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Desisto – o que não vejo imagino

Nuno Sousa Vieira

15.05.26 – 12.09.26

Opening 15.05.26, 18h – 21h

To imagine a condition of possibility

Politics and art, just as much as knowledge, construct ‘fictions’; that is to say, material rearrangements of signs and images, of the relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done.¹

“White with black: walls white, floor black.”

This is the first line of text of the first scene inscribed in *Victory Over the Sun* opera’s libretto, written by the Russian poet and painter Aleksei Kruchenykh, with musical composition by Mikhail Matiushin and sets and costumes by Kazimir Malevich. Having premiered at the Luna Park Theatre in St Petersburg (Russia) in December 1913, it summarised, in large part, the artistic activities and political intentions of the pre-war Russian avant-garde movements: the shocking and radical exploration of the shape, the anarchic, fragmentary and apparently disjointed presentation of the elements and a profoundly nihilistic message.

The public’s reaction was chaotic and violent, and the critics, at the time, did not spare the initiative.

A large part of the text was incomprehensible to the public: making use of the zaum writing experiments (or transrational writing), practiced by Kruchenykh, which required a decomposition of the Russian language in its fundamental sounds, stripping the words of their precise meaning to reveal the more profound and primitive force of the sounds.

Let us remember that Aleksei Kruchenykh was a co-author (together with the poets Vladimir Mayakovsky, David and Vladimir Burluk, and Velimir Khlebnikov) of the book *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, published in 1912 and assumed as the manifesto of the Russian futurist movement, inspired by the text of the Italian Marinetti, published in 1909. The work (a mixture of poetry and essay) was an appeal to the mobilization against the refined softness of the contemporary Russian style, assuming an intention of shock not only for its content but also by its form: the burlap covering (considered a poor material, associated with manual labour) affirmed the need of democratising art as a tool for cultural and social emancipation.

We return to the opera *Victory Over the Sun* and its intricate narrative. In it, the sun (representing the decadent past) is ripped from the sky, closed in a concrete box and its death is celebrated in a ceremony conducted by the Futurist Strongmen. The Time Traveller (another character) shows up to declare that the future is now in the hands of men and that everybody will be happy, even though stating that happiness is something that does not exist. Further ahead, the Fightpicker starts a war and the terrified Fat Man finds himself not being able to understand the modern world. The opera ends with an airplane crashing into the stage.

The interpretations vary and throughout the years there have been a few attempts to re-enact, represent or reinterpret the futurist piece. In 1923, El Lissitzky rethinks it by creating a plan for a deeply mechanical enactment, seeing the work as a celebration of men’s technological abilities: the sun, as an expression of the old world’s energy, is ripped from the skies by the modern man, that thanks to his technological superiority, creates his own energy source. It is a man of the future, courageous, optimist, a gun, technology and progress enthusiast, that challenges nature to the point of capturing the sun.

Other interpretations point to the prophetic condition of the piece, which announced the war-related catastrophes and the geopolitical, social and cultural problems that followed. As a kind of prediction of the future based on a critical analysis of the past. However, the original representation, seen through the futuristic worries and intentions, seems to centre itself

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more in the conscious rejection of a safe past than in the fear of the future (the sun was a very appreciated symbolic motif and, because of that, suitable as a target of the futurist attack). We are well aware that the first two decades of the 20th century were (in the European context) rich in artistic and aesthetic experiments, in the profusion of rupture intentions that aimed to innovate culturally and to cross multiple disciplines, and in the understanding of the artistic action as a political action that involves, equally and in a responsible way, creators and public. The possibilities were endless.

Let us then return to the first line of the libretto (and also of this essay) “White with black: walls white, floor black.”. This description indicates an environment, a space coated in flat colours, in high contrast, and completely coincidental with the interventions projected by Kazimir Malevich (as we mentioned, author of the sets and costumes).

His live geometric compositions pointed towards the construction of a new artistic language: the suprematism. Extremely seductive, of purist and almost mystical nature, through which the universe was represented as a geometric harmony, rhythmic, articulated between simple elements, using primary and flat colours.

Malevich took this process further, defending that pure art should be free of any dependency of theme or reference to realize its maximum expressive effect, which evolved to the complete reductionist syntheses: the Black Square.

The manifestation of creativity would not be dependent on art production. Only then, without recourse to mediations, would the creative conscience become immediately free.

In 1915 (two years after the premier of *Victory Over the Sun*), the *Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0,10* happened in Petrograd, in which Malevich showed a series of paintings composed by planes of colour, suggesting the placing of his Black Square in the superior corner of the room, the place (in the Russian orthodox tradition) usually reserved for religious icons, giving it a metaphysical dimension and underlining the political quality of the gesture (inevitably understood as provocative).

The Black Square accomplishes its philosophical determinations in its condition as the final artwork but assumes at the same time the place of iconic and magical object, destined to drive the spectators to go beyond themselves and beyond all references to the real world, to a state of undifferentiated non-objectivity.

We arrive, then, at the territory of abstraction, of the imagined visions, of hope, of revolution and of utopia. That place where anticipation of a future world is possible, where standards for the creation of a universal language (that does not depend on recognition) can be established, or, in short, where it is possible to think about the total reorganization of human experience. Perhaps the place of *fictions* and of *rearrangements of signs and images*, as pointed out by Rancière, where everything can be reinvented and to which Nuno Sousa Vieira’s proposals seem to so clearly point to, now grouped in the exhibition *Desisto – o que não vejo imagino* (I give up – what I can’t see I imagine).

Welcoming the political gesture intrinsic to the poetics of the artistic gesture, the artist has been developing an interesting path based on an investigative core that links the studio space (that utopia place) with a questioning of issues concerning history and the artistic practice itself. His works (widely affirmative in the way they inscribe themselves in the real space) assume their own discursive strategies, based on manipulation, layering, displacement and recontextualization procedures.

Fruit of a (often times) serial conception, his works often establish dialogues and connections between themselves (at times only inferred), and assume a clear and unequivocal installative condition, aiming (similarly to the characters and elements that constitute an operatic work) for a relative positioning that looks forward to the drawing of a determined narrative.

In light of the revolutionary positioning that united a lot of intellectual vanguards of the beginning of the 20th century, and observing with disenchantment the conditions that define today the human and social experience in the globalized

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geographical contexts (the massification of consumption and of image production, the proliferation of disinformation and of fake contents, the valorisation of technical and technological developments, the accelerated infantilisation of speeches, the manifestation of extremes and rising dehumanising phenomena through the new tecno-imperialist advances and neoliberal domination) it is more than urgent to create spaces of reposition and to create alternative visions. Artists know it, they feel it, they sense it and assume, in the territory of their practices, a lot of the responsibility to establish those spaces.

In this current exhibition, Nuno Sousa Vieira affirms the recovery of disciplinary intersections, of poetic languages, of the syntheses of shapes and materials, and of the careful articulation between pre-existing elements and new elements now conceived. The result is a combination of varied layers of meaning that gather to build that territory of freedom, where experience can be more complex, denser, but, above all, truly new.

The abstract language links itself with the presence of words, the volumes compete with the planes of colour, the image-light coexists with the anthropomorphic representation, the verses claim or deny the reverses, and the fractures reaffirm the importance of the articulation of bodies turned paintings. We cannot guess, in this place, a beginning or an end. Only an intermission in a multidimensional narrative, in a deeply abstract time, that moves us prospectively through history.

And it is also here that, as almost always in the artist's works, the displacement, the rotation, the translation or the fold, propose an occurrence. A resignification based in a speculative geometric procedure that promotes a change in the positioning and, by consequence, in the gaze.

The gaze moves in the direction of abstraction.

We agree, then, that without a great degree of abstraction, it becomes difficult to imagine other ways of life, to think beyond the present, to break habits of perception or to conceive true alternatives. Malevich knew it and, because of that, chased that state of undifferentiated non-objectivity that would allow to push humanity beyond itself.

Nuno Sousa Vieira imagines it and proposes a reinterpreted staging of that possibility.

Ana Anacleto
05.2026

Notes:

¹ RANCIÈRE, Jacques (2000) *Le partage du sensible: esthétique et politique*. Paris: La Fabrique (authorial translation)

3+1 Arte Contemporânea would like to thank Kindred Spirit projects

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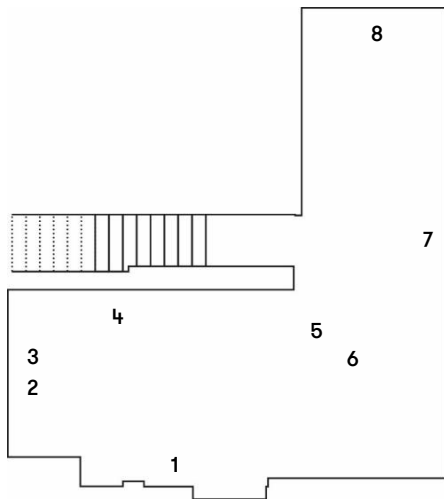
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GALERIA 1



1. *De olhos pregados no chão*, 2014 - 2026

Installation in situ, paint on 6 glasses of the gallery façade, Variable dimensions

2. *O Que Imaginamos Muitos do Um*

Survival Guide – A guide for hosts and guests, booklet (Portuguese only)

3. *O Que Imaginamos Muitos do Um*

Survival Guide – A guide for hosts and guests, character sheets (Portuguese only)

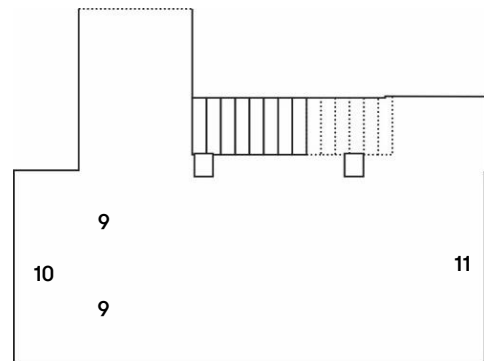
4. *Elemento 1: duplo vivo*, 2026

Oil on linen, 90,5 x 49,5 x 3 cm

5. *Parede-Abrigo – (O Espaço-Não-Neutro)*, 2026

Oil on plywood, peephole, slide (29 elements) [*O que não vejo, imagino I and II*, 2026, Oil on laminated MDF, porcelain eye and aluminium mounts, 32 x 19 x 4 cm | *Eu – (O Doppelgänger da Obra)* and *Muitos – (O Doppelgänger da Obra)*, 2025, Oil on linen and cotton thread, 53,3 x 40 cm | *O que sobra do pescoço*, 2025, Oil on wood and nylon thread, 60 x 3 x 3 cm] 185 x 390 x 118 cm

GALERIA 2



6. *Manifesto para uma ação imaginada, ou, como desobedecer ao visível*, 2025

Offset printing on graph paper, 45 x 32 cm, Edition of 150

7. *O Corpo-Ferida #1 to #16*, 2026

Oil on linen and cotton thread, 40 x 32 cm (frame | each)

8. *Passada e meia na escuridão – (Sem Sol)*, 2026

Oil on linen, mahogany wood and metal fittings 124 cm Ø x 45 cm (the size of the work is equivalent to one and a half of the artist's steps)

9. *Declamador - O Artista Sombra*, 2025

Oil on plywood, oil and digital print on linen and cotton thread, 184 x 62 x 112 cm | 14 x 89,5 x 20 cm

10. *Elemento 2: objeto caído*, 2026

Oil on linen, 112 x 102 x 3 cm

11. *Mais alto que a luz – (O Transgressor do Visível)*, 2024

Video, colour and sound, 5'56", Edition of 3 + 1 AP

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