

Fight the future: Later Is Now at Workplace Gallery, London

In the following text, I gathered some information and insights that have emerged from an email conversation, concerning the last exhibition curated by Portuguese artist Hugo Canoilas, *Later Is Now*, for Workplace Gallery in London. The show brings together a group of artists who aim to undermine, subvert or challenge the anthropocentric implications of language. The title – borrowed from a text of the same name by Bernard Aspe, published in *Imprópria** on issue number 2 in 2012, which in turn is a quote from Cormack McCarthy's *The Road* – hovers like a dark cloud over the exhibition. In *The Road*, a post-apocalyptic story where life is reduced to extremes, there is no time for superfluous activities. In his essay, Aspe uses *The Road* as an antithesis to illustrate our 'liquid' society which is impeded by our anxieties that result from our negative projections into the future, stopping us from living fully in the present. Without being answerable to a text, or to questions of art and life, the works produced by Sónia Almeida, Eduardo Batarda, Kris Lemsalu, Musa paradisiaca and Jannis Varelas are manifestations that help to deal with some of the aspects of Aspe's text, through the possibilities of art to codify and inscribe complex ideas into a concrete reality, compounded by context, interpretation, and associative interrelations between things. The exhibition combines a series of proto-forms of language, close to pre-verbal communication or aphasia, as a way to escape the constraints of language, and that, in their opacity, create a space for individuation outside the oppressive nature of the rational.

47· BY MEANS OF AGONIZING SUFFERING,
48· ENDLESS FREEZING WINTERS, MOLDY,
49· OVERBOILED FOODS, AND 50· NU-
MEROUS HALF MUGS OF LEFTOVER ALE,
51· WE HAVE POLISHED TO PERFECTION
52· Our thought process, and se-
cured 53· A STRONG, DURABLE
PRESENCE AT THE TOP,
54· Along with our mentor and roommate
55· **TOD.**
BIG BONED PERHAPS, BUT
56· a nonchalant, easygoing grey bear
57· in fact, he's (THIS IS) russet-brown
58· NO NO PLEASE REMAIN SEATED
59· He presides over THIS 60· vermin ridden
district of OURS, 61· A big, domineer-
ing Biedermeier brute 62· THIS IS
DOUBTLESSLY UPLIFTING: 63· Here—
— our greatest (encoded) asset
64· THE UNPLEASANT, INDISPENSABLE
65· CRUSHING PROOF THAT OUR 66· B. of
work was planned out beforehand 67· so
they won't be laughing anymore.
68· YES. WE TAKE PRIDE IN
RATIONAL, 69· DISCIPLINED
THINKING 70· THAT IS CLEAR,
OPEN-MINDED, 71· AND IN-
FORMED BY EXPERIENCE

Eduardo Batarida

III (Polished To Perfection), 2016

Acrylic on canvas



Sónia Almeida

KWY, 2017

Artist Book

mixed media on paper and fabric

I had a brief conversation with the (artist) curator via email about the show. We talked about TROIKA, childhood, freedom and slavery, and a lot more as you will find in the following text. Some other parts of the e-mail conversation are about football, and I swear I won't make them public.

From Hugo Canoilas

(no subject)

To Vincenzo Estremo

Dear Vincenzo

At the end of last year, I decided to build my own bookshelf, which allowed me to reorganize my books. Among one of the categories, there was this *Imprópria Magazine** no. 2, dated from the second semester of 2012, which I hadn't read. *Imprópria* (a word that gathers a mixture of possible meanings – not your own, not suitable, inopportune, inconvenient) was a political and philosophical magazine with critical thought. As it was 2012, the Portuguese crisis was at its height, with strong restrictions imposed by the TROIKA and IMF – whose influence can only be fully assessed over the next 20 to 30 years. The issue of the magazine dedicated to the idea of Present, future, and

childhood. Presentism marked the way in which Portugal was incapable to live in full the present, and remained suspended between certain ideas from the past and a future that couldn't be imagined collectively, in a process marked by a common horizon. Not being able to fully live the present is also a result of a future that is suspended or targeted by financial institutions, which need a preconized future to actually occur. The second part of the magazine was dedicated to the emancipation of the child, based not on their sexual, productive and political incapacities, but on their capacities, disrupting the old model of education that adults permanently shaped in function of an idealized political system to come. All the texts refer to a mental entrapment that doesn't allow us to think outside of a grid, which used to have its main extension in language, because of its anthropomorphic nature – an extension of men, a kind of human territorialization over the planet. Nowadays, with the 4th (digital) revolution, the grid has extended to a much bigger degree with its new precognitive literacy, in digital choreographies and a-semiotic signs that transform our subjectivity. The works showcased in the exhibition at Workplace Gallery were chosen as matters that allowed me to keep thinking about these topics, rather than answering or offering a solution to it. The chosen artists start to appear as images that help me to deal with texts by Bernard Aspe (*Later is now*, that gave the show its title), Maurizio Lazzarato (an excerpt from *The Making of the Indebted Man*), Paolo Virno (*Childhood and Critical Thought*), and a roundtable with philosophers René Schérer, José Gil and Vanessa Brito on the idea of the emancipation of the child, a minority or a majority to come (the word they use is *Devir...* “Devir Criança: Devir Maior ou Devir – Menor”). All works are anachronistic in relation to the idea of the 4th revolution I have mentioned above. First, because anachronism is also a way to release the works from a meaningful and instrumentalized way of using them to do a show, and in political terms, I want them to be a mean that constructs a new end out of my reach. Secondly, these technical devices for anachronism are well informed by new media and have an impact in their production – by refusing or embracing, consciously or unconsciously.



Sónia Almeida

Words without letters, 2017

Oil and sharpie on paper



Kris Lemsalu

The Camp of Phantom Stuff, 2013

From Vincenzo Estremo

Re:

To Hugo Canoilas

Dear Hugo,

Thanks a lot for your email, now everything is clear (I hope). Lately, I have worked on operatic theories but I never face this aspect of the issue. But I have some ideas coming to my mind, mostly considering a Foucauldian perspective. In the Foucauldian perspective, the theory of power can be seen a tool to open the vision on a specific, pervasive physiognomy of something that is at the same time disciplined and institutional. A power that irradiates its authority through society's institutions: family, education, disciplines and fields of knowledge. Medicine, psychiatry, sociology, pedagogy and demography have been accompanying the individual since infancy, and end up making him interiorize as absolute an idea of normality that is right, lawful, socially approved, and therefore opposed to an idea of abnormality, illicitness, and madness. As you mention, the 4th digital revolution is one more tooth in this entrapment, but a very specific one. Considering the digital as a kind of discipline of disciplines, something pervasive that can be 'here and there' and can be assumed as a universal need, we might be tempted to say that it is the cage of this power entrapment. In my opinion, women and men are free until proven otherwise, however humans constantly work to enchain other men for their own benefit. This tension between freedom and slavery appears since the first stage of human life and has been explained by Lazzarato in his *La fabbrica dell'uomo indebitato* (*The Making of the Indebted Man*). There are forms of early

colonization of time; activities that do not exclude children's life. Lazzarato reminds us that this is, in fact, indicative of a colonization of that time once thought to be free from capitalist exploitation, and I quote:

«Play... no longer constitutes an alternative to work as domination. The dialectical opposition between play and work has been transformed into a continuum, of which play and work are only the two extremes. Between the two, it is possible to arrange in a thousand different ways the coefficients of work and play, autonomy and subordination, activity and passivity, intellectual and manual labour, which nourish capitalist valorization.»

Thanks to (or because of) digital power, every stage of our life is in a constant state of conflict. I use the word conflict not because I wish to bring the discourse to its negative degree, but simply because this clash (violent occupation of time and submission to unforeseen and invisible powers) has been often underestimated until now. And yes, it is time to establish a strategy of opposition, if any are possible. And correct me if I'm wrong, I see the works in *Later Is Now* as the visible fragments of a possible strike strategy.



Jannis Varelas

bob the train and sunset, 2016

oil, oil stick, ink, permanent marker, pastel gesso on canvas