



# FUNDAÇÃO CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN

## CENTRO DE ARTE MODERNA JOSÉ DE AZEREDO PERDIGÃO

### **LOURDES CASTRO** (1930)

Lourdes Castro was born in Funchal, Madeira in 1930. She completed a painting degree at Escola Nacional de Belas-Artes, Lisboa, in 1956. In 1955, in Funchal, she had her first solo exhibition, and also participated in group shows in Lisbon. In 1957, with many of the gallery owners of her generation having left the country, she decided to leave, also. She later received a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (1958).

After staying a short time in Munich, she installed herself in Paris with René Bertholo. Together they were to take the first steps towards creating the magazine *KWY* (1958-1963), a project set up with a homonymous group. This group was free from manifestos and not interested in the traditional standards and rules of the plastic arts. It gathered Lourdes Castro and René Bertholo, the Bulgarian Christo, the German Jan Voss, and some Portuguese artists such as José Escada, João Vieira, Costa Pinheiro and Gonçalo Duarte. The group defined itself through collective exhibitions (Saarbrücken, 1960; Lisboa, 1960; Paris, 1961; Bologna, 1962), editorial work, and the shared responsibilities for producing the 12 silk-screened issues of the magazine.

The tendency towards abstraction, noticeable in Lourdes Castro's works made during the initial years of her residence in Paris, and in the works that she brought to the SNBA (Sociedade Nacional de Belas-Artes) in 1960 for the national selection of *KWY*, changed radically after 1961. At this time she had also abandoned the traditional medium of painting, and was receptive to the contemporary ideas of "Nouveau Réalisme". Under this influence, she first made constructed objects from the *assemblage* of everyday consumer goods. Frequently collected from waste and garbage, these pieces, filled with memories of an inhabited world, were arranged in boxes and painted with aluminum paint that unified them and gave them a certain presence.

This production of objects heightened her interest in shadows, which developed into a second phase. Her future work was to revolve around the problem of representing this dematerialised outline, a paradoxical sign of the material presence. Her research started with her silk-screening experience (the method that had been used in producing *KWY*). She then affixed the projected silhouettes of friends onto canvas. The next step took place in 1964 with the use of Plexiglas, which permitted her to reconcile the creation of objects with the exercise of making shadows. In this case, the transparency of the Plexiglas enhanced the complex and contradictory fusion of the object in an immaterial

dimension. Coloured or cut out, she often superimposed plates of this medium to give the original shadows a shadow of their own. This is what happens with the outline of the *Sombra Projectada de Christina Maar* (Projected Shadow of Christina Maar, 1968). The piece is an air box that separates the outline from the background and exposes the shadow to a shadow itself. This creates an effect whereby the deliberate separation between figure and background is diminished, which the artist's use of monochrome makes even more paradoxical.

The silhouettes gained real animation in Castro's staging projects, more specifically in the shadow plays that she dedicated herself to after 1966. After living in Berlin, between 1972 and 1973, these actions became more frequent, and therefore she decided to focus exclusively on developing work in this field, which took its inspiration from the Chinese tradition and "happenings". Thereafter, she collaborated with Manuel Zimbro, with the works *As Cinco Estações* (The Five Seasons, 1976), and *Linha do Horizonte* (Horizon Line, 1981), conceived for two hands.

The shadows also occupied beds, or more exactly bed sheets, "After removing the shadows of the shadow, by giving them colour and transparency, an independent life, I spread them out", she wrote in 1969. She lies them down on undone beds where we can see the embroidered outlines of the silhouettes, which make the absent bodies present as memory. Her research on shadow has always inspired thoughts on time and memory. Note, for example, her *Álbum de Família* (Family Album), (where she compiles images, thoughts, and excerpts related to shadow); the accumulation of geranium petals from her *Montanha de Flores* (Mountain of Flowers) which she began in 1988, or yet again *A Peça* (The Play), which she conceived with Pedro Tropa for the Biennale of São Paulo, in 2000. In this work a white cloth was unrolled and submitted to extremely powerful lighting, creating a universe of different shadows: those from the topography of the creases and the folds of the sheet, and those created by the viewer who approaches the work to look at it.

The Grande Prémio EDP Arte (Electricity of Portugal Art Prize) that she won in 2000 should also be singled out. It was the source of an exhibition at the Museu de Serralves, *Sombras à Volta de um Centro* (Shadows Surrounding a Center, 2003), and also led CAMJAP to exhibit, for the first time, the fragile sheets of the *Grande Herbário de Sombras* (The Great Herbarium of Shadows). Assírio e Alvim completed this initiative by making a facsimile edition of the album in two sizes (large and small).

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### **Bibliography**

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*Lourdes Castro: "Além da Sombra", Lisboa: CAM – Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1992. (Catalogue)*

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**Works in the CAMJAP collection**

5 paintings, 1 painting/object, 2 sculptures, 4 drawings, 6 prints, 1 object / textile