

Good Vibrations

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HELENA ALMEIDA | JUAN ARAUJO | MICHAEL BIBERSTEIN | FERNANDO CALHAU | LOURDES CASTRO
| ANDRÉ CEPEDA | ÂNGELA FERREIRA | JOÃO MARIA GUSMÃO + PEDRO PAIVA | FERNANDO LANHAS |
JOSÉ LOUREIRO | JONATHAN MONK | MATT MULLICAN | JOÃO ONOFRE | JULIÃO SARMENTO | ÂNGELO DE
SOUSA | RUI TOSCANO | LAWRENCE WEINER | YONAMINE

I, I love the colorful clothes she wears
And the way the sunlight plays upon her hair
I hear the sound of a gentle word
On the wind that lifts her perfume through the air

I'm pickin' up good vibrations
She's giving me excitations
I'm pickin' up good vibrations
(oom bop bop good vibrations)
She's giving me excitations
(oom bop bop excitations)
Good good good good vibrations
(oom bop bop)
She's giving me excitations
(oom bop bop excitations)

The title of this exhibition contains a joyous provocation: "good vibrations". These two words immediately bring to mind Brian Wilson's radiant falsetto and the song's whistling theremin. It creates a desirable imaginary plane of reverberating gazes and bodies, indifferent to the circumstances that now hem us in. Yes, reverberating like the works by Michael Biberstein, Julião Sarmiento, Yonamine, João Onofre, Fernando Calhau, Lawrence Weiner, José Loureiro, João Maria Gusmão + Pedro Paiva, André Cepeda, Juan Araujo, Lourdes Castro, Matt Mullican, Fernando Lanhas, Rui Toscano, Helena Almeida, Ângela Ferreira, Jonathan Monk, and Ângelo de Sousa. Eighteen artists who, through their work, express one of the most enduring faculties of art: that of communicating vibrations, forces, colors, energies, or, borrowing Beach Boys' voice and words, elations, excitations.

This summer, the promise of freedom seems to be less evident, but art (like the muse sung by the Californian band) remains a place for movements, conversations and exaltations that the viewer may invent and reinvent, discover and rediscover among and between works of art. Everything comes to life in this space, even in silence, when it is visited by persons, viewers, spectators. There are no bad vibrations, there are vibrations like the ones shuddering in Lourdes Castro's *Furrows* (1974). Someone's shadow, freed by the artist with her gentle, sweet colors. Variations of someone's presence, moods and emotions that match the singular shape of a body made of opaque and transparent lines. Formally, the work's serial and repetitive nature evokes the silkscreen prints of another artist, but their light and color convey a joyous sentiment – a dance – that, being melancholic, is not at all traumatic. Their vibration is that of life.

There are more enigmatic, unfathomable shadows. In Julião Sarmento's *Light Piece* (1976) we cannot figure out from where they come. The work was shown only twice, in Milan and at the Elvas Contemporary Art Museum, part of the show *Index*, curated by João Silvério in 2013. The random movement of a surface, a shadow tentatively advancing over a series of photographic portraits of two women (the presence of the portrait should be highlighted). In the first image, we see them waiting, tarrying about something; in the last they are obscured by a shadow. The vibrations coming from the works by Lourdes Castro and Julião Sarmento are quite different, but they both leave space to a certain vagueness. In their amorous struggle against light and shadow, they share a sensibility to the ephemeral, to beginnings and ends. They endeavor to take hold of the shadows and their effects, to contemplate them in different shades of melancholy.

Vibrations can also be blows, instigated by the violence of figuration and by the figuration of violence. The three paintings of the series *El Primer Hombre*, created by Juan Araujo for the exhibition *Potlatch*, curated by Julião Sarmento at Museu do Caramulo, are pictorial reproductions of photographic images of car accidents. They bring the documents of Albert Camus' and Jackson Pollock's car wrecks into the field of painting while quoting Andy Warhol's silkscreen print *Car Crash* in an elliptic tautology. Hal Foster's traumatic realism gives way to a tragic, almost elegiac breath while painting unrealizes and eternizes images. The vibration is that of an increasingly distant mourning. *Untitled (Dead Man Nr. 1)* and *Untitled (Dead Man Nr. 3)*, from Matt Mullican's homonymous series (2018), represents a dead man diluted in nature. Through the use of frottage, the original image gave way to a visceral, convulsive abstraction. The original photograph has been diluted, but color and title remind us of death in its telluric and earthen vibration. That body, that dead man is disappearing.

Helena Almeida's body has not disappeared, it is there. It is not a mere silhouette or a simple shadow, it is a body that could be a drawing, a sculpture (why not?), or an object. An indeterminate and elusive figure that escapes any reification or classification. A suspended, spontaneous and staged movement that manages to be almost non-human, even if it was drawn by a human being. There is humor in this dark presence, a dignified mordacity in the way it presents itself in front of the sculpture by João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva: a boiling pressure cooker suspended in a frozen moment that, from a certain point of view, seems ready to dive into the image by Helena Almeida.

Converging rhythms, crisscrossing as they emerge from each one of the works. Projections, journeys. At the center of the room, João Onofre's piece emerges temporarily as an apt metaphor for this group show. [Curiously, this same song by the Beach Boys was included in one of the artist's works, *Untitled (leveling a spirit level in free fall feat. Dorit Chrysler's BBGV dub)*]. One of the artist's earlier works, the piece in this exhibition consists of a double stethoscope that can be used by two persons, allowing them to listen to both their hearts at the same time. Today, for reasons that are known to all, this exercise is not allowed and the piece rests in its closed position. We are left with the memory of that echo, which we know to be universal in all its minor variations.

In *Good Vibrations*, the vitality of shapes, shadows and colors coexists with the fascination of the sublime, with the perception of an end or of the void, with immersive images, and cosmologies. Vibrations on a human and superhuman scale, shadows and

stars. Like an altar, a heavy iron surface receives the viewer. At its center, a neon caption says, 'perfect blank'. This is one of the pieces created by Fernando Calhau in 1990 that refers to a void, an absence. Curiously, that light does not go out. It persists, fragile, immaterial, defining a space to be filled, occupied. Artificial and human, it carries that weight. Michael Biberstein's painting, *Big Drift* (2010), points towards other lights, the luminaries of an interior landscape, of a landscape that can only be made visible by an artist, gradually emerging on the surface of the canvas, in chromatic and musical vibrations. In its interior, we can hear movements, modulations, and voices like those in the background of Tim Buckley's *Dream Letter* or *Song to the Siren*. Between treble and bass, between color and shape, connections float freely. Something similar happens in the series of works by José Loureiro. Drawings on paper that look like paper, undulating lines and brief currents that compose a geometric, swift and restless dance that establishes a dialogue with the folding and unfolding spatial drawings of Ângelo de Sousa's sculptures.

André Cepeda's photograph opens the show to another kind of vibration. A portal to the contemporary transformation of the city of Lisbon, it is a detail of a place, a building (Palácio Almada Carvalhais in Conde Barão, Lisbon) captured by the artist's camera in 2019. The image is silent about all this. Naked and voided of its context, it presents itself as an abstraction: an almost monochrome surface that, nonetheless, reveals the passage of time. This is the tension replicated in the room below, the stage for a series of parallel and tangent movements. Between the paintings by Rui Toscano and Fernando Lanhas, Yonamine's silkscreen print and the project by Ângela Ferreira, the cosmic and the human, the history of painting and of our political world vibrate on the perception, the senses and the memory of the viewers. Rui Toscano's pictorial screen invites the visitor to look directly into a star, enveloping them in a solar illusion within the limits of painting. The piece by Fernando Lanhas is less immersive, more geometric with its lines and cuts, a vertical and irregular sequence of blue and black. Separated by their distant generations, these two artists approach each other through their representations of the Cosmo.

And what does bring together the works by Yonamine and those by Ângela Ferreira? Our global political past, and especially the history of the 20th century. Yonamine evokes the hopeful face of a young Angolan in 1976 while Ferreira pays homage to the North American anti-racist activist and philosopher Angela Davis with a series of drawings and a model. Somehow, this same gesture can be recognized in the works by Jonathan Monk, even if the objects of their homage are other artists, i.e., it remains within the art world. But we should go back to the works by Yonamine and Ângela Ferreira: they reveal two different (temporal) approaches within the framework of their own productions and create a space in the exhibition where we are transported into a plane that confronts us with more urgent, pressing and grounded realities. Other vibrations, with their unexpected sounds and echoes. Works that offer excitations, elations. Paraphrasing the work by Lawrence Weiner, the first we see as we enter the show, "however placed, anyways, to reach wherever".

José Marmeleira