

Gil Heitor Cortesão

Amnesia ad Ascea

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Madrid

We accept reality so readily – perhaps because we intuit that nothing is real.
Jorge Luís Borges, *The Immortal*¹.

In a solitary glance, looking at Aleph, the whole universe was contained – one small iridescent sphere, the *aleph*, the primal letter of existence and a place where all reality was condensed in one brief moment of contemplation. Where time and space collapsed, an unconceivable image was portrayed by Borge's tale².

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Lost in a labyrinth of elusive imprecision, we find ourselves facing a mirror of infinite things and unanswered enigmas. The realness of the real seems to flow endlessly in the artificial currents of manipulation and ambivalence; reality has become an estranged other, a realm where authenticity lies in ruins, replaced by the dissipating abyss of contemporary simulation. As we float amidst the intangible circles of the void, disorientation becomes our only guide through the enigmatic paintings of Gil Heitor Cortesão.

As sketches of worlds with no apparent narrative, traced by transformation, Heitor Cortesão's works makes us adrift an area of camouflage, a surface where nothing is as it seems, detailing only the absence of concrete destinations. The conventional notion of realism fades away, opening instead a space that abandons the traditional territories of the mimetic image. Beginning with appropriated pictures found online, his reverse plexiglass paintings of neutral ready-made settings move away from accurate portrayals of life, taking us instead into a field of undifferentiated vertigo through a blend of post-produced and remixed footage that provide glimpses into a world devoid of certainty. In his exhibition "Amnesia ad Ascea" – the fourth show to take place at the gallery's new location in Madrid and Heitor Cortesão's eleventh solo exhibition at Pedro Cera – fragments of dissembled bodies and obscure references blur the line between what is seen and concealed, leaving us to wander through a panorama of extended possibilities and restricted truths.

In *Golden Brown*, the grid and the window – the first being integral to the polyptych structure – make a tangible reality indistinguishable from a simulated projection; in contrast, *Amnesia ad Ascea* (*a contrario sensu*) acts as a railway, horizontally extending the quest for interpretation as written clues are left behind by the artist, akin to bodies of letters. Within veiled landscapes and transitional spaces that defy our search for a focal point, a simulacrum built of intentional distortion emerges in the layers of oil paint, blending precision with abstraction, textured lines, details, fragments, and removed or added objects, whilst reverberating the narrative of visual complexity inscribed in the digital era.

*It only takes two facing mirrors to construct a labyrinth*³. From houses – *poppenhuis* and museums – to landscapes, ponds and spaces-in-between, solid forms to transitional domains, each painting provides a doorway to new substratum of meaning and representation, simultaneously concealing its passage: subject and medium unite to paradoxically extend our body and milieu as echoes in these worlds, while creating a sense of destabilization accordingly to the proximity to the work. Glass, like an aseptic

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skin, dims the difference between visibility and invisibility, drawing us into its vague silent embrace. Inside this spheric apprehension, possibilities flow freely, avoiding crystallization and challenging traditional hierarchies of both painterly processes and paradigms of fidelity. Yet, amidst this ambiguity, a question lingers: What remains to be expressed beyond the absurd quality of the real, trapped in its own dissimulating strategies that enhance our desire to *know*? Perhaps, in the silence that surrounds us, lies the key to understanding.

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And so, as we navigate through uncertainty, the world ceases to exist in the shadows of amnesic vagueness. As a mirror of our own, each plexiglass becomes a portal to dwell on the nature of reality, where one simple letter, one vague instance and reflection, are enough to initiate it all.

¹BORGES, Jorge Luis, *The Immortal*, in *Labyrinths. Selected Stories and Other Writings* (1964), ed. Donald A. Yates, James E. Irby: p.109.

²BORGES, Jorge Luis, *The Aleph and Other Stories* (1949).

³BORGES, Jorge Luis, "Nightmares", *Seven Nights* (1984): p. 29.

Gil Heitor Cortesão's work is internationally recognized, being included in the collection of Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (Lisbon, Portugal), Fundación Helga Alvear (Caceres, Spain), Fundación ARCO (Madrid, Spain), Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza (La Coruña, Spain), Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (Mudam, Luxemburg), Salsali Private Museum (Dubai, United Arab Emirates), Museu de Arte Contemporânea Armando Martins (Lisbon, Portugal), Coleção Fundação Serralves (Oporto, Portugal), Coleção António Cachola (Elvas, Portugal), Coleção Associação Industrial Portuguesa (Lisbon, Portugal), EDP – Eletricidade de Portugal (Lisbon, Portugal), Coleção Arquipélago (Azores, Portugal), among other.