

## VERA MOTA | MERGULHO

Until Jan 9, 2015

That which distinguishes falling from diving is intention, the body's predisposition -- the body as a whole -- to movement. Vera Mota's work always shows a body -- hers -- in a dive into plastic compositions. In this sense, the performing dimension never strays from the surfaces that are created; the body, even if it is submerged in a dive, and is invisible, still remains present in the images that she produces. These images result from a succession of action, of movements that create and compose. Thus there is no intention to reflect (on) the real, but to reconstruct it, breaking with the stability of the world.

The performing aspect is, rather than being a choreographic device, the capacity to create matter. It is this performing element, when stripped of any spectacular nature, that defines Vera Mota's work. There is a dynamic relationship between the bodies and the materials, a body which in movement creates other bodies. These bodies -- new entities that inhabit the world -- are not references, indications or substitutes for the real, but concrete realisations of (visual and plastic) facts. Therefore the bodies diving into the five surfaces that make up the exhibition being presented now in the Galeria Pedro Cera are outside any categorical definition, and are in many cases still unnameable.

Vera Mota questions the conflict-conditions that govern the relationship between the vertical and the horizontal, gravity as a major conditioning factor of inscribing of the senses. This is not an exhibition project, but is rather the exhibition result of performing events: gazes, actions, movements, dives. If in all of Vera Mota's works there is an attempt to control the materials -- yet impotent when faced with its ontology -- in "Dive" the proposal is for there to be a controlling of the body and the bodies that are trying to split consistencies and run through thicknesses.

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Diving also means depriving the body of its natural conditions of survival; the dive is the predisposition for placing the body in a situation of effort; believing in its resilience. It is not by chance that the objects diving on the five surfaces are incapable of piercing them and will be stopped and caught on the edges. Diving is not, however, the Utopian content of this exhibition, as Vera Mota's dive echoes throughout each object.

Ana Cristina Cachola

In a conversation with Vera Mota about the work *Dive* I told her about *Composition as Explanation*, a text by the American writer Gertrude Stein written in 1926. Stein, who was considered as a "cubist" of literature, read the text, for the first time, in two lecture sessions at the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, in Britain. In this text Stein discusses *composition* as a sort of event that is a part of daily experience, using a term that we directly associate to music, painting or drawing. The way Stein describes what composition is has directly to do with creation, the composition that takes place without us realising it, through the repetition of everyday gestures, or the way that everything is organised in our private and public space. Stein applies the term to a wider field, starting from the analysis that shows a particular interest in the visual arts, not to mention the connection that exists between the act of making or reorganising objects, images or ideas, as a reflection of the surrounding context. Stein stated that composition is the way that everything in the world is organised, and is the only thing that truly changes over time.

The title of the work that Vera Mota is presenting at the Pedro Cera Gallery is capable of placing us within a very specific situation from the point of view of action. The word *dive* suggests that immersion within a physical or psychic state. The title is essential for the building of a possible scenario in which the spectator may locate themselves. There will have to be a physical and emotional availability for us to be able to come to the materials and forms she uses as mediators of this relationship. The bare backdrop on a cloth setting, glass, sculptures and found objects are references to the action that takes place in this space.

In the case of this particular work, the space that is constantly reconstructed is that of intimacy, that of the relationship between bodies. That which visually seems always to be lacking in Vera Mora's works that are not performance, is us, as spectators. As if she left this space to be filled in by us. That relationship of intimacy of which I speak is, at the moment of one's first encounter with her work, as if we were walking alone and suddenly came across someone we didn't know or totally incomprehensible objects, but which slowly turned out to be part of ourselves.

What the spectator produces in looking at Vera Mota's work is very close to what she herself does when she makes what she does. It is a test and an assessment of resistance of her body in relation to the materials and objects. An absolute intimacy on the one hand, and on the other a distancing that is necessary for an observation that might one

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see only what is essential. The objects and sculptures that are left on the cloth are those that have stood up to the fight, like the vestiges on a battlefield.

In this work in particular she constructs that space, which is often seen as an arena, in order to then give way to a confrontation of intimate dimensions. The arena which in her work we have come to look at as a boxing ring, is the place where we can observe the surface of these bodies in an accelerated state of deterioration. As if they age in a few seconds, or as if we could in a few minutes witness the life of someone who is born and dies right there in front of us. And the title of this work refers to a space where the body finds itself at the time right before its state of vulnerability, and the spectator has to face their own image. And what is disturbing when we look Vera Mota's work is that confrontation with our incapacity to find a motive, a reason, to find something that secures us. Because Mota places us in the middle of the ocean, on a raft that can split at any moment.

In her 1968 text *The Aesthetics of Silence*, Susan Sontag writes about silence as a way for an artist to show, through their work, the issue of the gaze as a foremost trap. At a certain point Sontag writes: "Silence is a metaphor for a cleansed, noninterfering vision, in which one might envisage the making of art-works that are unresponsive before being seen, unviolable in their essential integrity by human scrutiny. The spectator would approach art as he does a landscape. A landscape doesn't demand from the spectator his "understanding," his imputations of significance, his anxieties and sympathies; it demands, rather, his absence, that he not add anything to it. Contemplation, strictly speaking, entails self-forgetfulness on the part of the spectator: an object worthy of contemplation is one which, in effect, annihilates the perceiving subject."

The decision to write about Vera Mota's work was personal. Vera didn't ask me to write about her work, and that is very important. It just happens that I always wanted to think and write about her work. Because I am interested in thinking of the spectator and their relationship with art, in the sense that it is very complex to try to explain the role of art in people's lives. Because in fact there is no explanation possible. Art precisely has to do with our need to on the one hand use artistic demonstrations in order to try to understand the world, and, on the other, to think of our relationship with things we do not understand. We have to learn that there is no problem in not being able to explain everything. These are my questions and the spectator should not mix them up with their own. Each one of us asks their own question. And that's the way it should be. I only have a few certainties, but this is one of them: each person asks their own questions, each person makes their own images, no matter how common or complex they may be, how little eloquent or intellectual they might seem. But the important thing is to do them. And to use these tools to have a critical gaze on everything around them.

Pedro Barateiro, Novembro 2015

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Cutting through the horizontal plane, wanting to break and go beyond the surface, going through mass and affecting its constitution and density, submerging.

In this work several objects interfere with the surface of sensitive yet resistant planes. These objects indicate a gesture of depositing, or delivering the object to its weight on the surface. That surface is not pierced, and always forms a limit. The immersion takes place in the action, when the body is hurled onto the wide plane and delivers a form to its strength.

It is the body which dives and is delivered into movements that travel through the space in the direction of the ground. Falls that describe lines. Suspensions, time and resistance, inscribed on inert objects, which more or less interfere with this elastic mass. There is a contained affection of the materials, in a shallow recipient where the ground is quickly reached. In a violent manner or resting over the surface, each surface materialises the strength and range of the movement that it demanded to be implanted, deposited.

In their physical evidence they are not exploratory dives; they are dives of frustrated disappearance; they are dives that do not pierce the surface; they are dives in intention.

This thus indicates a presence, revealing the agent that moved through the air tank that hovers over these rectangles in lines that are at once moment rapid and dry and then painful and slow, the body that oscillates from the vertical and horizontal to best be of use to what happens.

The negative space of the work is the space for testing, of preparation, in order to breathe one last time. Precision, suspension and leap. The fall is extended and seems to stretch time; the finalisation confirms the vitality of the trajectory, turbid or limpid.

Between free diving and diving in apnoea, muscles and resistance at the call of operations demanded by work, more than by will. Diving describing a line like someone dragging a pencil over paper. Diving and measuring the time that the body can remain under water. Diving and being able not to emerge.

Vera Mota