



# LES PÉNINSULES DÉMARRÉES

September 16 2022

February 26 2023

Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA · Bordeaux, France

SAISON TEMPORADA  
FRANCE PORTUGAL  
PORTUGAL FRANÇA  
2022

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# LES PÉNINSULES DÉMARRÉES

*Les Péninsules démarrées (Loosened Peninsulas) is a collective exhibition dedicated to Portuguese artists from diverse generations and backgrounds.*

Encompassing a period from the 1960s to the present day, this project aims to be retro-prospective, envisioning today's creation from its sources.

With Portugal as the foundation, the exhibition seeks to uncover parts of a little-known contemporary history and return to the roots of an avant-garde, by presenting artists driven by a need for emancipation and transgression in the face of dictatorship and censorship.

Although the prevailing context of Salazarism and the colonial war (1961–1974) led by the Portuguese government in its colonies influenced the artists of that time, their point of focus remained art itself, allowing them to resist the deleterious atmosphere of a conservative society. These artists kept abreast of international art movements and the avant-garde, and they travelled to, stayed in, or went into exile in European capitals.

The exhibition is organised in thematic and monographic constellations, with a particular emphasis on significant groups of works. Interweaving a variety of practices (painting, sculpture, drawing, video, etc.), these constellations cover themes that are open to interpretation:

language and literature, the image-enigma, the body and its metamorphoses, daily life, self-representation, colonial history.

*I ran! And loosened Peninsulas  
Have not undergone a more triumphant hubbub*

These verses taken from Rimbaud's famous poem 'The Drunken Boat' reflect a key aspect of Portugal's history which is its peninsular and maritime geography and an invitation to cast off one's moorings. This exhibition held at the MÉCA takes us on a diverse and even contrasting journey, revealing artists who are either little-known or unknown outside their country and, for some, are presented for the first time in France.



Back page :

Francisco Tropa, « Scripta », 2016, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff,

Photo : Marc Domage / Armanda Duarte, « Vernissage », 2017, Courtesy de l'artiste

## EXHIBITED ARTISTS :

MARIA JOSÉ AGUIAR, HELENA ALMEIDA, MANUEL ALVESH,  
LEONOR ANTUNES, ANTÓNIO BARROS,  
RENÉ BÉRTHOLO, ISABEL CARVALHO,  
LOURDES CASTRO, ARMANDA DUARTE,  
ALEXANDRE ESTRELA, GAËTAN, ANA HATHERLY,  
ANA JOTTA, ÁLVARO LAPA, MALANGATANA,  
E. M. DE MELO E CASTRO, MARIA JOSÉ OLIVEIRA,  
BRUNO PACHECO, JORGE QUEIROZ, PAULA REGO,  
CATARINA SIMÃO, ANA SANTOS, ÂNGELO DE SOUSA,  
SALETTE TAVARES, FRANCISCO TROPA, BELÉN URIEL,  
JOÃO PEDRO VALE & NUNO ALEXANDRE FERREIRA,  
VON CALHAU!

## CURATION :

Anne Bonnin



## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Along with the exhibition comes the catalogue, «Les Péninsules démarrées», published by Dilecta. With texts by curator Anne Bonnin, art critics, and art historians, this publication sheds light on the situation of contemporary art in Portugal from the 1960s to the present day, before and after the Carnation Revolution, while offering guidance for wandering through an artistic landscape, present and past, concrete and imaginary.

### With the authors:

Anne Bonnin, Antonia Gaeta, Marjorie Micucci,  
José Luís Porfírio, and Rui Torres

### Graphic design:

Fanette Mellier

On sale at the Frac ticket office and in bookshops

96 pages, €25

Release date:

November 2022



## EXHIBITION

September 16 2022

February 26 2023

## SPONSORS

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# LES PÉNINSULES DÉMARRÉES

## THEMES OF THE EXHIBITION

### PORTUGAL – MOZAMBIQUE

Portugal endured a long dictatorship that lasted more than forty years (1933–1974), which isolated Portugal from the rest of the world. Following the 1926 military coup, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar instigated in 1933 an authoritarian regime and referred to Portugal as the 'Estado Novo' (New State). This "new state" pursued a conservative policy, emphasizing the importance of religion, nation and family.

Within the exhibition, the convergence of the work by Mozambican artist Malangatana (1936–2011) with that of the Portuguese artist Álvaro Lapa (1939–2006) allows us to contemplate the Salazarist dictatorship from two relevant perspectives: Portuguese society and the African colonies. Malangatana, whose career was international, was one of the pioneers of Mozambican contemporary art and was known for both his commitment to the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and his civil action among local populations. Álvaro Lapa reacts to the deleterious atmosphere of Salazarism, drawing his models from modernist literature and the new invented languages by such authors as William Burroughs, Ezra Pound, Wittold Gombrowicz, James Joyce, and Stéphane Mallarmé.

The artist Catarina Simão has spent several years working on the war of independence in Mozambique and strives to show a living history by combining film archives, testimonies, and editing work. Her films reveal the ties between education and the armed struggle, which are indissociable during the process of emancipation from colonial domination.



Malangatana  
«Cela 4 - Expectativa», 1967, coleção da  
Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Lisbon.  
Photo : Laura Castro Caldas / Paula Cintra  
© Adagp, Paris, 2022

## PARIS AND LONDON

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Portuguese artists who were fascinated by the avant-garde were well aware of the international art scene. They travelled, stayed, and studied abroad, especially in Paris and London. They fed themselves on literature, philosophy, and semiology. Many Portuguese artists and intellectuals at that time chose to live in Paris. This was the case for Lourdes Castro (1930–2022), René Bértholo (1936–2005), and Manuel Alvess (1939–2009), who all produced their work in the French capital. After the Carnation Revolution on 25 April 1974, most of these exiles returned to Portugal. This artistic migration, which concerned a privileged class, cannot be compared with the much more massive economic immigration that affected the poorer social classes.

In Paris, Lourdes Castro and René Bértholo launched the KWY magazine (1958–1964), an avant-garde publication open to all art currents on an international scale, including the modernist and informal Fluxus abstraction, Nouveau Réalisme, kinetic art, the narrative figuration movement, and concrete poetry. In 1967 and 1968 in London, the artist Ângelo de Sousa developed an experimental practice of cinema and photography.

## LANGUAGE AS A MATERIAL

The Portuguese Experimental Poetry group was the only true avant-garde group active in Portugal during the 1960s and 1970s. Connected to the precursor group of concrete poetry founded by Noigandres in 1952 in Brazil, the Portuguese group (later renamed PO.EX) participated in the international movement of concrete and visual poetry that rapidly spread throughout Europe and several continents.

This avant-garde group was rooted in experimentation, following the tradition of Russian constructivists who viewed language as a verbal, vocal, and visual material and therefore focused on the word itself. Artists such as Salette Tavares, Ana Hatherly, and E. M. de Melo e Castro freed language from its syntax, reconsidered its meaning, and drew new opportunities for invention from language and words. However, their research also led PO.EX towards ancient poetry, particularly to poetry from the Baroque era, which was a decisive period in the history of Portugal and Brazil. The poets then rediscovered figures as well as a playful mindset, therefore reclaiming a mythologised past which, for the Portuguese, had been stolen and distorted by Salazarism. The legacy of concrete poetry and the attention it gave to literature and language in its relation to the image are visible in the work of contemporary artists such as Isabel Carvalho and the duo Von Calhau!

## BODIES AND THEIR REPRESENTATIONS

Art has always explored the fantasies and possibilities of metamorphosis of the human body and its potential hybridisation with non-humans. Maria José Oliveira's

sculpture Sistema muscular e coluna vertebral (Muscular System and Spine) is based on the measurement of the body and uses only natural and organic materials. The four leather jackets in Race d'Ep by João Pedro Vale and Nuno Alexandre Ferreira conjure absent but somehow present bodies. Inspired by the film Race d'Ep by Lionel Soukaz and Guy Hocquenghem (1979), these ornate, embroidered leather jackets adorned with images, words, and erotic accessories tell a story of desire(s) as well as the history of a persecution. Many of the artists active in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s in the exhibition engaged in self-representation. Paula Rego (1935–2022) and Helena Almeida (1934–2018) each represent, in very different ways, the violence of an inner struggle against the physical and symbolic constraints of pictorial and social representation. The artist Gaëtan, who is right-handed, draws with his left hand, fighting against himself and against the world. Wearing comical accessories, the artist portrays himself as an ironic clown.

### THE WORLD OF SMALL THINGS

The 1960s paintings of René Bértholo connected to the French narrative figuration movement echo the then new influx of images and consumer objects that produced an accessible, immediate myth. A few decades later, Ana Jotta and Armanda Duarte consider the everyday world but from its periphery. The two artists glean objects and materials that have been left behind. 'Life is laborious, art is toil': Jotta's collections echo popular and mass culture, while Duarte collects small ephemeral things such as twigs, petals, and seeds. Embracing the conceptualists' profession of faith, Duarte does not add any new object to a world that already counts too many. Instead, she restores, embroiders, and modifies her finds, preserving their uniqueness. Both Jotta and Duarte are interested in the commonplace, the intimate, and the anonymous.



From the exhibition catalogue, texts by Anne Bonnin



*On top :*  
João Pedro Vale & Nuno Alexandre Ferreira,  
« Sweet Sixteen in Sixties » de l'installation  
« Race d'Ep! », 2020, Courtesy des artistes  
et de Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art

Paula Rego, « Sem título, de la série  
«Menina e Cão», 1986, collection privée,  
dépôt Fundação de Serralves - Museu de  
Arte Contemporânea, Porto

## ADDITIONNAL IMAGES



René Berthelo, «Littérature conjugale», 1966, collection Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto



Jorge Queiroz, « The Inverse Case », 2015, Courtesy de l'artiste et de la Galerie Bruno Múrias



Belén Uriel, « Quechuas » 2020, Courtesy Galerie Madragoa



Manuel Alvess, «Isaías », 1970, coll. Alvess, dépôt Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto



Francisco Tropa, « Pietà », 2019, courtesy de l'artiste et de la Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Romainville. Photo : Jorge Silva



Salette Tavares, « Ourobesouro », 1965, Portuguese State Contemporary Art Collection, dépôt Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto, Portugal © Adagp, Paris, 2022



# THE FRAC NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE MÉCA

## PRESENTATION

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## Presentation of the Frac MÉCA

**Supporting contemporary creation by building a collection of works of art and bringing them to the attention of as many people as possible is the founding commitment that formed the DNA of the Frac Aquitaine in 1982. In February 2019, the institution was renamed Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA.**

### Made-to-measure spaces

The Frac is housed on the top three floors of the MÉCA (the 4th, 5th and 6th upper floors). A 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> exhibition space, 900 m<sup>2</sup> of storage spaces to house the entire collection, experimental workshops reserved for groups, schoolchildren and students, a 90-seat auditorium, a documentation centre, and residency and creation workshops for artists in connection with companies, etc., make up a total of nearly 4,600 m<sup>2</sup> of new spaces made to measure to welcome the professionals and the public.

### A new model

With the MÉCA, the Frac – whose purpose is to be diverse and wide-ranging – is inventing a new model by creating ways of operation that are more cross-cutting (transdisciplinary in collaboration with ALCA and OARA, as well as transhistorical, etc.), more horizontally organized (by continuing a «co-writing» programme of exhibitions in association with a set of partners, etc.), and more innovative. Among these, there is the art and business programme with the Pôle Innovation & création [Innovation & Creation Centre], which will accommodate artists in two workshops on the 4th floor. It is designed to amplify support for artists by helping them to create works, since they do not always have a workspace, backed up by the expertise of Nouvelle Aquitaine companies. Finally, it is a means by which Frac can enrich the collection and the projects for the distribution and public presentation of artworks. Innovation is also at stake with the Mécano de la Régionale, a mobile museum installation that will travel throughout the area, especially to places that are not equipped to accommodate contemporary art.

### Participative and inclusive cultural mediation

The cultural mediation and outreach policy planned by the Frac involves the artist and visitors more than ever in the process of presentation and understanding. “Chantons la collection” [«Let’s Sing the Collection»] is a collective workshop intended for the social field, where art will be approached through the voice and writing. The ExpoPopUp digital platform will offer people the possibility of creating their own virtual exhibition. Obtaining Tourisme et Handicap [Tourism and Disability] certification is part of Frac’s action to develop its policy of accessibility for people with all types of disabilities. In addition, visitors will have a new means of access to exhibitions at the MÉCA, by «Pay as you feel», a form of participative and concessionary pricing system based on value and trust that will allow everyone to come according to their own financial means.

## MOVING COLLECTION

In 2021 in parallel with the programme at MÉCA, the Frac presents more than twenty exhibitions in the region. It is the initiator of two regional exhibition programmes involving a dozen partners. *Vivantes ! (Alive!)*, pays particular and renewed attention to women artists.



«Memoria : récits d'une aurore Histoire» exhibition, 2021, crédit photo Jean-Christophe Garcia.

«La Ronde à l'Intérieur» exhibition of Sophie Lamm, 2020, crédit photo : DR. Avec le soutien de CDA-Développement et du Programme de résidences d'artistes en entreprises du ministère de la Culture

## THE COLLECTION : ORIGINAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Considered to be one of the finest public collections of contemporary art, it brings together 1,216 works of all forms of media, by French and foreign artists. This collection was formed in 1983 on the basis of a remarkable series of photographic works which «replays» a history of twentieth century photography (including Diane Arbus, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Larry Clark, Raymond Depardon, Walker Evans, etc.). In 1986, it widened its scope to include international art (with works by John Armleder, Katharina Fritsch, Cindy Sherman, Opalka Roman, Jeff Wall, Tatiana Trouvé and Jeff Koons, among others), and it has been enriched with works reflecting a neo-burlesque vein or Dada inspiration (Robert Filliou, Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux, etc.) with a strong social and political dimension (including Allora & Calzadilla, Thomas Hirschhorn, etc.).

### Young artists

Since 2007, new forms of impetus have been given to the collection. More space is provided for emerging French artists such as Florence Doléac, Bertrand Dezoteux, Chantal Raguet, Bertille Bak and Raphaël Zarka. Certain works received grant aid and specific assistance from the Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA for the purposes of exhibitions. This was the case for Benoît Maire, Muriel Rodolosse, Olivier Vadrot and the photographic work of Maitetxu Etcheverria concerning islands in the estuary of the River Gironde.

### Africa (at last)

The present aim is to ensure the consistency of all that has been previously developed in order to gradually open up to new horizons. One of the new developments is the result of an awareness of the absence of African artists in the Frac's collection, despite the fact that the former Aquitaine area and more particularly Bordeaux share a long history with the neighbouring continent. Only one African was previously included in the inventory: the Moroccan artist Touhami Ennadre. The artists Omar Victor Diop, Amadou Sanogo, Sory Sanlé and Zanele Muholi have recently been included in the collection, and this is just a start.

### Societal challenges

Many vital issues of our time – whether political, social or aesthetic – are closely scrutinized in the collection: the population explosion, the ecological time-bomb, the employment crisis, identity issues, questions of migration, etc. How can we sum up this collection? One might perhaps refer to its fundamentally free spirit of general interest, diversity and high standards. This collection has constantly revitalized itself by knowing how to carry out its work of the observation of art, almost without premeditation. Therefore its aims are not limited to those described above: they are innumerable, if we really wish to accept the equivocal nature of the artworks.



## SOME FIGURES & DATES THE FRAC

**1448 artworks in 2022**  
**553 artists in the collection**  
**126 acquisitions in 2021**  
**including 36 artists**  
**(16 men, 20 women)**  
**including 33 primary beneficiaries**

Camille Lavaud,  
Décorum « Ma Thérèse », 2020  
Encre sur toile, Don des Amis du Frac en  
2021, Collection Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine  
MÉCA

Joséfa Ntjam, «Mélas de Saturne», 2020,  
vidéo, Collection Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine  
MÉCA

Visiting the Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA  
during the European Heritage Days 2021,  
photo credit: Jean-Christophe Garcia

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**FRAC NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE MÉCA  
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