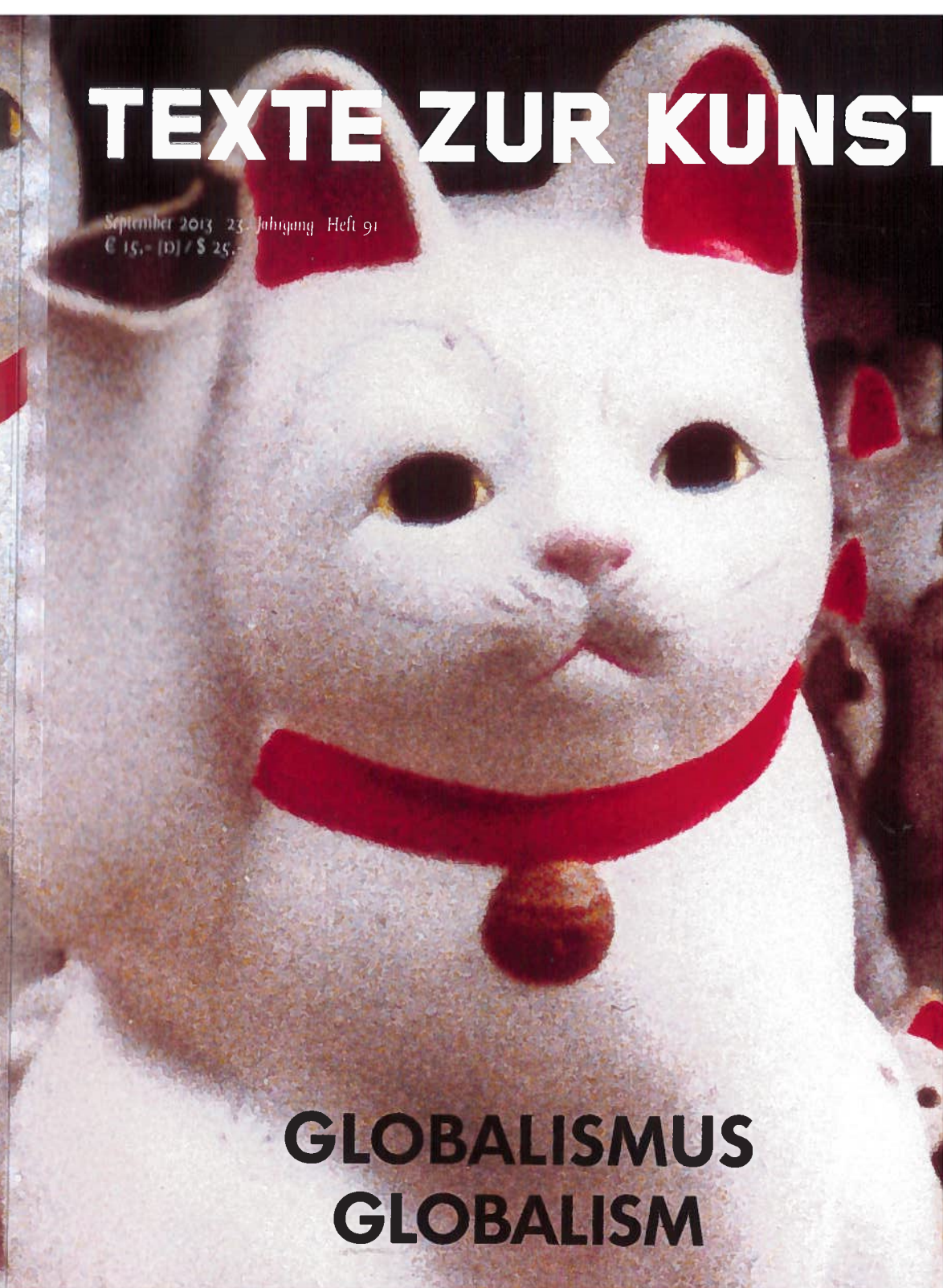


TEXTE ZUR KUNST

September 2013 23. Jahrgang Heft 91
€ 15,- (D) / \$ 25,-

TEXTE ZUR KUNST September 2013 23. Jahrgang Heft 91



GLOBALISMUS GLOBALISM

THE PERIPHERY OF THE OTHERS IS OUR CENTER¹

Pedro de Llano on Daniel Steegmann at *Uma certa falta de coerência*, Oporto

Uma certa falta de coerência (trans. "A Certain Lack of Coherence") is an artist-run space in Oporto managed by Mauro Cerqueira (1982) and André Sousa (1980). Open since 2007, it is situated on the ground floor of a building that originally housed a cheap restaurant, a bargain shop run by Indian immigrants, and a stylistic pen collector. This is a narrow, fractured, and multi-textured space; like a cavern in which the cold and humidity sit in every nook or cranny, and where moss gathers in the corners. *Coerência* in its semi-derelict state is only barely inhabitable, and, although somewhat hyperbolically, it is a truthful reflection of the living conditions of its bairro, Vitória, an area of the city devastated by economic ruin and drugs. Exposing this often repressed image of the city, and confronting the artists with it, is a primary goal: "if people live within these conditions, then we should be able to do art in them too", Sousa has said in an interview.²

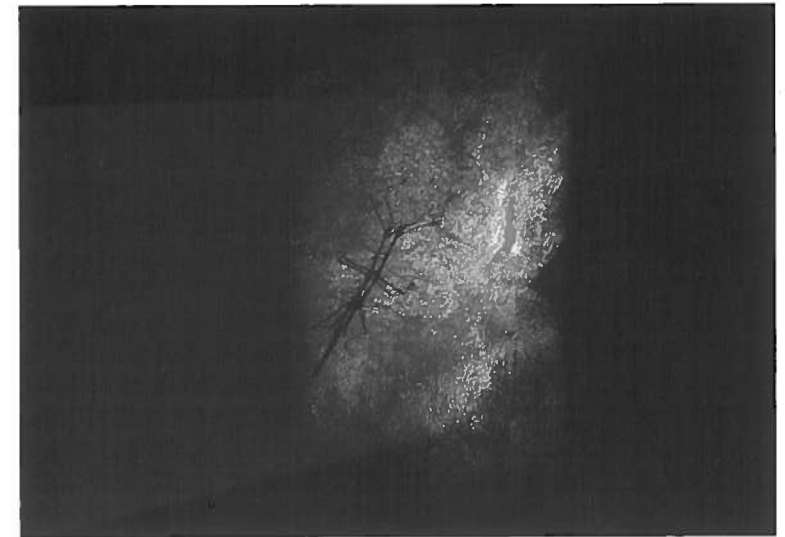
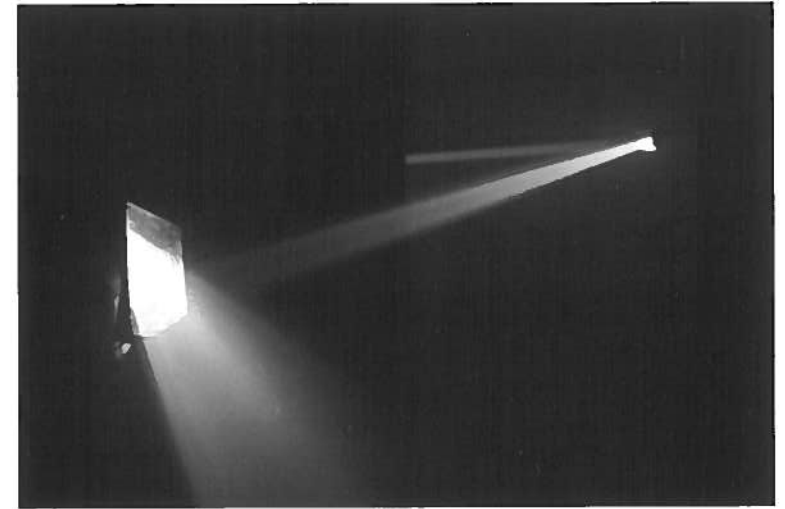
The project's origins come from 15 years of experience in other alternative venues across the city of Oporto. Projects such as *Caldeira 213*, which existed on the same street back in 2001, the *Salão Olímpico* (2003–2006), and *Mad Woman in the Attic* (created by Sousa, in 2005, in the attic of the building where he lived), were all important references for the *Coerência*, but none of them lasted for long. Cerqueira and Sousa thus faced the urgency of "giving continuity to the formation of a community." The current project aims to "stimulate the encounter and the confrontation of everyone interested in artistic proposals,

or willing to question themselves, to experiment themselves"³. Also "to learn from other artists" in an independent and free context. These artists can be local or international, and cover a wide generational spectrum ranging from people in their early 20s, like João Marçal or Nuno Cassola, to the 75-year-old Rolando Castellón. Many projects focus on the immediate context of *Coerência* itself – its architecture, the neighborhood, or the city – others show works created elsewhere.

For example, Daniel Barroca (born in 1976 in Lisbon) reflected upon the Portuguese colonial past, a traumatizing, crucial issue that still awaits a serious discussion by the country's institutions. He presented appropriated archival pictures that showed the atrocities committed by Portuguese soldiers against the people of Mozambique during the Colonial Wars. In Portuguese society these images were actually sold as war trophies. Seville artist Pedro G. Romero's work "Perros callejeros" ("Street Dogs", 1977), consisted of the projection of a 1977 Spanish film accompanied by the commentary of a group of women who analyze it, addressing the social architecture of its time. It presents the life of a group of misfit youngsters from the marginal suburbs of Barcelona, who spent their time stealing cars and shops in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response to the dwindling opportunities to live within legal boundaries.

Another interesting recent project held there was "Bicho de nariz delicado" (Animal with a Delicate Nose); by Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, an artist born in Barcelona in 1977, who moved to Brazil in 2004. Steegmann's work combines reflections on color, space, abstraction, and movement with elements of indigenous cultures, botanics, or social sciences. "Equal (Cut)" (2008), is a good

Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, "Bicho de nariz delicado", 2013.
A Certain Lack of Coherence, Oporto, exhibition views



example of his practice: A clean cut, 2 cm wide and 8 cm deep, which he traced as a diagonal straight line into the concrete patio of Ateliê 397, a São Paulo independent space. But because of its combination of movement and penetration into the unknown, what anticipates “Bicho de nariz delicado” is perhaps the film “16 mm” (2009–2011), in which a camera suspended on wires progresses into the jungle along a distance defined by the length of the film reel. As a whole, these works demonstrate Steegman’s will to create narratives and perceptual games, which often have to do with our relation with nature or popular culture, from a postcolonial point of view, and through a formal vocabulary that inherits Brazilian Modernism and Conceptual Art.

The work that Steegmann created for Coerência consisted of a projection, reflected by carefully placed mirrors, sending light into the most hidden and somber of four rooms – which are interconnected by an approximately 90-degree angle. In the first room, the light beam coming from a slide projector crossed through a second transversal projection, square shaped, which formed a barrier. Visitors oriented themselves almost blindly, disconcerted, following the trajectory of the light made visible by a smoke machine. Step by step, as one’s eyes were getting used to the dark, one perceived the space more clearly. Reaching the last room after zigzagging the whole gallery, soaked in its typical wet odor, the light illuminated a small stick insect – a thin bug originally from the Amazonian jungle, here entomologically preserved – alight over a golden leaf, which beams into the darkness. Here, after progressing like an explorer or a miner in search of precious metals, the visitor turns around and heads back toward the entrance. The return is

different from the arrival. The work retains its fragility but becomes more visible, both physically and conceptually. The embodied light draws itself bluntly over the architecture, as an interrupted ray, and the intensity of perception subsides.

Out on Caldeireiros Street, many thoughts come to mind, as if after leaving the cinema: The risk of entering a tunnel, guided by a trembling light. The alteration and enhancement of one’s senses. The amazement of finding a tropical insect, originally from Brazil, a former colony of Portugal, alight on a golden leaf, in the depths of what used to be a bargain shop in the oldest neighborhood in Oporto. After other artists experimenting with light in more conventional locations (i.e. the white cube), like Anthony McCall’s geometric-sculptural variations dating back to the 1970s, Steegmann’s gesture profits from the derelict and precarious context in which it is situated. However, something stands out with particular intensity among all these issues: The capacity of his intervention to transform the appearance of the *Uma certa falta de coerência* space. It looked different – cleaner, even – contradicting Stephen Dillemath’s definition of this peculiar venue as “the crappiest gallery”⁴ in which he ever has shown.

Daniel Steegmann, “Bicho de nariz delicado”, *Uma certa falta de coerência*, Oporto, April 19–May 15, 2013.

Notes

- 1 “A periferia dos outros é o nosso centro”, quote from a conversation with André Sousa online at www.baleiro.org/content/uma-certa-falta-de-coerencia-entrevista-con-andre-sousa. Translations by the author.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Online at: <http://acloc-textor-english.blogspot.com.es>.
- 4 Conversation with the artist at the opening of his “1st Retrospective” exhibition in *Uma certa falta de coerência*, October 7, 2011.



WORKING MOTHERS OF INVENTION

Avigail Moss on My Barbarian at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects

“If the mothers are revolutionized, there is nothing left to revolutionize.” Walter Benjamin, “A Family Drama in the Epic Theatre”

The American experimental art collective My Barbarian – composed of Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, and Alexandro Segade – have worked together and in collaboration with other artists for more than ten years. Their practice combines musical theater and visual art, and they engage theatrical forms like Augusto Boal’s “Theater of the Oppressed” with a decidedly queer, campy vigor.

In recent years they have produced installations and performances integrating subjects as diverse as biblical narrative, Greek drama, and contemporary Socialist Critique.

With their latest exhibition at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, My Barbarian presented a witty, intergenerational assemblage exploring the psychological and political resonances of the mother-child relationship. In a new video entitled “Universal Declaration of Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in the Creative Impulse” (2013) (also the exhibition’s title), Gaines, Gordon, and Segade perform a series of short episodes with their own mothers as well as with Mary Kelly and Eleanor Antin, two artists known separately since the late 1960s and early