
PRESS RELEASES ON THE ARTIST'S PREVIOUS AND CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

Luís Lázaro Matos
Waves and Whirlpools
Galeria Municipal do Porto, PT

September 12th - November 11th 2020

Inspired by the triangular shape of the mezzanine of the Galeria Municipal do Porto as a potential metaphor for the Bermuda Triangle, Luís Lázaro Matos' new series of works takes us to a whirlwind of suspended images in space.

Curated by Martha Kirszenbaum (curator of the French Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale, 2019), the starting point of the exhibition project is the artist's fascination with the mythology of the sea. Music appears at the core of his practice, and the seven diptych paintings in the exhibition are inspired by the seven songs of his recently released album, also named *Waves and Whirlpools*.

The pictorial and musical compositions consist in a superimposition of layers of paint and sounds, and invite the viewers to immerse themselves in a mystical, romantic and troubling universe, underpinned by an ultimate fantasy of dominating the ocean and its uncontrollable waves

Curator's Statement

For his solo presentation at the Galeria Municipal of Porto, Lisbon-based artist Luís Lázaro Matos (b. 1987) – whose practice spans painting, drawing, music, and performance – has created a new ensemble of seven diptych paintings, inspired by seven recently released songs, and conveying references to the mythology of the sea.

Matos depicts intriguing surroundings of dark blue waves and smiling cartoonish palm trees, haunted by fantastic marine creatures, such as sea turtles, manta rays, octopuses, whales, but also birds and an Astronaut dog named Laika. The iconography he displays might recall the imaginary realism of Portuguese artist, Paula Rego, whose interpretation of fairytales grew into an important source of inspiration for his approach. A recurrent persona portrayed

throughout the exhibition is an allegorical self-portrait of a musician transformed into a sea turtle, who serenades an Egyptian character, in a scene that echoes the Exodus and the parting of the Red Sea, thus expressing the ultimate fantasy to have power over the ocean and its uncontrollable waves and currents. Finally, Matos has outlined mysterious aliens, reflecting his fascination for conspiracy theories and the Bermuda Triangle, a source of inspiration for this project that is also expressed in the architectural shape of the exhibition space.

Each painting comprises a long black rope that seems to interlace and connect all the works, as it figures an Ariadne's thread, in the shape of an audio jack, reminding us that music appears at the deep core of Luís Lázaro Matos' work. For this particular series, he has composed seven tracks of lively noise-punk, stylistically inspired by the compositions of the American band, Sonic Youth. The lyrics and titles of each song address and elucidate the themes developed in his painting series: Red Sea, Whirlpools, Laika Surfing Cosmic Waves and Tsunami, among others. In his musical compositions, the arrangement technique consists of layering different instruments, a method also used in his paintings, by applying numerous layers and undercoats of paint. The storytelling behind his canvases is punctuated by the occurrence of several musical instruments (guitars, keyboards or microphones) and their presence resonates with a visual realm that is profoundly mystical, romantic and troubling.

Curated by Martha Kirszenbaum

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Luís Lázaro Matos
Summer Waterfalls & Autumn Leaves
beursschouwburg, Brussel, BE

September 20th - December 14th 2019

Curated by Helena Kritis

"I was never able to skateboard, nor was I ever able to date boys in school. Like skateboards they all seemed to run from under my feet."

For his first presentation in Belgium, Luís Lázaro Matos designed a stage like environment built out of a mural, drawings and sculptures. Surrounded by fictional architecture structures combining crystal palaces and skateparks, the dream like setting invites the audience to inhabit a waterfall where skateboards flow down the stream. The poems drawn in the boards choreograph a friction between shared and intimate dynamics, which signal the artist's sharp critique of contemporary social dynamics marked by digital liquidity while echoing Lázaro Matos' pop sensibility. "Twelve songs that flow one after the other showing the multiplicity of experiences one can find when going down a river on an adventure; betrayal, loss, anger, but also happiness and comfort."

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Luís Lázaro Matos

Zoo

Casa da Cerca - Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Almada, PT

June 14th - October 20th 2019

Curated by Filipa Oliveira

The work refers back to a song by George Michael, written following his arrest for "lewd conduct in a public space". The incident triggered a scandal in the tabloids. Michael wrote the song as a refusal to be humiliated for his sexuality. Outside reached Number Two in the UK Singles Chart.

Casa da Cerca has collaborated with Festival de Almada since 1999, holding a solo exhibition by the author of the poster for each edition of the Festival. This stimulating dialogue between visual arts and theatre has enriched both institutions, as well as Almada. The artist Luís Lázaro Matos was selected to design this year's poster and subsequently hold a solo show at Casa da Cerca's Galeria do Pátio. The walls of the exhibition hall are covered by a drawing of a nineteenth-century industrial, polluted London cityscape, on which the sentences "I am the love that dare not speak its name" (taken from a poem by Oscar Wilde's lover Lord Alfred Douglas) and "Each man kills the thing he loves" (a quote from Wilde himself) build a kind of cage-like structure. The image is the set for Luís Lázaro Matos' staging inspired by Oscar Wilde's play "An Ideal Husband" and the accounts of Wilde's trials for "gross indecency", a euphemism for homosexuality-related crimes. In the show, men are baboons metamorphosed into English dandies, locked up in their cages, playing on tires as they wait to be judged, ridiculed and humiliated by a puritan, decadent (Victorian) society yearning for a good scandal. The exhibition speaks of the relation between political power and its interference in each individual's personal (as well as moral) life. It compares the need for freedom of expression with the conformity, pettiness and intolerance of society, then and now. Scandals and melodramas, mixed with acid humour and satire, are the ingredients used by Wilde and Lázaro Matos to create a play and an exhibition whose backdrop is a theatre festival. Art is all about fiction... or maybe not. On the outside wall of Casa da Cerca, Lázaro Matos has painted a mural entitled Let's Go Outside in the Sunshine, a reflection on freedom in the wild.

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Luís Lázaro Matos

Notes on Cosmic Pluralism

1646 - Experimental Art Space, The Hague, NL

May 3rd - June 2nd 2019

How can foreign life be imagined? How to relate to what is strange and foreign? What role does visualisation play in this relation and how do our imaginings reflect certain power relations? Through an exploration of the many possible and previous ways of imagining the idea of the alien, the work of Luís Lázaro Matos subtly raises these questions that touch upon contemporary politically sensitive issues. In a series of descriptions of the alien, Luís Lázaro Matos will use subjects like class and identity in order to satirise certain aspects of identity politics and the current neoliberal economical wave that is present in many western countries, as well as the rise of protofascist political regimes. The newly realised work at 1646 is inspired by the nineteenth century philosophical belief in the existence of other "civilised worlds" throughout the cosmos. The astronomer William Herschel, a cosmic pluralist himself, used the numeric amount of "One Million in One Hundred Million", without scientific base to calculate the amount of possible worlds among the stars. These highly precarious scientific speculations ended up later giving birth to the Drake equation – an equation that tries to comply all variables that would have to be taken into account to reach an exact number on how many civilisations could exist in the universe. Herschel's writings, who believed he found evidence that the surface of the moon was similar to the English countryside, and popular culture films like Avatar where the narrative uses British colonialism as a metaphor for the relation of the invader to the alien, sparked Matos' interest in the subject. The speculative and perhaps cliché notions of the 'alien' provided him the imaginative material to produce a series of works, that use a fictional background to take their form. Matos will use the gallery space to create a landscape of another possible planetary system. In a series of short sculptural stories and graphic representations of

these aliens, the artist will be using seriality as a structure that serves, like in many of his works, to express and mark down the several possibilities of imagining other forms and other worlds. The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication, as this work could also be seen as a literary event crossing the visual arts. Luís Lázaro Matos mainly uses the medium of drawing to develop concepts in a similar way that architects and fashion designers use it to sketch and formulate their ideas. Lázaro Matos focusses on the influence of fiction in the process of architectural thought, with many of his drawings and fictional architectural sketches subvert general utopian notions of 20th century architecture. Previously he has also been concerned with tourism to question how this industry has been fundamental to reshape ideas around the notion of paradise throughout the development of capitalist societies. Notwithstanding the earnest nature of these subjects, his work breaths pleasure, lightness and humour, often combining intriguing combination of elements. His immersive installations have produced a sensorial astonishment on us, as they feel like expanded paintings. Color, composition, contrast, depth and texture of the canvas are transformed into three dimensional spaces ruled by the same principles. Principles that Luís seem to master with ease, enjoyment and sensuality.

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Luís Lázaro Matos
WHITE SHARK CAFE
Bastide Projects, Marseille

November 23, 2018 - February 16, 2019

Dear Rafael,

I've been meaning to send you this letter for a long time. So much has happened in my life since the first time I saw you on that little beach in the Calanques. What an incredible place for a first date. It seemed we were swimming in the most translucent pool in the universe. I have heard so many times people reinforcing the idea of the beauty of the water of a beach and comparing it with that of a swimming pool. We swam in the most limitless pool of all; more infinite than the ones we see in architectural magazines which people usually stack as decoration on coffee tables.

Like I told you a year ago, I went on holiday to the south of France because I wanted to understand the reason why so many artists moved there in the past century.

In one of my plunges on the internet where I usually find the most incredible curiosities I came across the expression "White Shark Cafe".

This term, created by a team of biologists comprises an extensive area of the Pacific Ocean where every year there is a migratory flow of great white sharks that go there for no apparent reason; nor to feed or reproduce. It seems that biologists used this name to suggest that the animals go there with no other purpose than socializing.

When I travelled south, the image of the "White shark Cafe" accompanied me. I imagined all the artists who had been there, swimming like sharks around and after each other.

I told Alexis about you the other day and I thanked him for putting us in touch.

Finding someone as interesting as you and starting a friendship in the south of France, gives me the impression of a scenario strikingly similar to what I had day-dreamed while thinking about the "White shark Cafe".

Thank you for driving me to the Noialles villa in Hyères. I recommend that you watch the movie which Man Ray filmed in that place - it was so incredible to find out about the people who frequented that house and swam in that pool.

"How two travellers arrived in St. Bernard, what they saw in the ruins of an old castle on top of which a modern-time castle stands."

When we walked the streets of Arles, you spoke to me about the Mistral, and how this wind, by cleaning the air of Provence gives the region a very particular light, that would have attracted artists like Van Gogh or Gauguin.

I also remember you talking about the popular belief that this wind when it lasts for too long makes people go a bit crazy. Do we breathe the winds as fish breathe the currents? I also wonder if sharks could go crazy like Van Gogh - eventually mutilating their own fin?

I have been thinking about the violent year I had since I met you. And the image of our week in Marseille emerges as a peaceful island where Sharks can kiss without tearing each other's skin with their teeth.

I hope to see you soon in our White Shark Cafe. I love the image in my head, of this beach-pool and of all the movement of the car racing at the speed of light, cutting through those roads accompanied by cypresses.

It is the good memories that let us keep breathing, no matter how often we feel the pain of Poseidon's harpoon opening our gills.

Farewell my friend.

PS: I'm sorry you did not see the man doing a handstand on the edge of the pool of the Radiant City. One fantasy on top of another.

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Luís Lázaro Matos
Tomber Dans Le Lac
Madrageo, Lisbon, PT

16 May — 21 July 2018

In the melancholy of the chroma Blue of Prussia, we see immersed the after death of King Louis II of Bavaria, in "Tomber Dans Le Lac". To fall into the lake, an expression that in French means to fall into a world of illusions, is the diving board of Lázaro Matos to perform a tragicomic acrobatics on the perils of dazzle. Ironically, it was on the Lake Starnberger that the defunct body of Louis II of Bavaria was found, three days after being deposed. This State figure, known for contracting debts and withdrawing from matters of the State, is the driving force of various follies, opulent buildings built on dreams and musings. Lázaro Matos presents these works as narcissus-castles, accentuating an architectural view as an extension of the self. One of the undertakings of this delusional and megalomaniac legacy, the Neuschwanstein Castle, is the inspiring model of the Disney Castle, this American stronghold where so many unattainable romantic stories are written, especially when we talk about queer lives. "(...) searching for romantic love, but always abandoning my book too soon (...)". Atop a transparent blue, we see a moray reciting the outbursts of the scorned sovereign which metamorphize into an astonishing confessional manifesto. The aesthetic exaggerations of privilege cover the solitude of the bottom of an unknown lake.

Rodrigo Vaiapraia
May 9th, 2018, Lisbon

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Luís Lázaro Matos
SMILE YOU ARE IN SPAIN STUDIO PART I
Madrageo, Lisbon, PT

28 January – 11 March 2017

Smile! You Are in Spain is the slogan of a well-known, five year-long advertising campaign launched in 2004 to promote tourism in Spain. It captioned photographs of young people enjoying Spain, surrounded by sunny landscapes, at unspoiled beaches or in front of iconic monuments, immersed in an inviting atmosphere suitable for culture, leisure and sports. The purpose was to convey an image of Spain as the ultimate tourist destination, an earthly paradise and the land of sun and fiesta. Such conservative campaigning, which put an emphasis on a slow-paced and pleasant lifestyle, succeeded in capturing the stereotypes and clichés traditionally associated with the country, nurturing this appealing, peculiar image of Spanish vitality and cheerfulness in the minds of potential tourists. Throughout the years of the campaign and following more than a decade of sustained economic growth, Spain was badly affected by the global financial crisis of 2008; while promoting such an ideally positive take of Spain under Juan Miró's sunny emblem, the country was inwardly succumbing to a profound and severe economic downturn.

Luís Lázaro Matos uses this well known campaign to inform a project which intends to look at how clichés on countries and their culture become promotional commodities and how landscape, traditions, populations and art are rendered simple and ready to use by the consumer. The project is divided in two chapters independent from each other but deeply intertwined: the exhibition currently presented at MADRAGOA and a performative installation which will be presented at ARCO, the International Contemporary Art fair in Madrid, in February 2017.

The starting point of the whole project is the juxtaposition between the "smile" introduced in the advertising campaign and its reverse, an expression taken on to represent the actual critical situation shared by South European countries and symbolized by the "scream" from Edvard Munch's most famous painting. Through

a sarcastic filter, the artist uses an image which has undergone an extreme process of semantic depletion: from the deep psychological pain originally expressed by the canvas to the abused iconic image that became such a media staple that it acquired a life of its own, almost completely abstracted from the painting itself. By continuing this process of decontextualisation, the dramatic dissonant landscape in which the protagonist of Munch's masterpiece is immersed, representing a projection of identity and human experience and a repository for the mystical or the sublime, is replaced by a sunny southern beach where the character finds himself "on vacation" in Matos' photograph *Under the Sun I*. For this purpose, the whole gallery is turned into a bright space, animated by a holiday atmosphere and enlivened by Raffaella Carrà's *Hay Que Venir Al Sur*, a song encouraging an escape to the South, a land for love and for a thoughtless and peaceful life, again promoting its stereotypes. The song is used as the soundtrack for a video-animation with the same title, which works as a sort of manifesto providing instructions and introducing us to the second chapter of the project which involves a collaboration with several architects.

Matos' drawing *Model for a Holiday Villa*, presented in the exhibition, is the artist's interpretation of a series of instructions given to several architects and requesting the development of a project for a holiday house inspired by Munch's painting. In the second part of the project, which will take place in a fictional set resembling an architectural studio, the artist will intervene directly on those drawings, correcting them so as to bring to the surface the clichés embedded in them. The deep relationship between the face of *The Scream's* protagonist and his surrounding landscape, which is transformed according to his distorted features, is transposed, in the project, from the natural scenery to an architectural context, so as to explore how conventions and mythologies nurture our imagination and give shape to our landscapes. Even the gallery facade, featuring typical portuguese tiles, will be transformed and covered by an accumulation of advertisement posters designed by the artist.

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Luís Lázaro Matos
Super Gibraltar
Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, PT

October 16th - December 19th 2015

Super Gibraltar is Lisbon based Luís Lázaro Matos's first solo show in Portugal, taking place from October 16 to December 19, 2015. Luís Lázaro Matos's interest in Gibraltar comes through a text by Portuguese author Ferreira de Castro published in *A volta do Mundo* [Around the World] magazine in 1942. In this text, the author eloquently explains the existence of a belief in Gibraltar claiming that while the Barbary macaque (known as Gibraltar monkey in Portuguese) inhabits the Rock, the territory will remain under British rule. The Barbary macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*) is an Old World monkey that currently inhabits some areas of the Atlas Mountains in northern Africa and the Rock of Gibraltar in the south of the Iberian Peninsula. It is the only population of wild monkeys in Europe. The superstition narrated by Ferreira de Castro, linking ecology and geopolitics in a seemingly inexplicable way, led Lázaro Matos to an idea that he had already been exploring before, that of reproductive futurism, ie the idea that the future (or the maintenance of the present) is derived essentially from a biological process, that of reproduction. In the case of Gibraltar, and its superstition, the political status of the territory is thus dependent on an animal which, although being a primate and so close to humans, is apparently irrational.