, particularly in the fields of Architecture, Art, and Design. The graphic design of the publication³ creates a strong and innovative identity, integrating diverse contributions into a high-quality layout and exploring the potential of the physical book⁴.

The identity of the CONTRAST project is consolidated annually, valuing students' work and ensuring the project's openness to society and its internationalisation. The curatorial approach utilises all available means to create synergies, adopting a more flexible publication format akin to a contemporary art magazine or book, which strengthens the connection between artistic research and education.

As an interdisciplinary space, the publication brings together various editors and texts on pedagogical strategies and reflective and critical analyses of photographic projects in education and research, filling a gap in the landscape of photography education in Portugal and contributing to the development and dissemination of photographic knowledge. The renewed format of the publication signals our commitment to university extension, ensuring engagement with a broader audience passionate about Photography, Art, Architecture, and Design and promoting a more dynamic dialogue between emerging artists and the broader community, thereby opening the university to society.

³ Né Santelmo and Artur Leão

⁴ Neto, Pedro Leão. Alternative Publications in the Universe of Documentary and Artistic Photography: Architecture, the City and the Territory In Another approach on the works of Álvaro Siza: Contemporary Documentary Photography on Portuguese Architecture. Porto: scopio Editions, 2021. ISBN 978-989- 53268-8-4



Exhibition of the Contrast project at the Portuguese Centre of Photography (2024)



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

The Exercise of Photography

José Maças de Carvalho

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The Exercise of Photography

José Maças de Cavalho

Abstract

This essay explores the emergence of Contemporary Photography from the 1970s onwards, a period marked by its liberation from traditional social functions and its intersection with the second Avant-Garde. Photography became a tool for performance, self-representation, and socio-anthropological expression, establishing its artistic autonomy through fiction and theatricality. Within a pedagogical context, students develop two semester-long projects—self-portraiture and either appropriation or visual narrative—each emphasizing photography as a poetic, narrative medium. The essay reflects on student works that exemplify these approaches: from Eva Postica's introspective visual poetics to Salomé Monteiro's reinterpretation of Jeff Wall's *Insomnia*, and Ricardo Almeida's chromatically rich urban interventions. These projects underscore contemporary creation as rooted in appropriation, narrative layering, and relational image-making, positioning photography as both a personal and conceptual practice grounded in critical artistic inquiry..

Keywords: Contemporary Photography, Self-portraiture, Appropriation, Narrative Expression, Artistic Autonomy

Biography

Artist, curator, and professor. He holds a PhD in Contemporary Art from the College of Arts at the University of Coimbra. He is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture at the University of Coimbra and the College of Arts. He studied Modern Languages and Literatures at the Faculty of Arts, University of Coimbra. He completed a postgraduate degree in Arts Management at the Institute of European Studies of Macau in the 1990s, where he lived and worked. His works are represented in collections such as the Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, the Coimbra Photography Meetings, the PLMJ Foundation, António Cachola Collection, Figueiredo Ribeiro Collection, EDP Foundation, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Berardo Collection, and the State Contemporary Art Collection, among others. A contributor and published author with scopia Editions, he was also a co-supervisor of Pedro Leão Neto's postdoctoral research at FAUP, titled "Mapping Documentary and Artistic Photography: A Contemporary Look at Architecture and Reference Spaces in Porto (MFDA-ARP)." He is the author of several books on photography and video art. Curator of the Coimbra Contemporary Art Centre since 2020. Coimbra Contemporary Art Centre since 2020..

Essay

Photography liberated itself from its social function from the 1970s onwards, coexisting with the emergence of the second Avant-Garde movement of the 20th century. At this point, it began to be instrumentalised for practices requiring a lasting medium, such as Performance and Happenings, or, in a more vernacular sense, to express issues subject to sociological or anthropological reception.

What is certain is that its importance and freshness emerged within the artistic field, particularly in the realms of the theatricality and fiction. We therefore consider that the starting point for Contemporary Photography lies in this period, with many of the authors who began their careers at that time still actively producing work today. The students' practical work, which constitutes 75% of their final assessment, is developed over the semester within the framework of two projects. The first focuses on self-portrait, while the second revolves around the idea of appropriation or, alternatively, the development of a visual narrative.

Despite its autobiographical definition and affiliation with Art History, self-portrait is understood broadly and diversely. It is always a poetic point of view (that which lies beyond the real), the "self" as "other", transforming Photography into a field of narrative expression. In the second project, the methodology of appropriation is based on the idea that appropriationist methods define the paradigm of contemporary creation, aligned with acquiring knowledge as the starting point for all learning. The alternative second project fits within a broad field, which can be called domestic or private narratives, favouring a sequential organisation (however paratactic it may be) and the coexistence of images with a relational dynamic that enhances their connection more than the individual value of each image.

Eva Postica's self-portrait work embodies a refined poetic directness but also reflects the strangeness of places, adopting a critical stance in self-representation. Margaux Mazure's photographs, also in the field of self-representation, possess an atmosphere akin to photo-performance, influenced by modern experiments from Man Ray to André Kertész. Ricardo Almeida's self-portraits should be viewed as critical gestures of self-representation in suburban public spaces. However, they reveal a very intense chromatic and constructive density that favours the fusion of figure and background.

*Salomé Monteiro's appropriation project begins with Jeff Wall's photograph *Insomnia*, making a radical shift from the original setting to a public garden. By stripping the work of its depressive character, she updates the everyday gestures and postures of idle life in the garden and daytime sleep.*

Finally, Sofia Pratas Morais' work holds narrative potential, wandering through urban spaces that close off to the photographic lens through compositional choices that hint at hesitant exits and reveal a familiar strangeness.





FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**FO:RCE _ Photography:
Reflection, Creation and Teaching**

Orlando Franco, Rodrigo Peixoto

Scopio Architecture, Art and Image
Exploring Contemporary Realities
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FO:RCE _ Photography: Reflection, Creation and Teaching

Orlando Franco, Rodrigo Peixoto

Abstract

This essay presents four final-year undergraduate photography projects developed within the Contrast project (2022–23). The works explore themes of identity, memory, family, fragility, and archives through distinct approaches: André Paulino's *Kaus*, a multimedia exploration of psychological states; Beatriz Pilré's *Elos*, a reimagining of family traditions and female lineage; Duarte Manhita's *01.C.18*, a cinematic study of hidden hospital spaces; and Maria Judas's *Searching in the Chest of Affection*, a poetic reflection on childhood and growth. Together, these projects highlight the value of tutorial-based pedagogy in fostering individual creativity, turning limitations into opportunities for authorial exploration.

Keywords: Photography, Reflection, Creation, Teaching, Visual criticism

Biography

Orlando Franco is a Lisbon-based artist, curator, professor, and cultural mediator. He holds a PhD in Media Arts from Universidade Lusófona de Lisboa and a degree in Fine Arts from ESAD–Caldas da Rainha, with further studies at Salamanca, the University of Lisbon, and Ar.Co. His artistic practice spans video, photography, installation, and drawing, often exploring tension, failure, weight, lightness, and the interplay between body and machine. He is Assistant Professor in Cinema and Media Arts at Universidade Lusófona, co-director of the Master's in Photography, and deputy director of the BA in Photography. Since 1999, he has exhibited widely in Portugal and abroad. Since 1999, he has regularly exhibited his work individually and in group shows. His recent projects include "Notes on Empathy and Otherness" at the Cultural Centre of Lagos, and "WAIT" at the Berardo Collection Museum, CCB, Lisbon.

Rodrigo Peixoto holds a Master's in Fine Arts from ESAD.CR (2010) and completed his photography studies at AR.CO (2000). In 1999, he was awarded a FLAD scholarship to study at SVA, New York. Participant in the 1st Photography Course of the Gulbenkian Programme for Creativity and Artistic Creation (2004). Author of several scientific articles on photography. He has been exhibiting regularly since 1999, and his photographs are part of the PLMJ, BES Arte, and EDP Foundation collections. Founder of the company "Resize" (2001 and 2018) and the "Art Division" department at L2Spirit (2005). Co-founder of "Hélice – Photographers Who Use Photography" (2016), an association that created the magazine "Propeller," where he is part of the editorial board. He has been a lecturer at ULHT in the Photography Department since 2008 and the programme director since 2017.

Essay

In this 2022–23 academic year, we present, as part of the Contrast project, the work of four final-year undergraduate students: André Paulino, Beatriz Pilré, Duarte Manhita, and Maria Judas.

These students' projects touch on themes such as identity, memory, fragility, family, and archival work, clearly reflecting some of the key directions in contemporary photography.

André Paulino's project, *Kaus*, unfolds as a dive into the inner workings of a psychological state where the speed of images and thoughts collide in a chaotic context. The result is an installation of text and images in various media: a manifesto, repetitive images engraved on metal plates, and audiovisual objects for multi-screen video and sound displays.

Beatriz Pilré's project, *Elos*, reveals part of a journey of self-discovery centred on family ties, marked by the female figures of her mother and grandmothers. This project explores the specific traditions of a region (Glória do Ribatejo), revealing bodies, identities, rituals, and landscapes, which, through photography, singularly reimagine this reality.

Duarte Manhita developed a photographic series entitled *01.C.18*, which focused on less visible hospital architecture. Archival spaces, storage rooms, and hospital laboratories, under dramatic lighting and cinematographic framing, reveal tense and dramatic narratives through suspended actions and the constant suggestion of movements that highlight human absence.

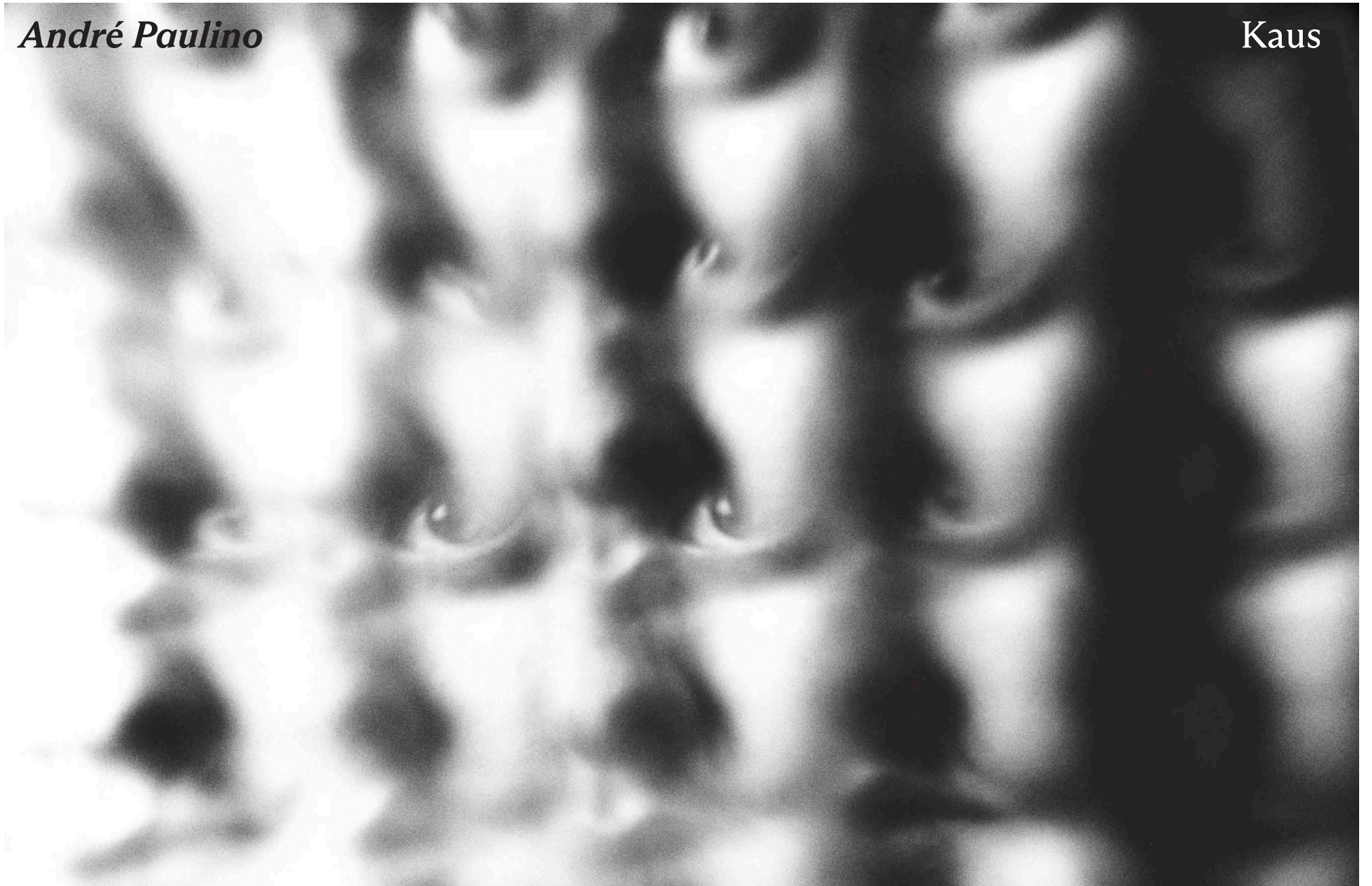
In her project, *Searching in the Chest of Affection*, Maria Judas embarked on an expedition into her memories, particularly the imaginary territory of childhood. Her work consists of images forming a constellation of symbolic references linked to that journey. This poetic visual narrative addresses the theme of growth as a phenomenon filled with uncertainties. Rather than questioning what it means to be an adult, this project meditates on the inability to remain a child. The images pave the way for a visual narrative that moves from the freedom found in the affections and relationships of childhood to an inevitable constant redefinition, marked by doubts, of the irregular path from adolescence to adulthood.

These four projects illustrate well the importance of the pedagogical practice of individual tutorials as a distinct form of teaching, promoting procedural development based on each student's unique specificity. This methodology enables the enhancement of each student's qualities while presenting solutions, in the form of authorial exploration opportunities, to the existing limitations and contingencies.

In reality, there are no "right" themes or predetermined paths. Problems, limitations, and difficulties can become starting points for a project, all while maintaining a deep respect for the identities and idiosyncrasies of each individual.

André Paulino

Kaus





FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**A continuous, diversified and sustained
photographic practice**

Carlos Lobo

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A continuous, diversified and sustained photographic practice

Carlos Lobo

Abstract

This essay examines three photographic projects that reflect diverse approaches to territory, identity, and memory. In *Da Pedra ao Osso*, João Ramilo explores the ontological meaning of place through his home village of Louriceira, addressing themes of disappearance, change, and nostalgia in the rural world. José Miguel Ribeiro's *Na Cratera do Vulcão*, grounded in Paulo Valverde's ethnographic notes on São Tomé and Príncipe, engages with the coexistence of the living and the dead, using photography to probe the spectral boundaries between visibility and invisibility, material and immaterial. Finally, Luísa Fernandes' *Para Além da Forma* challenges stereotypical and sexualised representations of the LGBTIQ+ community, creating a space for self-expression and recognition. Together, these projects highlight the vitality of contemporary photographic practice as reflection and critique of society's turbulence.

Keywords: Teaching, Contemporary Photography Discourses, Photographic practice, Research and reflection, Visual criticism

Biography

Photographer, musician, researcher and programmer in the field of photography. Professor at the School of Arts of the Portuguese Catholic University, he is a researcher at CITAR – Center for Research in Science and Technology of the Arts. PhD in Science and Technology of Arts from the Catholic University of Porto. Since 2018, he has been the coordinator of the Photography Masters at Escola das Artes. He is also an independent programmer at CAAA (Centro Subjects Art and Architecture) and editor of LEBOP, a publisher specializing in photography books. He has already published several monographs and his photographic work is represented in several prestigious private and public collections.

Essay

In his project, *Da Pedra ao Osso*, student João Ramilo works on the question of territory and its relationship with place, more specifically, his home village of Louriceira. According to the student: 'This desire was born out of the restlessness of seeing the place where I grew up disappear and the inability to fight the circumstances without necessarily wanting to change its nature, becoming a village on the verge of extinction'. Thus, this body of work shows an ontological understanding of place, in which the relationship between the self and places is established, which raises an essential reflection on the existence and death of spaces, places and territories. The manifestation of this problem realises the essential processes of permanent changes in the rural world. This project emerges from the notions of space, place, territory, personal or shared memories, remembrance, and nostalgia without necessarily wanting to touch on a political sphere. According to João Ramilo: 'I approach Louriceira from a perspective of farewell and absence'.

The visual exploration of the territory is also one of the central themes in the work of José Miguel Ribeiro and his series *Na Cratera do Vulcão*. Based on the texts and ethnographic notes written by anthropologist Paulo Valverde during his fieldwork in São Tomé and Príncipe between 1995 and 1999 and posthumously compiled by João de Pina Cabral in the book *Máscara, Mato e Morte: Textos para uma etnografia de São Tomé*, Celta Editora (2000), this photographic project seeks to capture and understand how, on these islands, the world of the dead coexists side by side with the world of the living.

In the words of José Miguel Ribeiro: 'Working from a territory that is familiar to me, I propose to reflect on the theme of spirits, spectres, apparitions, belief, fiction and performance on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, assuming photography as a means of representation of a spectral nature, which is positioned on a privileged plane of connection between the notions of life and death, of past and present, of the material and the intangible, belonging simultaneously to the realms of the invisible and of vision.'

The difference of approaches and themes developed by the students during their master's degree in photography is visible in the work of Luísa Fernandes and her series *Para Além da Forma*. This project arose from observing the stereotypical and sexualised representation of the LGBTIQ+ community to create a space for members of this community to express themselves freely. To create this body of work, concepts of misogyny and its sexualisation, and how it is directly related to the stereotypes formed about the LGBTIQ+ community, influenced this entire photographic project in order to explore the archetypes of recognition and representation of the LGBTIQ+ community. These three projects, as well as attesting to the diversity of approaches and themes of the projects developed by the students, ensure and reinforce the vitality and constant reinvention of photographic practice as a mode of observation but also an essential reflection on contemporary society and the 'turbulence' that plagues our existence.

João Ramilo



Da Pedra ao Osso





FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**At a time when the production of images
is undergoing yet another profound
transformation**

Nuno Ramalho

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At a time when the production of images is undergoing yet another profound transformation

Nuno Ramalho

Abstract

This essay discusses the photographic explorations of Elisa Vieira and Valéria Martins, both engaging with contemporary transformations in image production. Vieira investigates the social dimension of the sacred through the history of representation, reworking the canonical portrait by printing on fabric. Her practice questions photography's limits and challenges its reproductive nature within today's hyper-real visual culture. Martins, meanwhile, addresses memory—subjective and collective—through moving images that echo the torrent of intimate visual confessions in contemporary society. By embracing a celebratory yet critical approach, Martins distinguishes her work as authorial, transforming ephemeral registers into careful, enduring sequences.

Keywords: Production of images, Emergence of photography, Temporal depth, Authorial, Limits of photography

Biography

He has a degree in Sculpture from FBAUP (1999), an MA in New Genres from the San Francisco Art Institute (2008), and a PhD in Art from FBAUP (2020 and Goldsmiths, between 2011 and 2016). Since 1999, he has participated in several solo and group exhibitions in Portugal, Brazil, Spain, the United States of America, Norway, the United Kingdom, Russia and Germany. He has curated several exhibition projects and is responsible for the monthly video art programme 'Playlist', which began in 2016 in Porto. His work is represented in institutions such as the Portuguese State, CAV, Novo Banco, and the Serralves Foundation and in various private collections. A resident artist at Triangle France, he was one of the nominees for the EDP New Artists award in 2004. He has been awarded Fulbright and Gulbenkian Foundation scholarships.

Essay

At a time when the production of images is undergoing yet another profound transformation, certainly the biggest since the emergence of photography, it is precisely in this field and the issues intrinsic to its expansion and questioning that we will find Elisa Vieira's proposals.

For Vieira, this questioning also involves incorporating the social dimension of the sacred, understood from a perspective of temporal depth: using the history of representation itself, through and in images, the author starts from the canonical use of the portrait and its printing on fabric to test it here in the photographic field, working on the limits of photography in this operation, in a logic of challenging the unifying and reproductive nature of the format, in the institution of the hyper-realistic world that constitutes our present.

In Valéria Martins's case, the field of subjective and collective memory is referenced and crossed by the agility and speed of moving images. In this work, they are made known through a homely and objectively carefree register, in a parallel position to the current torrent of images from the intimate confessional plane, which, due to their profusion, professionalism and canon, merge into each other and tend to disappear in a logic of consumption quickly. In a movement that incorporates and affirms another intelligence and will, Martins' work naturally dialogues with this type of register and speed typical of his generation, but manages to impose on them a celebratory, open dimension capable of inscribing in this project its critical dimension and its life as a sequence of safe and careful images, precisely because they are authorial.

Elisa Vieira

Ecce Facies





FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**Theories and practices that mutually
stimulate one another**

João Leal

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Theories and practices that mutually stimulate one another

João Leal

Abstract

This essay highlights photographic projects developed within the Bachelor's and Master's programs in Photography and Cinema, reflecting the tension between theory and the experiential "eroticism" of practice, as noted by Susan Sontag and Henk Borgdorff. Ari Moura and Teresa Ribeiro's Impressions documents elderly participants from the Senior University of Vila das Aves, exploring shared learning and memory. Emanuel Constantino's De Zhejiang investigates the industrial community of Varziela, evoking a sense of estrangement between people, buildings, and landscape. Felícia Oliveira's Sem Passado engages with archival traces of abandoned children in Porto's Casa da Roda, transforming memory objects into visual testimony. Natalia Perulero's Quemadura experiments with photography's elemental materials—light and time—balancing figuration and abstraction. Together, these works reveal photography's critical, poetic, and transformative possibilities.

Keywords: Interrelationship of theories and practices, Photograph, Photography investigation, Teaching, Photography elements

Biography

Artist and teacher, João leao participates in solo and group exhibitions since 2001. His artworks use still and moving images as well as sound and they are presented in exhibition, projection and installation formats. His main interests as a practitioner are the ideas of structure (and its multiple connotations), the "proximity/distance" dichotomy and the ways of occupying the exhibition space. In 2005 won, ex-aequo, the "Pedro Miguel Frade" award, from the Portuguese Centre of Photography, with the work "Night Order". In 2018 won the acquisition award of the XX Cerveira Biennale. PhD in Visual Arts (practice based in installation, photography and videoart) from the University of South Wales in connection with the European Centre for Documentary Research. Worked in São João and D. Maria II National Theatres, RTP Portuguese television, and "Casa da Música". Full time professor in the Department of Image Arts P.Porto | ESMAD, full member of ID+ | IMAD – Research Group in Media Arts and collaborator of the CEAU | AAI – Architecture, Art and Image Research Group and UNIMAD research unit. Since 2017, João Leal works collaboratively with Mark Durden in photographing modernist European architecture, beginning with Álvaro Siza.

Essay

If the function of theory is to explain and enrich our understanding of images, there is also an 'eroticism' of experimentation and practice in the processes of photography that challenges these theories—something we cannot explain but must feel, as Susan Sontag suggests.

We believe that art "invites reflection, but eludes any defining thought about its content," as Henk Borgdorff wrote in his study on academic research through artistic practice.

In this publication, the expression is photographic. The works presented by alumni result from prolonged investigations and experiences, discussed and showcased through various mediums and contexts. All were developed in the context of the Final Project modules of the Bachelor's in Photography and the Master's in Cinema and Photography.

The 'Impressions' by Ari Moura and Teresa Ribeiro are the outcome of a semester spent accompanying a group of elderly participants from the Senior University of Vila das Aves. While researching and learning, they also shared their knowledge with a collective of individuals eager to learn more about how to express themselves through images. Until then, their interaction with photography was mainly through family photographs kept in albums or passepartouts.

Emanuel Constantino engaged with the community living in the industrial area of Varziela, in Vila do Conde, and produced a work entitled De Zhejiang. His curiosity about the place guided his exploration and helped the construction of the images; his persistence and care granted him access. The resulting images evoke a certain strangeness, seemingly stemming from an unclear attempt to integrate the buildings and people into the landscape.

Felícia Oliveira immersed herself in the archive of the Porto's 'Casa da Roda', housed in the city's District Archive. Her work, Sem Passado [Without a Past], focused on the 'signs' that could help identify children who were given up or abandoned. The artist photographically embraced and explored these memory objects within the archive's facilities. The building itself and the precision and care with which these objects are handled inspired a video where the memory of these children is evoked.

Natalia Perulero's Quemadura stems from experiments with the fundamental elements of photography: light and time. Her gaze moves between figurative images filled with a sense of strangeness and abstraction, rarely letting the subject disappear entirely. The interplay between high and low key and between distinct production contexts makes the work a visually challenging experience.

¹ Sontag, S. (2009). Against Interpretation. In *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (pp. 3–15). London: Penguin Classics.

² Borgdorff, H. (2012). The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research. In *The Conflict of the Faculties – Perspective on Artistic Research and Academia* (pp. 140–173). Leiden University Press.



*Saborear o sol do pinhão
& fantástico...*



5 anos



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**Photography as a cognitive instrument
for (re)discovering architectural and
social realities**

Pedro Leão Neto

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Photography as a cognitive instrument for (re)discovering architectural and social realities

Pedro Leão Neto

Abstract

This essay presents the pedagogical approach to photography at FAUP, where teaching is closely aligned with research, fostering students' critical, independent thought and ability to articulate it through photographic narratives. The projects address architectural and social realities, engaging with political, economic, and cultural contexts while balancing realism and abstraction. Parque Residencial da Boavista reinterprets Porto's 1970s housing through Italo Calvino's fictional city of Valdrada, blending influences from Hanzlová and Gursky. Identity explores the São João de Deus neighbourhood through walking as a method of inquiry, evoking influences from the Düsseldorf school and Wim Wenders. Decoupage examines Bom Sucesso's human presence, echoing Aalto's humanism and Ribeiro's focus on lived space. Transições reflects on Siza's Bouça neighbourhood, integrating architecture, light, and everyday life. Collectively, these projects reveal photography as a cognitive tool for (re)discovering urban and social realities.

Keywords: Photography, Cognitive instrument, (re)discovering architectural and social realities, Atmospheric, Architecture.

Biography

Pedro Leão Neto holds a degree in Architecture (FAUP, 1992), a Master's in Urban Environment Planning and Design (FAUP-FEUP, 1992), and a PhD in Planning and Landscape from the University of Manchester (2002), with postdoctoral work at FAUP (2018). He is Professor and Researcher at FAUP, where he teaches courses on photography and architectural design and coordinates the research group Architecture, Art and Image (AAI). He is Editor-in-Chief of Sophia Journal and scopio Magazine and Principal Investigator of the projects Visual Spaces of Change (FCT) and Contrast (DGArtes). His research explores the intersections of architecture, art, and photography, with a focus on artistic documentary practice. He has published around 40 books, over 100 scientific articles, and curated exhibitions, conferences, and the Sophia Journal international conference series.

Essay

The work carried out so far in the curricular units linked to the teaching of photography at FAUP has aimed to bring the world of teaching closer to that of research. Moreover, it is pertinent to highlight that the pedagogical methodology employed aspires to cultivate in students a comprehensive capacity for informed and independent thought, enabling them to articulate this thought through a compendium of photographic visual narratives. This pedagogy necessitates, among other components, an openness to critique—both commendatory and detrimental—concerning the political, economic, social, and artistic contexts of urban space and its architecture. Consequently, the resultant works exhibit diverse realism and abstraction, varying in their interpretative approaches to reality and the issues they elect to convey.

Notably, the students' projects exhibit significant conceptual and technical influences from various authors. For instance, the Parque Residencial da Boavista project, executed by Ana Amélia Ferreira, Ana Carolina Varejão, João Diogo Afonso, and Maria Inês Silva, invokes Italo Calvino, imaginatively and critically linking the author's narrative regarding the fantastical city of Valdrada with a paradigmatic residential district from the 1970s in Porto. Through the fictional framework of Valdrada, the photographic series investigates the concepts of symmetry, transformation, and identity of the Boavista Residential Park, thus (re)discovering the atmospheric qualities of its architecture and public space. The influence of authors such as Jitka Hanzlová is also evident in the series' direct engagement with the neighbourhood's nature and architecture, underscoring their relational and often latent tensions with the greenery and urban environment. Additionally, elements inspired by Andreas Gursky are manifest in certain images, particularly those of larger scale, characterized by meticulous attention to detail, patterns, and the intricate landscapes of the neighbourhood's architecture.

Identity by Isadora Fontana, José Rodrigues, Maria Luíza da Silva, Nadja Araújo, and Vinícius Pauli centres on the São João de Deus neighbourhood, revitalized by architect Nuno Brandão Costa. This photographic series, aligning with the philosophy of Francesco Careri, implements a visual methodology of walking as an investigative tool for perceiving space, facilitating an examination of architecture and space as dynamic entities. The construction of the visual narrative, including the cropping and frontal composition of the images, functions as apertures through which the world may be perceived and understood, reflecting cross-influences from photographers such as Sebastião Raimundo and movements including the flat, dispassionate documentary style characteristic of the Düsseldorf school of photography, as well as contributions from philosophical, cinematic, and architectural realms—specifically referencing figures such as Wim Wenders and Aldo Rossi.

Decoupage by Rodrigo Encarnação, Simão Alves, and António Gonçalves scrutinizes the Bom Sucesso neighbourhood, established in the 1950s to address the issue of unsanitary living conditions in Porto's islands. The series meticulously explores the connection between the individual and their surroundings, reflecting the intricate realities of this community, thereby aligning with Alvar Aalto's advocacy for human-centric architecture as articulated in "The Humanizing of Architecture." This emphasis on human presence¹ further denotes the influence of Eduardo Sousa Ribeiro, particularly in capturing the human imprint and activities within spatial contexts. Furthermore, the influence of Andreas Gursky is apparent, particularly within the abstract and geometric interpretations of the neighbourhood's architecture, underscoring keen attention to detail and architectural patterns.

Transições by Carolina Cunha, Duarte Amaral, Guilherme Ferreira, Mariana Afonso, Matilde Oliveira, and Pedro Martins examines the Bouça Neighborhood, a design by architect Álvaro Siza. This photographic series endeavours to depict the essential moments and attributes of the neighbourhood, avoiding a depiction of mere architectural shells, instead integrating nuanced facets of daily life alongside inhabitants and their routines within the milieu. This collection illustrates influences from Hélène Binet regarding the capture of light and form within the neighbourhood's architecture and Paolo Rosselli in incorporating individuals within select images.

Subsequently, students are tasked with producing a final project consisting of a series of critical visual narratives, emerging from examining diverse works by the author, predicated on individual reflection and the effective application of photographic techniques and visual grammar.

¹ Quoting the students, 'Not just photographing them, but talking, getting to know them, asking and listening... stories of now and before, how they ended up there if they like it there, the family they have and the life they lead, asking if we can come in.'

**Rodrigo Encarnação
Simão Alves
António Gonçalves**

Decoupage



Ana Amélia Ferreira
Ana Carolina Varejão
João Diogo Afonso
Maria Inês Silva



Parque Residencial da Boavista





FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

Contemporary Photography Discourses

Rogério Taveira, Victor dos Reis

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Contemporary Photography Discourses

Rogério Taveira, Victor dos Reis

Abstract

This essay highlights the photographic experimentation of Carolina Lino and Luca Zangrandi, whose projects reflect the diversity of artistic approaches cultivated at the Faculty of Fine Arts. Lino, trained in Painting and holding a Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Photography Discourses, presents *A escrita que nasce*, where drawing and writing merge through natural metamorphic processes. Her work evokes Walter Benjamin's "optical unconscious," revealing a poetic vegetal script in which light inscribes thought and perception. Zangrandi, a Multimedia Art student, explores photo-chemical processes in *Remains of a Portrait*, producing chemigrams that analogise bodily metamorphosis with photographic transformation. Through the interplay of developer, fixer, and light, his images evoke portraits in continuous states of becoming. Both artists foreground photography's experimental dimension, situated within the Faculty as a speculative laboratory bridging artistic disciplines and expanding the medium's possibilities beyond digital certainty.

Keywords: Contemporary Photography Discourses, Photographic medium, Photographic experimentation, Chemical processes, Mutations

Biography

Rogério Azevedo holds a PhD in Fine Arts from the University of Valencia (2011) and a degree in Architecture from the Technical University of Lisbon (1989). His work investigates territorial use's social, economic, and political conditions and has been exhibited in various national and international group and solo exhibitions. He is currently an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, a CIEBA researcher, and the Bachelor's in Multimedia Art coordinator.

Victor dos Reis is Professor in the Multimedia Art Department at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, where he was also President between 2014 and 2019. He is a researcher at CIEBA and holds a PhD in Image Theory from the University of Lisbon (2007). His research has explored the relationship between art and science in the stereoscopic photographic work of Portuguese naturalist Francisco Afonso Chaves (1857–1926). He has curated exhibitions, including *A Imagem Paradoxal: Francisco Afonso Chaves*, held at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Museum of Natural History and Science, and the Carlos Machado Museum. He has published widely and participated in numerous international conferences..

Essay

The selection of students Carolina Lino and Luca Zangrandi as representatives of the work produced at the Faculty of Fine Arts stems from the fact that their projects embody distinct fields of experimentation within the photographic medium, which, in some way, reflect different paths taken within the Faculty. Carolina Lino completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Photography Discourses after finishing her undergraduate degree in Painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, in 2018. Luca Zangrandi is currently pursuing a degree in Multimedia Art. The wide range of possibilities for photographic experimentation, shaped by these different artistic backgrounds, has led to a fascinating heterogeneity of outcomes, which is what we aim to showcase through the selection of these students. The unifying thread between their works lies solely in the exploration of photo-chemical processes within their production.

*Carolina Lino's project is rooted in "writing" as a nascent form of constructing and signifying the photographic gaze. The rhythm analysis¹ of drawings triggered by natural metamorphic processes forms the core of her work, titled *A escrita que nasce*. In the synopsis of this project, Carolina writes:*

*"Photography happens, each time, as a risk (a risky mark) that emerges on the immaculate white — a sign that stains the untouchable, which is the virgin paper, never before exposed but always waiting for that moment: for a ray of light to kiss it. *A escrita que nasce* reveals a drawing that emerges from the forest, composed of lines that our gaze follows — lines that rise from the earth and the snow, stiff and lush, or fall into them, bent and twisted, forming drawings that the attentive eye fixes upon, which the hand's movement, as it writes, prolongs. These are physical, immersive drawings that stimulate thought and are formed through what overflows from the mind.*

With images, I write; with words, I imagine: I create images. The one who writes is, therefore, the one who observes — the observer is the one who writes: both are the same, crossed by poetry, which guides, draws, and presents the gesture, repeatedly, without end."

Carolina Lino's writing seems to evoke that stimulating but underexplored concept of the "optical unconscious" coined by Walter Benjamin², using photography as a medium to reveal an invisible or illegible form of writing — a vegetal script. This poetic revelation reads only what the "light kisses." These are poetic "operative images," images that probe the very nature of perception through what Christopher Bollas refers to as the "unthought known,"³ or, as Carolina Lino puts it, what "overflows from the mind."

¹ Lefebvre, H. and Elden, S. (eds) (2004) *Rhythm analysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, London: Continuum.

² Benjamin, Walter (2006) *A obra de arte na época da sua possibilidade de reprodução técnica, e Pequena História da Fotografia in A Modernidade*, Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim (pp.207–241 e pp.243–261).

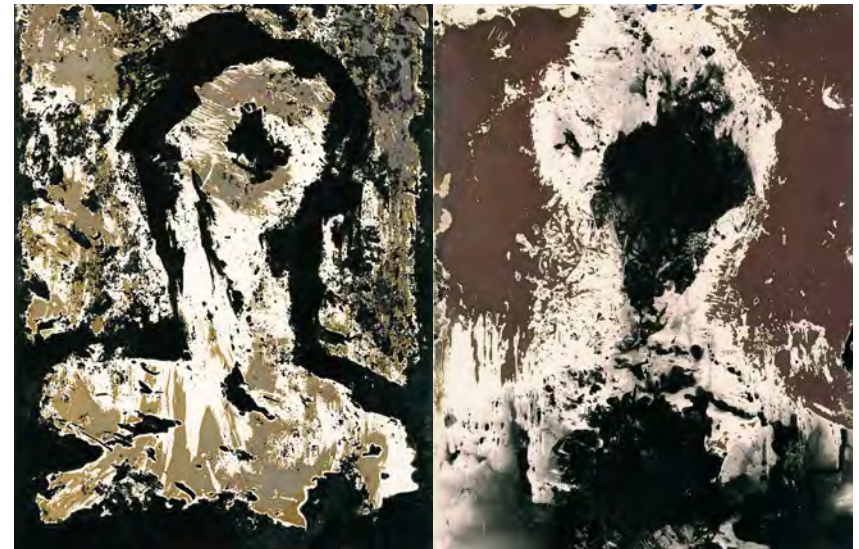
³ Bollas, Christopher (1987) *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis and the Unthought Known*, New York: Columbia.

Luca Zangrandi has created a series of chemigrams that explore the analogy between the metamorphic nature of being and photo-chemical processes. In this series, the programmed and random alternation of developer, stop bath, and fixer creates conditions for the continuous mutation of colour and tone in the images, which were produced as part of the Experimental Photography course taught by José Luis Neto. Through photo-chemical agency, *Remains of a Portrait* seeks to draw an analogy to the embodiment of becoming. Vital processes and silver-based photographic production result from light interactions and chemical reactions that determine the permanence or impermanence of materials. Fascinated by the site of bodily mutations and the parallel he found in the chemical processes of photography, Luca Zangrandi developed a series focused on the possibility of portraiture without reference. A constantly mutating photographic image that, through chemical stains, evokes portraits in various stages of decomposition.

Luca's work exemplifies the excitement of discovering a medium of experimentation far from pixels' certainty and rigid speed.

Both approaches are infused with a plasticity that arises from the unique space photography occupies within the Faculty of Fine Arts. It exists in an interstitial space between other visual approaches, structured within degree-awarding programmes.

This complementary space of relative freedom has strived to establish itself as a laboratory of experimentation, a speculative territory expanded by the nature of the environment in which it develops, the resources available, and the diverse knowledge drawn from the seven departments housed there.







FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

**The Photographic Image: Memory,
History, and Identity in Artistic
Expression**

José Carneiro, Susana Lourenço Marques

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The Photographic Image: Memory, History, and Identity in Artistic Expression

José Carneiro, Susana Lourenço Marques

Abstract

The Photographic Image: Memory, History, and Identity in Artistic Expression presents four projects exploring photography's role in shaping narratives of self and community. Gonçalo Estevão reflects on queer visibility through cinematic references to Xavier Dolan, while Inês Leal reconfigures archival images of the Pejão Mines to address memory and sociopolitical identity. João Bernardo documents Serra da Estrela's ageing communities in *A Dança dos Mosquitos*, blending ethnography and film. Raul Macedo's *Hummin'* that old distant melody captures fleeting urban moments as introspective reflections. Together, these works highlight photography's power to mediate between history, identity, and artistic expression.

Keywords: The Photographic Image, Memory, History, Identity, Artistic Expression

Biography

José Carneiro is professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto (FBAUP) since 1999. Member of FBAUP's Executive Board. Director of the MA in Image Design (MDI). Director of the Centre for Studies in Design and Art (CEDA) from 2015 to 2024. PhD in Art & Design from the FBAUP, 2014. Researcher at ID+ Research Institute for Design, Media and Culture and collaborates with i2ADS – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society. He develops artistic and communication design work. He is the author of the www.recordsansphotographs.com project.

Susana Lourenço Marques is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Porto, with a Ph.D. in Communication and Art from Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She is a researcher at i2ADS and author of *Ether / um laboratório de Fotografia e História* (2018) and *Pó, cinza, nevoeiro* (2018). She co-edited *Livros de Fotografia em Portugal da Revolução ao Presente* (2023), *Lágrimas de Crocodilo* (2022), and *Pedagogy of the Streets, Porto 1977* (2018). As a curator, she has organized exhibitions such as *Quem te ensinou? Ninguém* (2016), *Imagem/ Técnica* (2020), *Opacity of Water* (2021), *Loss of Aura* (2022), and *Eternal Youth* (Porto Photography Biennale, 2023). She co-founded the publishing house *Pierrot le Fou* in 2014.

Essay

The Photographic Image: Memory, History, and Identity in Artistic Expression In What Would You Do If I Died Today?, produced within the scope of the Master's in Graphic Design and Editorial Projects, Gonçalo Estevão explores the intersection between cinema, artistic identity, and queer representation. The project focuses on the importance of LGBTIQ+ visibility in cinema, examining how this influences narratives and character development. His images reveal the construction of small narratives that, through the work of Xavier Dolan, explore the fluctuations in the lives of queer individuals. By combining Dolan's fictional stories with real-life experiences, the project seeks to give visibility to underrepresented LGBTIQ+ voices, celebrating the complexity of their identities while challenging stereotypes and promoting a deeper understanding of their lives. The title, inspired by a quote from Dolan's film *I Killed My Mother* (2009), is suggested as a metaphor for these characters' vulnerable and marginalised condition.

Inês Leal presents the project *Periódica*, produced following her undergraduate degree in Communication Design, where she uses the archive as a tool for visual research. Focusing on the mining activity of the Pejão Mines, located in the Douro Coal Basin, she uses editing and montage of photographs from *O Pejão*, a publication produced by the Douro Coal Company. In this context, the archive is reconfigured to show the sociopolitical and identity-re-lated impacts of mining on a community marked by tradition and abandonment. The recombination of archival images challenges the usual imagery associated with this activity, creating analogies and visual relationships that encourage critical reflection on the historical and cultural heritage of the region. The project transcends mere documentation, establishing a dialogue between the past and the present.

João Bernardo presents the project *A Dança dos Mosquitos* [The Dance of the Mosquitoes], developed as a student in the Master's in Image Design, linking ethnographic photography with film still photography as the basis for his research for the film of the same name. The project addresses the collective memory of the populations living at the foot of the Serra da Estrela, documenting the spaces, objects, people, and animals that form the social fabric of that region. João Bernardo explores visual fragments that reveal the solitude and abandonment of an ageing and gradually depopulated territory. In this project, photography plays a central role in the pre-production process, serving as a way to highlight and document the traces of life, and the absence of life. By rejecting linear narrative, the project seeks a more emotional connection with the memory of this place, blending facts with the personal and collective imagination of those who inhabit it.

Lastly, Raul Macedo, who attended an undergraduate degree in Fine Arts, presents the project *Hummin' that old distant melody*. His photographic approach is more intimate and personal, reflecting his way of seeing and thinking about the world around him. His photographs capture seemingly banal and ephemeral moments, from portraits of strangers in the streets to everyday urban scenes, such as fog and walks through cities. For Raul Macedo, photography is a medium of introspection, a distillation of sensations accumulated over time, recording the passage of life through layers of thought and memory that shape his gaze.

About the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto

The teaching of photography at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto stands out for its interdisciplinary approach, allowing students from different courses to integrate photography as an essential tool in the development of their projects. In both undergraduate programmes, such as Fine Arts and Communication Design, and Master's degrees, like Image Design, Graphic Design and Editorial Projects, photography emerges as a cross-cutting medium for expression, research, and documentation, enhancing the student's education and encouraging various narratives and contexts in dialogue with other artistic and scientific fields.

For this edition of *Contrast*, four students were selected who developed their projects during the 2023/2024 academic year, exploring the photographic image as a form of artistic expression and demonstrating its relevance in the development of personal approaches to memory, history, and identity.



Gonçalo Estêvão





FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

In Place: Visual Narratives of Immobility and Isolation

José Carneiro

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In Place: Visual Narratives of Immobility and Isolation

José Carneiro

Abstract

In Place: Visual Narratives of Immobility and Isolation gathers four student projects that revisit private and archival photographs to reflect on memory, identity, and spatial belonging. Developed during the pandemic, Francisco Oliveira's Casa das Águas traces the Cáster River's springs, blending personal exploration with local history. Guided by oral testimony, his photographic sequence culminates at the Casa das Águas, a site once central to Santa Maria da Feira's water distribution. Jessica Teixeira's Retratos da Memória confronts family history through portraits of her mother, reinterpreted in light of dementia. By symbolically destroying and reworking these photographs, she translates the fragility of memory and the erosion of self-recognition into visual form. Jorge Marques' Camuflagem begins with a found rural photograph and evolves into digitally manipulated landscapes that resist geographical or temporal fixing, questioning the stability of territory and belonging. Finally, Mariana Vilanova's project turns her lens toward Porto's ilhas, modest workers' housing now threatened by gentrification. Her distant, anonymous images of daily life in these spaces highlight both continuity and loss, exposing the pressures of tourism and real estate on the city's social fabric. Together, these works explore photography's role in reactivating memory, transforming place, and narrating conditions of isolation and displacement.

Keywords: In Place, Visual Narratives, Immobility, Isolation, Photography

Biography

José Carneiro is professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto (FBAUP) since 1999. Member of FBAUP's Executive Board. Director of the MA in Image Design (MDI). Director of the Centre for Studies in Design and Art (CEDA) from 2015 to 2024. PhD in Art & Design from the FBAUP, 2014. Researcher at ID+ Research Institute for Design, Media and Culture and collaborates with i2ADS – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society. He develops artistic and communication design work. He is the author of the www.recordsansphotographs.com project.

Essay

In 2021/2022, selecting a photograph from a private collection served as a starting point for creating a photographic series. Students worked with personal and family photographs and were challenged to reflect on how memory is evoked, preserved, and reactivated through these images, transforming them into new visual interpretations.

The project "Casa das Águas", by Francisco Oliveira, was developed during the pandemic when leaving the house was a challenge. The work began with a search on Google Maps, during which the student could not precisely locate the source of the Cáster River, finding only known information about its origin in Sanfins. Without exact coordinates, Francisco relied on the help of Alberto Tavares, known as "Mr. Alberto," who accompanied him in exploring the forests of Sanfins. Together, they found the springs of Vergado and Santo Aleixo, which is the point where they converge to form the Cáster River. Francisco's photographic sequence documents this journey, culminating at the Casa das Águas, the former distribution centre of the Cáster River, which supplied Santa Maria da Feira.

"Retratos da Memória" (Portraits of Memory), by Jessica Teixeira, explores the intersection between photography and family memory. Motivated by memories of her father as a young man—my father loved photographing, and my mother would pose for every photo—the student began the project by meticulously curating portraits of her mother, selecting those that evoked a sense of melancholy. The project progressed with a significant emotional challenge: the symbolic destruction of these photographs, accentuating the feeling of loss and deterioration associated with her mother's dementia. Various materials were used to represent the loss of self-recognition, a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease.

Jorge Marques' project, "Camuflagem" (Camouflage), began with a photograph of a rural landscape acquired from a second-hand bookshop. The resulting photographic series follows a retrospective discourse, exploring the possibility of adapting and transforming this document into a new visual composition, one difficult to situate geographically and chronologically. The photographs retain traces of the original image, but the student created a nomadic landscape through digital manipulation. This work is interested in dissolving the idea of a demarcated territory into its broader possibilities.

Mariana Vilanova's project, also developed during the pandemic, documents the daily life of an ilha in Porto, capturing anonymous scenes of everyday life through a telephoto lens. The photographs depict families' routine and reflect a type of housing typical of the city, which is gradually disappearing. The ilhas consist of tiny houses without basic amenities, located behind bourgeois residences, and were expected from the 18th century onwards. This project highlights the impact of tourism growth and real estate pressure in Porto, phenomena that have transformed many of these homes into high-cost apartments, forcing the displacement of their former residents.

Francisco Oliveira



Casa das Águas





FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

Negative Space and Electric Traces

Duarte Amaral Netto, Marta Sicurella

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Negative Space and Electric Traces

Duarte Amaral Netto, Marta Sicurella

Abstract

Negative Space and Electric Traces examines the photographic negative both as a technical process and as a broader cultural metaphor. Inverting tone and colour, the negative evokes ideas from mathematics, physics, psychoanalysis, and philosophy, resonating strongly within the visual arts. Bruna Sirgado's work explores this inversion by transforming images of nature—plants, textures, landscapes—into luminous, otherworldly forms that suggest hidden energies and invite new perspectives on the natural world. Janine Oliveira's *Revive the Electricity* focuses on abandoned industrial sites between Tomar and Leiria, employing the "American night" technique to isolate objects once central to electrical power. Her harshly lit images metaphorically revive these forgotten spaces, casting electricity as both memory and life force.

Keywords: Negative Space, Electric Traces, Photography, Photographic film, Emotions

Biography

Duarte Amaral Netto is a photographer exhibiting his work for more than 20 years. He has shown his work around Europe but also in North and South America. In 2003 he won the Grand Prix of the 48ème Salon de Montrouge in Paris, was nominated for the 2012 BES Photo award (with shows at the Berardo Museum – CCB in Lisbon, and Pinacoteca de São Paulo, Brazil) and received a Kodak grant and an IED Madrid scholarship to participate in the Master in European Fine Art Photography. He also represented Portugal in "100 Photos pour l'Europe" (Paris, 2006), and in Arles "European Night" (2006). Duarte is also a photography teacher, with over 20 years of experience at BA and MA level. He is co-founder of Hélice, a non-profit organization that promotes and produces photography related activities, among them the Propeller publication. Recently he did his first short movie – *Raquel* (2021) – that was screened at Indie Brazil and IndieLisboa.

Marta Sicurella is a photographer who has exhibited her work in Portugal, France and Italy. After completing her training at Ar.Co., she was in residence at the ENSP in Arles and took part in the Gulbenkian Foundation's Creativity and Artistic Creation programme. In 2004, she won the CPF's Pedro Miguel Frade prize. She has been a lecturer on the IPT Photography degree programme since 2009, and has also collaborated with CEAC – V.N. Barquinha.

Essay

A photographic negative is an inverted image in terms of tone and colour obtained when photographic film is exposed to light and subsequently developed. In black and white film, the lighter areas of the image appear dark on the negative and vice versa. In colour film, the colours of the negative are complementary to the actual colours of the scene, creating a dreamlike image when viewed in this way. The negative is also a concept with different meanings and connotations, which extends to maths (negative numbers), physics (electrical charges), medicine (examinations and diagnoses), and economics (deficit), among other areas. Some of the areas that remain to be mentioned – Psychology (emotions), Psychoanalysis (repression) and Philosophy (Hegel's *Dialectic and Existentialism*) – are possibly the areas with the most significant impact on the field of visual arts, without, of course, neglecting the influence of the others.

In Bruna Sirgado's work, the negative, i.e. the inversion of the positive, is the method she uses to create this universe that seems to be from another galaxy but which has identifiable referents. According to the author, the inverted images 'work like an x-ray, showing that everything around us has life, shines, has its internal light source'. The images are exclusively records of nature (plants, landscapes, textures) in order to place the human gaze in another perspective on the natural and thereby establish new connections, most of them positive.

Throughout the course, Janine Oliveira looked for inspiration and materials for her work in the various abandoned industrial sites found in the area between Tomar and Leiria. In the series '*Revive the Electricity*', she focuses on objects related to damaged and non-functional electricity, photographing them using the 'American night' technique. The technique, named after Truffaut's 1973 film of the same name, not only creates darkness around the photographed subject, isolating it but also projects a harsh light that adds sculptural value.

The technical choice is not merely aesthetic: Janine uses the flash to open up a gap in the night of oblivion to which these sites are consigned. Electricity was at the heart of these sites; boxes, frames, levers, all contained within them life and death.

Aby Warburg compared the snake used in the Hopi Indian dances to the lightning that brings rain, the source of life and regeneration; by taking the form of lightning, the snake gives the natives the power to control one of the most fearsome forces in nature. One of the snake's qualities is that it performs a life cycle from the deepest sleep (death) to the most intense and powerful form of life. In the same way, the lightning of the flash, with its electric shock, aims to infuse new life into what has been forgotten.

Bruna Sirgado

Light Source

