

# Later Is Now

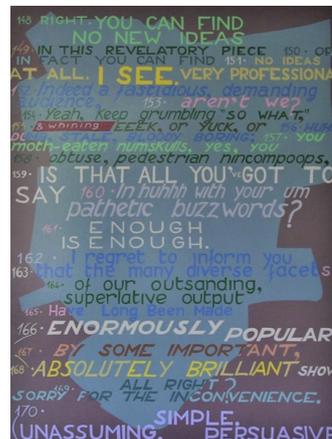
Curated by Hugo Canoilas

Sónia Almeida  
Eduardo Batarada  
Kris Lemsalu  
Musa Paradisiaca  
Jannis Varelas

3rd October – 18th November

## WORKPLACE

61 Conduit Street, Mayfair  
London, W1S 2GB  
Thursday - Saturday, 10 – 6pm



**Later Is Now** brings together a heterogeneous group of artists that undermine, subvert or challenge the anthropocentric implications of language. The title, borrowed from Bernard Aspe's text<sup>1</sup> which itself is a quote from Cormack McCarthy's *The Road*, hovers like a dark cloud over the exhibition. In *The Road*, a post-apocalyptic story where life is reduced to extremes, there is no time for superfluous activities. In his essay, Aspe uses *The Road* as antithesis to illustrate our 'liquid' society which is impeded by our anxieties that result from our negative projections into the future, stopping us from living fully in the present. Without being answerable to a text, or to questions of art and life, the work of Sónia Almeida, Eduardo Batarada, Kris Lemsalu, *Musa paradisiaca* and Jannis Varelas, are manifestations that help to deal with some of the aspects of Aspe's text, through the possibilities of art to codify and inscribe complex ideas into a concrete reality, compounded by context, interpretation, and associative interrelations between things. The exhibition combines a series of proto-forms of language, close to pre-verbal communication or aphasia, as a way to escape the constraints of language that in their opacity, create a space for individuation outside the oppressive nature of the rational.

**Jannis Varelas'** seemingly abstract paintings use childlike, pre-verbal, elements alongside violent or playful gestures that fill zones of the canvas. Without hierarchy, geometric volumes, and primitive and vernacular figurations come together with stereotypical symbols from the pre *emoji* period of language. These elements function as lures that immerse the viewer in the pictorial scene, but also contaminate the potential meaning of the juxtaposed elements. Varelas' paintings function as walls where everything is on the same surface, with the same value. The paintings become enclosures for difference, resulting from the receptivity of the artist to a breadth of input: from classical philosophy to contemporary culture, from the academic to the vernacular.

**Eduardo Batarada's** complex oeuvre oscillates between figuration and abstraction, erudition and superficiality. Its subversive humour, and veiled cultural and social critique can be understood in the context of Portugal and the cultural climate created by the authoritarian *Estado Novo* dictatorship (1932 - 1974). The two canvases in the exhibition were made after his *Misquoteros* exhibition<sup>3</sup> at EDP foundation in Portugal. The texts were selected and taken out of context by traditional processes of collage and chance. Found mainly on the internet, Batarada uses lame jokes, popular psychology, dictionaries, sociology, and other sources of the banal. Reworked over the year on a computer, the quotes are decontextualised, reorganised and left open to free association before being painted over an abstracted ground informed by previous works by the artist. Deliberately refusing "to meddle with social and global problems [the works] self-consciously dissociate themselves from the problems of life in death (in other words from the broad consensus), about which everyone, no doubt, expects artists to pontificate."<sup>4</sup> The act of painting text releases the artist from the traditional dichotomy of illusion and abstraction and the heavy history of painting, thus liberating his practice from cliché<sup>5</sup>.

**Sónia Almeida's** most recent works reveal the body in the abstract surface of her paintings. The structures present in the composition create a space that conveys the idea of space created by Barnett Newman's "zips", wherein the paintings convey a representation of something impossible to re-present: a *via negativa* of the sublime that anchors the work historically. The delicate, abstracted elements that float above these spaces function as a presence of the future bringing the work back to the present punctuated with poised symbols that are drawn from progressive educational sciences such as Raven's Progressive Matrices. Almeida's paintings delve into forms of precognitive apprehension that are triggered by new technologies and are shaping our subjectivity. Following similar precognitive qualities of literacy Almeida's painting offers resistance through the imprint of her body into the canvas, something interior that is organised outside as object.

When considering **Kris Lemsalu's** body of work one has the strange feeling of a figure in the future that lives in the past. Lemsalu's figures and objects come from a post-apocalyptic world of *The Road*. Her work has the archetypal presence of the half man, half animal that fights with bone of animal in sci-fi movies or creates chaos in ancient myths. Lemsalu firmly rejects the rational, with works formed by personal narratives that resist the external imposition of contemporary life on our subjectivity. Something that can be evinced through the use of animal motives, found objects, mythological creatures, and fake fur. The porcelain works exhibited in this exhibition, are half animal, half vegetable. Evoking the old gilded motifs in baroque churches that would enable people to project their hopes and fears. These shapeless and grotesque forms offer us a place to have an experience close to the sublime.

**Musa paradisiaca** is an artist duo that started their practice through a series of dialogues with other individuals, recorded and transformed into monologues. Their first sculptural objects appeared with their first experience of work in São Tomé (the small island off the Atlantic coast of Central Africa). Objects then would be named, however these names would carry other values that cannot be translated, instead expressed by a system of knowledge that is outside of Europe. *Musa paradisiaca's* "How to catch a fugitive" starts from a collaboration with Tomé Coelho, an artist from São Tomé who "translates" specific words given to him by the artist duo into carved objects. The presentation of this series of objects implies their conception. The objects are reactivated by words that function as a *rite de passage* for the viewer. *Musa paradisiaca's* work dissolves the invisible relation between the word and the object, the magic and the artistic.

Hugo Canoilas, 2017

1- "Later is Now" is the name of Bernard Aspe's text published in *Imprópria* issue number 2 in the second half of 2012. *Imprópria* is a political and critical thinking magazine edited by UNIPOP in Portugal.

2 -This whole goes back to Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of the true intellectual, where knowledge comes from the whole (the world) and should be given back to that whole (the people).

3 -This exhibition happened in 2016 at MAAT Museum (Lisbon, PT) as a result of the award of the Grande Prémio EDP to lifetime achievement as an artist. The prize is given every three years to a highly significant figure in the Arts in Portugal.

4 - Excerpts are taken from Batarada's text in his catalogue of the above-mentioned exhibition (page 113).

5 - Paraphrasing Gilles Deleuze in "Bacon: Logics of sensation" The cliché is formed by all the artistic matter present in the head of the painter before he starts a painting. I would add the social and the political events in Batarada's convention of the cliché. The first thing the artist has to do is to erase them so he can start painting free from the cliché.