

Sies + Höke Galerie

Poststrasse 2+3
40213 Düsseldorf

t +49. 211. 301 43 60
f +49. 211. 301 43 629
post@sieshoeke.com
www.sieshoeke.com

João Maria Gusmão: *ALVORADA*

Opening: May 13th, 2022, 2-8 pm
Exhibition: May 14th – June 18th, 2022

PRESS RELEASE

Sies + Höke is pleased to present *ALVORADA*, a solo exhibition by João Maria Gusmão about everything and nothing. It features a group of photographs based on miniature ink drawings which the artist composed, photographed and enlarged, and a set of new sculptures.

The title, *Alvorada*, is Portuguese for the first light of the day; it means daybreak, but it also conveys the wakeup call of the singing rooster and the chant of the morning birds. It sets the mood for a conceptual phantasmagoria resting at the limits of visibility and representation. Key to the exhibition is an investigation of the spectral dimension in film and photography, accentuating the paradoxical and poetic aspects of images and objects that are static or moving. A collection of short stories by the artist, published in the accompanying booklet in the vein of satirical literature, features absurdist anecdotes that offer an insight to the artworks in the show.

Balancing rock is a photograph created from a small calligraphic drawing the artist executed on three parallel post-it notes. It exists both in a *daytime* and a *nighttime* version and is described, in the booklet's corresponding tale, as a large rock, precariously perched on a cliff, which has been turned into a sanctuary: *During the day the boulder is a stone but at night it merges with the firmament. The sanctuary gathers various sorts of pilgrims: those who take a camera to photograph and those who take a camera to film. The former insist the stone is as solid as a rock the latter say it is ready to fall.* Himself both a filmmaker and photographer, Gusmão here not only places an insider's joke. He presents a kind of Zen riddle in Zen form – the paradoxical possibility of a rock being both in rest position and about to plunge into the abyss; the idea of movement as a possibility expressed in ideogrammatic instant brushstrokes.

While the photographs in the exhibition are based on miniature drawings, the bronze sculptures can be seen as indebted to photography: they were modelled as negative shapes, as indentations in blocks of clay. The method references the so-called Fiorelli process, an archaeological technique conceived in the 19th century at excavations in Pompeii to produce plaster casts of cavities which human or animal shapes had left in the ashes. The resulting plaster objects were neither artefacts nor sculptures, but instead had the quality of an image developed from the negative conserved by the volcano's ashes. Similarly, Gusmão's sculptures, depicting torsos, tombstones and light sources, represent images of cavities, creating what might be called an objectual shadow theatre. Accompanied by the magical anecdotes in the booklet – fairy tales gone wild with art history, philosophy and the theatre of the absurd – the sculptures are concerned with a

Sies + Höke Galerie

Poststrasse 2+3
40213 Düsseldorf

t +49. 211. 301 43 60
f +49. 211. 301 43 629
post@sieshoeke.com
www.sieshoeke.com

metaphysical inquiry into the phantasmatic nature of imagery, questioning ideas of illusion and reality, darkness and light, stillness and motion.

Featuring faint yellow walls, one of which has a circular cutout, the exhibition design is arranged to recall a projection of sorts, with the sun in *Torso with sun* as the light source on one side of the wall, and the panel in *Tombstone and projection* as a screen on the other side. While the exhibition does not actually involve moving images, motion and light (natural and artificial) are implied in a number of works. Acting as *ideograms for things that are moving or not / seen or invisible*, the bronze sculptures and photographs of calligraphic drawings resemble storyboards for non-narrative minimal film, looming at the boundaries of representation.

João Maria Gusmão was born in Lisbon in 1979, where he lives and works today. Having collaborated with Pedro Paiva from 2001 until 2018, Gusmão has subsequently continued on his own to create a multidisciplinary body of work that comprises paracinematic devices, bronze sculptures, photographs and writing. He has shown his solo work at the Serralves Museum, Porto, 2021, as part of his extensive retrospective exhibition together with Paiva, and at the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco in 2020. His work produced in collaboration with Paiva was subject to numerous institutional exhibitions, including solo shows at La Casa Encendida, Madrid, 2018; Kunstverein München (with Alexandre Estrela), Munich, 2018; Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2016; Aargauer Kunsthaut, Aarau, 2016; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2015; REDCAT, Los Angeles, 2015; Camden Arts Centre, London, 2015; Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, 2015 and Hangar Bicocca, Milan, 2014, amongst others. It was presented twice at the Venice Biennale (2009 and 2013), the SeMa Biennale Seoul (2016), the Gwangju Biennale, (2010) and the São Paulo Biennial (2006), and is held in some of the most important public collections internationally such as SFMOMA, San Francisco; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Centro de Arte Contemporânea Inhotim, Brumadinho; Tate Modern, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris and Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.