



MUTABLE MEMBRANES

Curator Sandra Birman

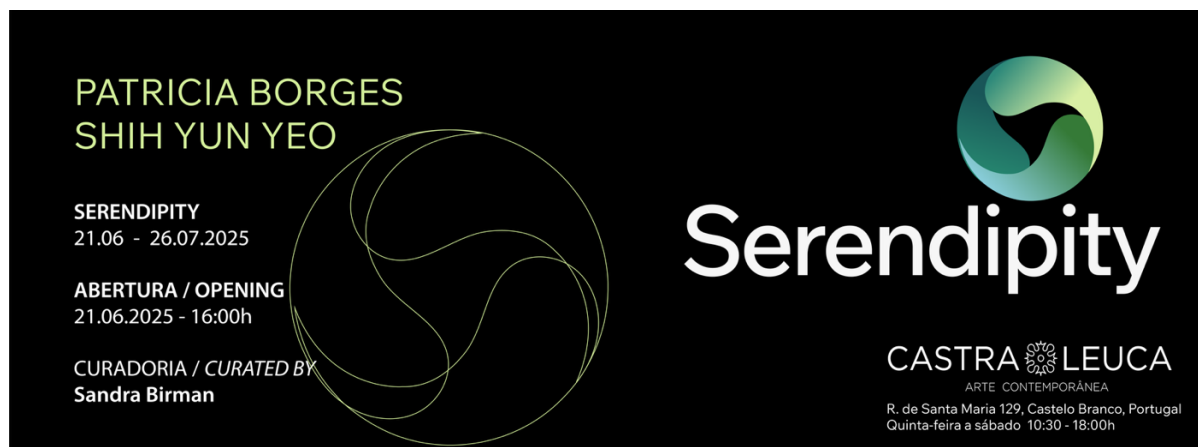
Jarek Mankiewicz's work arises from a fascination with the hidden geometry of the world around us. With a background in graphic arts, the artist transforms fragments of urban space, typography, and architecture into layered compositions that invite the viewer to reconsider the details of everyday life. What may begin as a single typographic character, a small architectural detail beneath a window, or the pattern of a traditional Portuguese tile, evolves into a structure of transparencies, in which each form resonates with the others, creating new and unexpected connections.

Tracing Polish and Portuguese urban and landscape paths, Mankiewicz gathers letterforms and other shapes, which carry cultural resonance in both countries. These are fragments of two distinct cultures that intertwine in his compositions. At the core of his practice lies the principle that "simple elements form a complex whole." Through semi-transparent acrylic layers, he balances precision and imperfection through brushstrokes.

Forms overlap, dissolve, and reappear, evoking the layered logic of Minimalism and Op Art — movements that found fertile ground in the renewed Portuguese art scene after decades of repression under the Estado Novo (Portugal's authoritarian regime, 1933–1974). The artist's pictorial approach — though rooted in the sensibility of printmaking — becomes powerful art when repetition is not mechanical reproduction and modularity is not predictable. This process also echoes other historical resonances: Polish Constructivism, with Henryk Stażewski's pioneering role, fused graphic design and geometric abstraction with social transformation, rejecting mere ornamentation.

In this solo exhibition at Castra Leuca Contemporary Art, the modular approach becomes visible. Some works remain autonomous; others interlace into larger structures where edges align — and occasionally break — but, when brought together, merge into greater constellations, echoes of Portuguese Baroque visual logic. Here, balance is not abstract but physical: translucent surfaces interact like mutable membranes, colors float across the canvases, and textured forms demand constant spatial reorganization. A play of hiding and revealing, where the artist decides which spaces we are allowed to cross.

In dialogue with Paul Klee's belief that "art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible," Mankiewicz's works show how urban fragments and graphic icons can become tangible visual systems. The artist unites place and geometric abstraction in a proposal to assemble fragments toward a planet freed from visual vices.



SERENDIPITY

Curator Sandra Birman

In a world increasingly shaped by automation, artificial intelligence and ecological imbalance, the works of Patricia Borges (Brazil) and Shih Yun Yeo (Singapore) resonate together in the poetic and the unpredictable. *Serendipity* being the act of finding something valuable or meaningful where one did not intentionally seek it. This concept underpins the practices of both artists and serves as a point of convergence for this exhibition in a region of inland Portugal.

At the heart of the two contemporary artists' work is a tension between control and chance, or natural forces and technological interventions. In Shih Yun Yeo's practice, chance is both method and metaphor: ink flows not only through brushes, but also along paths traced by robots she has built, algorithms, and remotely controlled devices. Her fusion of traditional techniques with contemporary technologies opens portals to new temporalities and spatialities, inviting the viewer into a performative relationship with matter and time.

Patricia Borges, in turn, works with generative AI and photosensitive processes. Her photographic objects are not fixed representations, but rather mutable presences, often undergoing transformations, even within the exhibition space. Rooted in both digital processes and alchemical reactions, the works breathe temporality and ask: could impermanence be a form of resistance? Her poetics challenge the desire for clarity and completeness, speaking from the folds of ambiguity, as if echoing Maurice Blanchot's central idea that *art is the space where absence becomes presence*.

Although they come from very different geographies, the works in the gallery converge in an affective and conceptual space fueled by a common interest in instability, the power of the unfinished, and transitional states. The artists allow the natural world to intervene - whether through climate, light or living organisms - emphasizing the agency of non-human forces in the creative act. In doing so, the modern divide between nature and machine, interior and exterior, artist and medium begins to dissolve. As philosopher Byung-Chul Han writes, *beauty does not lie in perfection, but in the event*; a notion that permeates the entire exhibition.

Castelo Branco, with its landscapes and layered histories, becomes fertile ground for this encounter. It is here, far from urban centers, that *Serendipity* unfolds; not as a spectacle of high technology in art, but as a quiet dialogue between nature, machine, and contemplation. The exhibition suggests that the meaning of art does not arise from control and supposed foresight, but from surrender and attentiveness to what emerges when we stop insisting.

At the intersection of their practices, we find a renewed poetics of perception, where the artificial and the organic do not compete, but conspire. This is *Serendipity*: a moment of alignment that was never programmed, but always possible.



FOREST BETWEEN LINES

Curator Sandra Birman

Drawing is an act of immersion, a line that travels through territories and memories, acting as a guiding thread between experiences and landscapes. In *Forests Between Lines*, Luíza Rizzo inserts herself into the organic flow of the landscape to explore the invisible connections between the Amazon Rainforest and the Laurisilva Forest. Among leaves, textures, and shadows, her work not only observes but listens to the vegetal ancestry of these ecosystems, transforming drawing into a sensory portal.

Crossing the boundary between art and ethnobotany, Rizzo adopts an autoethnographic approach, in which the act of drawing is also an act of belonging. Ink and charcoal evoke the materiality of the forest, capturing rhythms and dynamics that transcend mere botanical representation. The forms unfold in a continuous movement, where each line reveals not only the external landscape but also the artist's inner world.

As an immigrant between Brazil and Portugal, Rizzo experiences displacement as an essential part of her identity and artistic practice. The relationship between the Amazon and Laurisilva is not limited to their ecological similarities but expands into a dialogue about memory and belonging. The artist's book, an essential part of this exhibition, serves as a testament to this journey: a visual diary that records the experience of being in the forest and translating its nuances onto paper. As visitors turn its pages, they become part of this process, understanding that drawing is not only a result but also an experiment and a discovery.

Thus, *Forests Between Lines* is more than an exhibition of drawings: it is an invitation to rethink our relationship with the natural world and the boundaries that traverse us. Each line can be a bridge between distant landscapes, deeply intertwined in their origins and destinies.



INFINITE INTERIOR

Curator Sandra Birman

The Castra Leuca Contemporary Art gallery is located in Castelo Branco, a city in the Beira Baixa region, in the interior of Portugal. In contrast to the impression often associated with large coastal cities, where a supposed Portuguese cultural essence is often presented that can be considered superficial, the true authenticity of Portugal lies in areas further away from urban centers. It is in the interior of the country, far from the large metropolises, that the deep culture and its traditions are preserved in a more genuine way. Similarly, in the digital age and social networks, many people seem to live in a state of constant happiness, without ups and downs. However, such emotions can be illusory. To discover authentic feelings and truly know people, it is necessary to explore their inner worlds. From this duality and analogy, the theme INFINITE INTERIOR emerged. This concept can be approached both from the perspective of the regional interior and from the personal interior and its infinite interaction with the space it occupies in the world. The term “interior,” derived from the Latin *internus*, means “from within.” In the context of this exhibition, it refers both to internal space—a reflection of the individual personality—and to geographic and cultural space.

Exploring this relationship through art presents a rich and multifaceted investigation, connecting the artist’s interior with the external space in its various dimensions. Artists such as Rachel Whiteread— who, through her architectural forms, transforms physical space into a reflection of the emptiness, absence, and memory that inhabit its interior, or Giorgio de Chirico, with his metaphysical landscapes—which suggest a philosophical introspection of space and time — are examples that guide us through these intersections. The choice of the opening date and the number of artists was not arbitrary. The number 8, when laid down, forms the symbol of infinity, a concept that permeates the entire exhibition. The infinite here represents the continuous and limitless nature of the exploration of the interior, be it the personal interior - with its layers of emotions and experiences - or the geographic space, which extends and transforms without an end point. The Infinite Interior exhibition will display works by 8 national and international artists, such as Daniela Reis (Portugal), Elsa Rebelo (Portugal), Jarek Mankiewicz (Poland), Marco Estrella (Brazil), Nikos Iosif (Greece), Patricia Borges (Brazil), Pedro Besugo (Portugal), Sandra Birman (Brazil). The interaction between the internal dimension of each artist present in the exhibition, and the interior of a specific space, transports us to an infinity of possibilities, where the convergence of personal visions into a collective vision, broadens our understanding of an artistic reality in constant expansion. In this encounter between the subjective and the territorial, art invites us to explore unknown environments, both within ourselves and in the world around us. Infinitely.



RULES? NO.

Curator Sandra Birman

The exhibition 'Rules? No' by RUNA reveals an intense and liberating journey through the essence of painting, challenging the conventions and traditional expectations of the contemporary art world. RUNA, a Portuguese artist whose work is marked by versatility, invites us to explore a universe where creativity flows without barriers.

Through large-scale paintings, we encounter an interactive dialogue between the concrete and the imaginary, where the suggestion of figures coexists with abstract compositions. RUNA values the texture and the brushstrokes, exploring the possibilities of form and colour in each work. This diversity reflects a free and non-linear approach, with the paintings reflecting a unique manifestation of her keen eye for personal interpretation, where each brushstroke is a visual declaration of artistic independence. The artist rejects the imposition of a single purpose or rigid artistic statement, preferring an approach that celebrates diversity and experimentation. This stance challenges the notion that an artist must follow a predefined path, making room for spontaneous expression. The exhibition is thus a visual manifesto against the limitations imposed by the art society, celebrating the art of creating without contextualized constraints.

Just as writer Jorge Luis Borges challenged traditional narrative conventions and explored the limits of imagination – with his quest for the deconstruction of boundaries – RUNA also echoes a philosophy of freedom and similar expression.

We invite the public to dive in this immersive experience through the paintings of RUNA, where we are led to question and redefine our concepts of art, creativity, and freedom. There are no rules to follow, only the pure essence of the act of painting. As RUNA states about her work 'The Permanent Things': "There are volatile things around us, that come and go, appear and disappear. But there is what is permanent - which stays in our lives forever."

What matters is to perceive the intrinsic visual dialogue of the artist with her own perceptions, where the continuity of artistic practice transcends its permanence. May this exhibition inspire each visitor to find their own voice and experience RUNA's art in its purest and most authentic form.



LILITH GUARDIAN OF DREAMS

Curator Sandra Birman

In the LILITH exhibition, Silvia Vale invites us to explore the mythological figure of Lilith through a contemporary and personal lens. Lilith, a figure shrouded in mystery and symbolism, is widely known as the first woman created to be Adam's companion in the Garden of Eden. Unlike Eve, Lilith was molded from the same clay as Adam, thus claiming equality since her origin. This situation, however, generated conflicts, as Lilith refused to submit to Adam's authority. Choosing autonomy and freedom, she abandoned Paradise, leaving patriarchal norms behind. Her story has become a powerful symbol of the fight for autonomy and gender equality. A feminine force that challenges and redefines the relationship between the feminine and the masculine for women today, representing freedom of choice and the courage to face the consequences of their decisions.

Silvia Vale, with her rich artistic trajectory that crosses continents and cultures, brings a unique dialogue in her pieces - with a combination of classic and contemporary techniques - using a variety of materials that include oil, acrylic, textiles and found objects. Inspired by Robert Rauschenberg's concept of "Combine Painting", which merges painting and sculpture in a hybrid form, Silvia incorporates a wide range of selected and integrated elements into her creations. An evocation of memories in times of distant places. The artist, born in Luanda and based in Espinho, transforms her experiences and cultural influences into works that delve into the complexities of the human soul, its concerns, dualities and mysteries. Greek mythology and the iconography of 17th century Portuguese tiles are recurring themes, but it is in introspection and the study of human playful experience that art reaches its peak. Silvia describes her dreams and her perceptions with an introspective perspective, as if she were always looking down on herself, an observer of her own existence. Waking up, for her, is a delicate process of returning to the body, a smooth transition from the world of dreams to reality. The tiny lights in her works are like guides, portals for movement between the dream world and the real one.

At the center of this exhibition, the work "Lilith" is suspended horizontally from the gallery's ceiling - a watchful guardian - silently observing visitors below. This positioning is not just an aesthetic choice, but a physical manifestation of Vale's inner experience, creating a space for reflection and self-observation. The suspended figure of Lilith encapsulates this exploration with a break from traditional conventions, since also in a free interpretation of the book Genesis, Lilith refused to be on the bottom in relationships. This gesture encourages visitors to a new form of contemplation that embraces the artist's own artistic work. When we look up, we symbolize both the search for transcendence and an internal journey of self-knowledge. As if we were in a mystical temple, seeking answers. In LILITH, Silvia Vale offers us a powerful synthesis of mythology, artistic technique and personal experience, creating a dialogue that offers the opportunity to delve into the artist's universe and contemplate the mysteries of her art, under Lilith's silent vigil.

invitation Curators
Luíza Palma \ Sandra Birman

BONS

ESSENCIALMENTE VAZIO,
OU HABITADO APENAS PELO AR

BONS ARES

ARES

OPENING
19 OCTOBER 2023 • 18 PM

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY FROM 3 TO 7 PM
RUA DOS BUENOS AIRES, Nº2, 1º. LISBON
PATENT FROM OCTOBER 19 TO 22, 2023

ANA LIMA-NETTO | ANTÓNIO FARIA | AFONSOUL | ALEXANDRE ROLA | DÁRIDA | DIEGO GARCEZ
GABRIELA ALBUQUERQUE | DANIELA GUERREIRO | JAREK MANKIEWICZ | JUDITH CAVALCANTI
JULIANA MATSUMURA | LUIS BASTOS | MARIANA DUARTE SANTOS | TITA MARTINS | NAT LOYOLA
NOGUEIRA DE BARROS | PAULO CANILHAS | ROBERTA GOLDFARB | RUNA | SANDRA BIRMAN
SÓNIA TÁVORA | VERIDIANA LEITE



BONS ARES

Co-curator Sandra Birman

ESSENTIALLY EMPTY, OR INHABITED ONLY BY AIR

Suddenly, a non-place of identity is born in a raw urban space. Essentially empty, or inhabited only by air. An intentional gesture that nullifies the neutrality of white, allowing the works of a collective of international artists to dialogue in an organic universe. A metamorphosis is generated, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. One lives in a space of passage, where the air insinuates itself as an image of an invisible movement.

Supermodernity produces non-places and the external influences in the exhibition BONS ARES coexist in artistic harmony, in an innovative action on reality. In this passing breath, in this imponderable instant, the unusual lodges itself in the most elementary. From the ephemerality of the moment springs a collective performance, fueled by the lightness of the air.



EVERY BODY IS POLITICAL

Co-Curator Sandra Birman

IMAGINED BODIES

The body, being recognized as a limit that contains what we are allowed to know with the skin barrier - and its solidity - transforms when it is painted, sculpted or seen from the inside through ultrasound images of its insides. The imperfections of the flesh, with all their social implications and taboos, transcend the simple reading of the body as the property of whoever owns it. The reconstruction of human flesh through artistic expression forms a new perception of the body and its resilience, as well as its fragility.

According to English artist Jenny Saville (1970), “human perception of one's own body is so acute that the slightest suggestion of a body can trigger recognition.” In their representations of the human form, artists can transcend the limits of classical figuration and modern abstraction. The paint applied in fluid or heavy layers becomes as visceral as the flesh itself, each painted mark maintains its own flexible life. The distinctions between living, breathing bodies and their painted representations begin to be blurred. The reinvigoration of contemporary figurative painting challenges the boundaries of the genre and raises questions about society's perception of the body and its potential. A deep awareness, both intellectual and sensorial, of how the body has been represented over time and across cultures - from ancient and Hindu sculpture, to Renaissance drawing and painting, to the work of modern artists such as Henri Matisse, Willem de Kooning and Pablo Picasso - allows us to understand that the individual body belongs to a collective conception of its own representation. If we consider that isolation is a condition of the solitary body that reaffirms its own identity in space, we point to motherhood and the countless appearances of the mother and child theme in art - and not only in the figurative art of museums, but in other symbolic systems of human communication: photographs, films, poetry, literature, theater - as a counterpoint to this state, because the body literally reproduced itself in another body. From the votive statues of the primordial era - which had a magical and mystical relationship with birth, growth and death - to the idealized forms of Renaissance Madonnas, pregnant with religious sentiment, the representation of the body can offer a feminine perspective of a body that multiplies.

In the same way, the body that ages and gradually stops having movement as support, becomes isolated in a body that once participated in a collective, withdraws into its final individuality. Lucien Freud (1922 - 2011) painted his elderly and sick mother in a way in which old age is blunt and beautiful in the ultimate rawness of farewell. The body in its erotic representation leads us to think of the sculpture "Faun Barberini", which was sculpted by an unknown Hellenistic artist from the School of Pergamum at the end of the 3rd century BC. After being restored, the statue acquired a reputation for erotic art. Nudity in Greek art is nothing new, but the sexuality of this work caused it to be viewed with greater interest in the 20th century.

For the French artist Yves Klein (1928 - 1962), the body was immaterial and pure color. In his famous Anthropometries of the Blue Epoch exhibition in Paris, three nude models were covered in blue paint and printed images of their bodies onto a blank canvas. The models had become, according to him, "living brushes". Brazilian artist Celeida Tostes (1929 - 1961) created original plastic works with clay, mixing them with different materials, such as trash. She related to clay, raising questions about women and the feminine universe, addressing themes such as fertility, sexuality, motherhood, fragility and resistance, birth and death. The organicity of her work establishes relationships with the earth and the emergence of life. In the performance work Rite of Passage - in which the artist involves herself with the clay, as if she were in a ceramic vessel, similar to an egg, a uterus - she integrates her body with her work material and subsequently slides in and out, as if, symbolically, was being born.

From the perspective of psychoanalysis, the body is a fundamental element in the construction of subjectivity, as it is through it that the subject establishes a relationship with the world and with others. Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) believed that the body responded to repression by generating muscular tension, which, over time, translated into chronic pain and illness. He said it was an "armor" or a "breastplate" that shaped an individual's physique and character and determined how that person viewed his or her existence. For the Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), there is a body-psyche entanglement through the understanding that the processes considered vital - the physiological ones - and the psychic ones are part of the same configuration in their operational complexities. Finally, psychoanalysis can also contribute to a reflection on the relationship between the body and the earth, since this relationship can be seen as a metaphor for the subject's relationship with nature and its roots.

In the historical search for body perfection, the sociocultural context changes, but the ideal body continues to be pursued. The media encourages a relationship with a beautiful body, which can be purchased through consumer artifacts. The body ceases to be an organic entity to be manipulated by the cultural environment of the society in which it is inserted in a certain period of time. Physical stereotypes are continually shaped by the beauty industry; a generic standard of aesthetic-body appearance dictates how we should behave physically in order to adapt to this perfect image. How can we look at the individual body - with its hereditary and primordial histories - in counterpoint with the imaginary of what this collective body of a given culture is? If art allows us to represent the particular experiences of body relations as property and individual identity, could it not also produce a collective experience of recognition of the body as a matter free from molding generalizations? "If my body is your body to the extent that you recognize yourself in me", art is capable of creating parameters of escape from this common place of equal collective bodies, towards a unique and unparalleled experience of the human being with his or her own body and the other's body.

*What you have inherited from your fathers
Earn over again for yourselves or it will not be yours — Goethe, Faust, 1808*