

Casa A. Molder Gallery

João Belga

I'm Alive – Yet I'm Not Alive

Opening: 9 of December from 3.30 pm to 7pm.

From the 9th of December 2021 until the 14th of January 2022

João Belga (1968) is the artist featured in the **Casa A. Molder Gallery's** seventh exhibition, **I'm Alive – Yet I'm Not Alive**. These words, which give the exhibition its title, are drawn on a small black-and-white canvas with all the graphic skill that defines his work as a draughtsman. Writing as drawing, the destruction of writing, the frightening symbolic value of all the images and texts that surround us – advertising as our manipulative established order –, all these themes from **João Belga's** drawing and painting work are also present in this show.

“Contamination” is the word the artist chose to describe the works exhibited here. Works that were contaminated by the 2020-2021 timespan, by lockdown after lockdown, by the fear, failure and chaos we have all experienced collectively.

João Belga secluded himself in his Caldas da Rainha studio, whence three series of small-format paintings emerged over time, not so much, we might say, as a reaction to these troubled days, but rather as an extension of them. In these series there is so much darkness and (faux) chaos that the artist appears to have been not just contaminated by the times, but has shaman-like contaminated the world itself, and that by letting ourselves be enfolded by his works we fall into a dark, unredeemable territory.

But that is only a first impression; actually, the three series of paintings (two in black on white unpainted canvas and one in white on black-painted canvas), in spite of being all “contaminated”, offer us a number of clues:

In the *Paleta Series*, which often resorts to the process of automatic drawing, we can recognise letters, skulls and the vestiges of quite precise drawings, which have been destroyed and transformed by a succession of dense layers laid over time, as well as by the fact that the artist has used some of these canvases as palettes while creating other works. The ones here have survived, and they give us some answers and a measure of redemption when we consider their titles, such as “White Light from the Mouth of Infinity” (the title of a 1991 Swans album) or “On Some Faraway Beach” (the title of one of the songs in Brian Eno's *Here Come the Warm Jets*). In the series *Luz Negra* [Dark Light] the density of noise is gone, but there is a visual deceptiveness that causes us to see characters, false symbols and even landscapes in its pictures. The third series is a lot less tumultuous as a whole, being drawn from models and featuring clearly defined compositions, which strangely does not bring us to a less sombre world than the previous ones. Still, there is noise, music and humour here.

This relationship with music, a defining feature of **João Belga's** work, is also present in the white canvas that shares the title **I'm Alive - Yet not Alive**: a palimpsest whose ninety-one layers are slowly revealed, as in a slide show of the paintings that make up this work, in the video piece that accompanies it. The video, which shows all that has been concealed in the white canvas, has a cadence that allows us to see each one of the hidden images, while hypnotising and manipulating us. The sound that envelops the whole exhibition, created by DAS COOL ensemble, a group of which **João Belga** is a member, is also used to soundtrack his studio work, thus making us artists as well as viewers.

The exhibition is open to the public on weekdays, during the shop's afternoon schedule, i.e. from **3.30pm to 7pm**; visits on weekends and holidays can be made by previous appointment. The Casa A. Molder Gallery is a project by artist **Adriana Molder**, intended as a showcase for contemporary art that makes use of the exhibition space of **Casa A. Molder**, a historic stamp shop at the heart of Lisbon, on the third floor of 101, 1.º de Dezembro Street, its address ever since it was founded by **August Molder** in 1943. The Casa A. Molder Gallery is a fully non-commercial project.

**The Casa A. Molder Gallery project is kindly supported by:
República Portuguesa – Cultura / Direção-Geral das Artes**

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The Gallery is installed in the A. Molder stamp shop, on the third floor of **101, 1.º de Dezembro Street**. For appointments, please contact info@galeriadacasaamolder.com.

Access to the Gallery is through the shop.

www.galeriadacasaamolder.com

<https://www.facebook.com/galeriadacasaamolder>

Covid-19

To enter the shop, mask-wearing and hand-sanitising are mandatory.

João Belga

Was Born in Luanda in 1968. He lives and works in Caldas da Rainha.

Visual artist, with academic training in painting and drawing, he has exhibited regularly since 1997. He presented his work, individually and collectively, in the projects: ART ATTACK; GL Box, Galeria Quadrum, Galeria Palmira Suso, Galeria ZDB, Galeria Graça Brandão, Hangar K7, Museum and Casa Bernardo, Caldas da Rainha and Sines Arts Center, Plataforma Revolver, among others.

At the same time, he is involved in the creation of projects aimed at enhancing artistic and cultural peripheries. In this sense, he created in 2003 together with Joana Montez the collective of artistic intervention and curatorship, Ozzy Project. Since 2013 he has been a founding and managing member of the NAU cultural association.