



Vítor Pomar

Vítor Pomar has been a prominent figure in the Portuguese art context since the 1970's. His conceptual approach bears influence of Buddhism, specifically Buddhist meditation and the spiritual at large. Although rooted in the medium of painting, the work of Vítor Pomar brings together a multitude of artistic approaches, crossing painting with the experience of drawing, photography and film. The conceptual unity of his work is thus continuously put in question by the diversity of media, language and the works' materiality, which are in permanent flux.

The work of Vítor Pomar emerges from reuniting seemingly dispersed experience inscribe in daily life, which through a diary-like method, based on fragmentation, observation and creation of images, capture the artist's interest in the conceptualisation of ideas connected with the subject of absolute existence. By the immediacy of his pictorial gesture, the Surrealism of his drawings, or the filter of reality constituted by his photographs, Pomar questions our relation, understanding and experience of time, place and being.

The work of Vítor Pomar (1949) has been exhibited at the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, Chiado 8 Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Oporto, Portugal, Culturgest, Lisbon or the Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon among other.

Untitled [02 NY], 1982

acrylic on canvas

227 × 125 cm





Untitled, 1980
acrylic on canvas
185 × 108 cm (framed)



Untitled, 1981
acrylic on canvas
190 × 190 cm



Studio view, 1981



Le tour du monde, 1981
acrylic on canvas
291 × 194 cm



Untitled, 1981
acrylic on canvas
295 × 194 cm



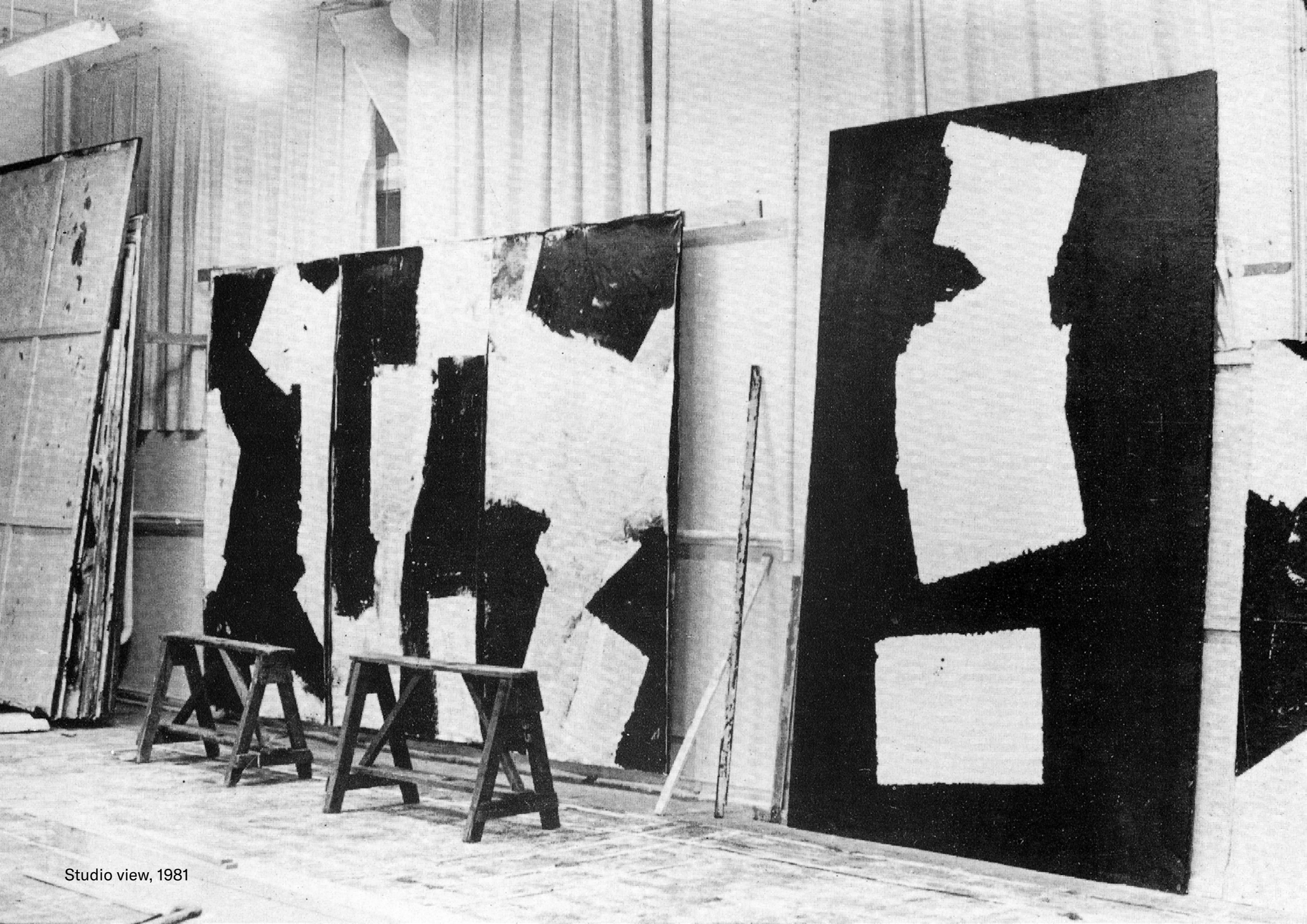
A passagem do tempo I, 1981-2003

virtual sculpture



Deus reconhecerá os seus, 1981-2003

virtual sculpture



Studio view, 1981

Vítor Pomar, Uma pátria assim...
Catalogue Fundação EDP, Lisbon, 2012
João Pinharanda



A row of raised flags, torn by the wind and faded by the sun and the rain, signal and call us to Vítor Pomar's space. We find his studio-house at the top of a dry piece of land. In the surrounding, slightly undulating terrain the land is an enormous canvas loose on the ground – with unrelated and uncertain elements: houses with no history or intimacy, roads built without care or design, old cars and old furniture, trails of domestic rubbish and rubble, walls without purpose which form the edges of sporadic cultivation – a landscape created from waste, where the real life of the countryside is not idyllic or poetic, but pulsates with life.

Today, these pavilions are one large hangar: a simple, unsheltered and austere collection of buildings which were once part of a cattle farm. Most of the space is used for Pomar's painting work. Everything that humanises the place has been built by the artist or with his guidance: plumbing and cupboards, doors and curtains which separate the different spaces, shelves, and ingenious bars for hanging and exhibiting paintings.

Carpets, tables, chairs, cushions, mattresses and Indian idols furnish these communicating spaces; and time settles slowly on everything as if it were just dust. The room which is most cherished is also the smallest: it is in this room that the artist does his daily meditation exercises. Lying on the wide cement floor of the atelier, may be an enormous canvas or just the random marks of the edges of the many others which were painted there before. A new universe emerges on this possible canvas (still in progress or already considered to be finished), and order is

Árvore, 1981

acrylic on canvas
292 × 191 cm

brought to the random and the dispersal of elements: each painting emerges charged with material, and the paint is applied with vigorous gestures, with various colours painted over one another – or exactly the opposite happens, a painting emerges as a lack of all this: an emptying of elements which allows the painting to be created from the actual presence of the raw canvas itself. In both situations Pomar seeks an sensory overload which can lead him or us from the desire to be free of desire to the actual overcoming of this (still/merely) sensitive stage. In the emptiness of the backgrounds or in its excess, we almost always notice the writing of a short phrase or of a single word: enigmas which introduce us to a universe of Eastern wisdom called Zen. We can read them (in English and more rarely in Portuguese) and turn them into a mantra which we can repeat in individual exercises.

As we look over the canvas which may be stretched out on the cement, at those which have been nailed temporarily along the wall and those hanging from the bars like large screen backdrops on a stage, we discover the vast body of work which made it possible for him to select the works presented now in the Exhibition Hall of the Museu da Electricidade– Central Tejo, in Lisbon. On the walls, just nailed up, or in crates, in the storage area are many more paintings which slide across one and which confirm the converging plurality of the voices with which the artist expresses himself on these unique canvases. Either large or very large, his paintings cover a recent period of Vitor Pomar's work as a painter and come from a continuity of pictorial language (abstract and gestural), which defined him publically during the years after his return from exile in Europe, in the mid 80's. They also show a path which is limited neither to his obvious philosophical references nor to his more recognisable painting methods. This freeing from references takes place through a crossing and fusion of universes: on the



Untitled [17 NY], 1982

acrylic on canvas

176 × 146 cm



Untitled [12 NY], 1982

acrylic on canvas

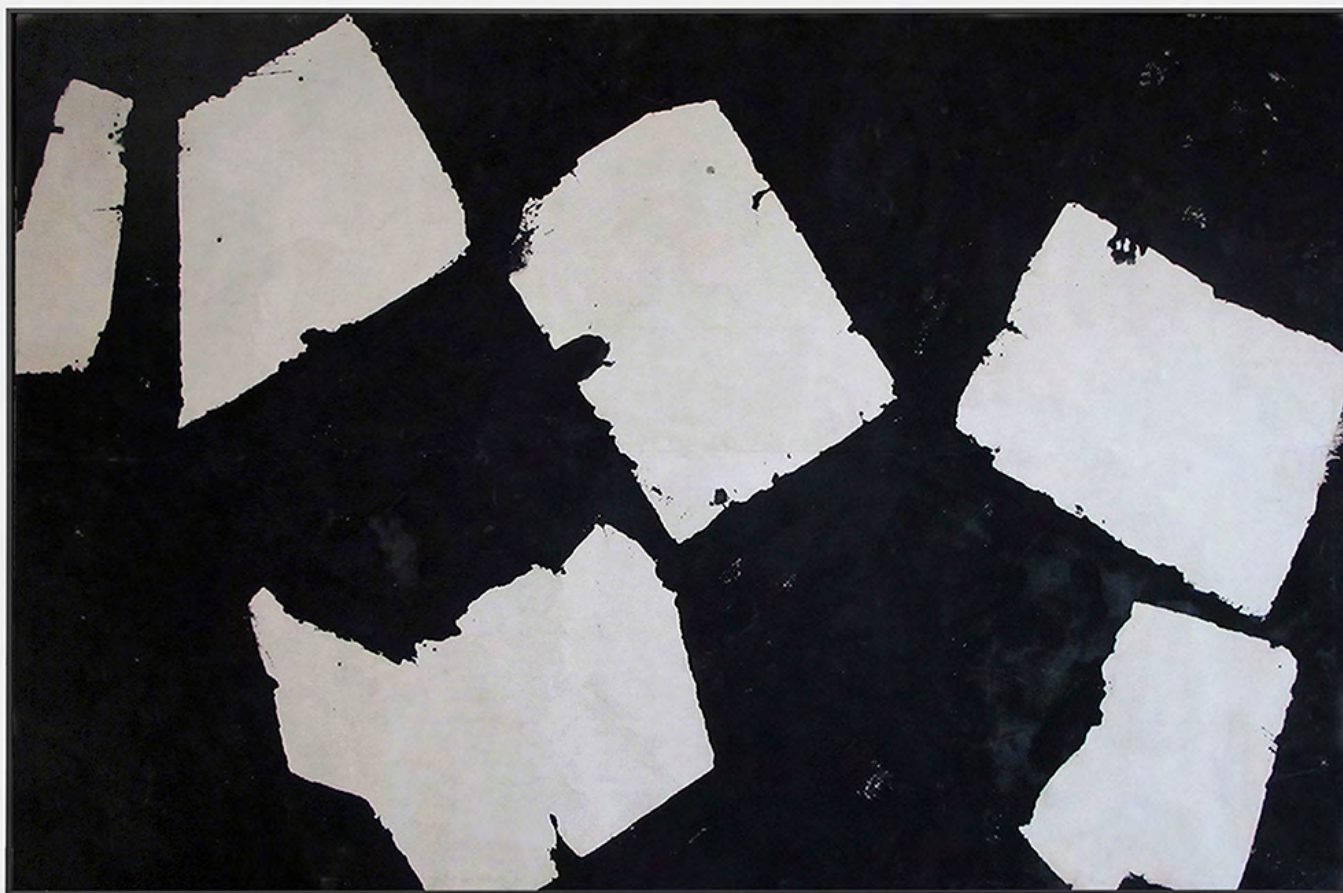
223 × 177 cm



Untitled [20 NY], 1982

acrylic on canvas

176 × 147 cm



Le passage du temps I, 1981

acrylic on canvas

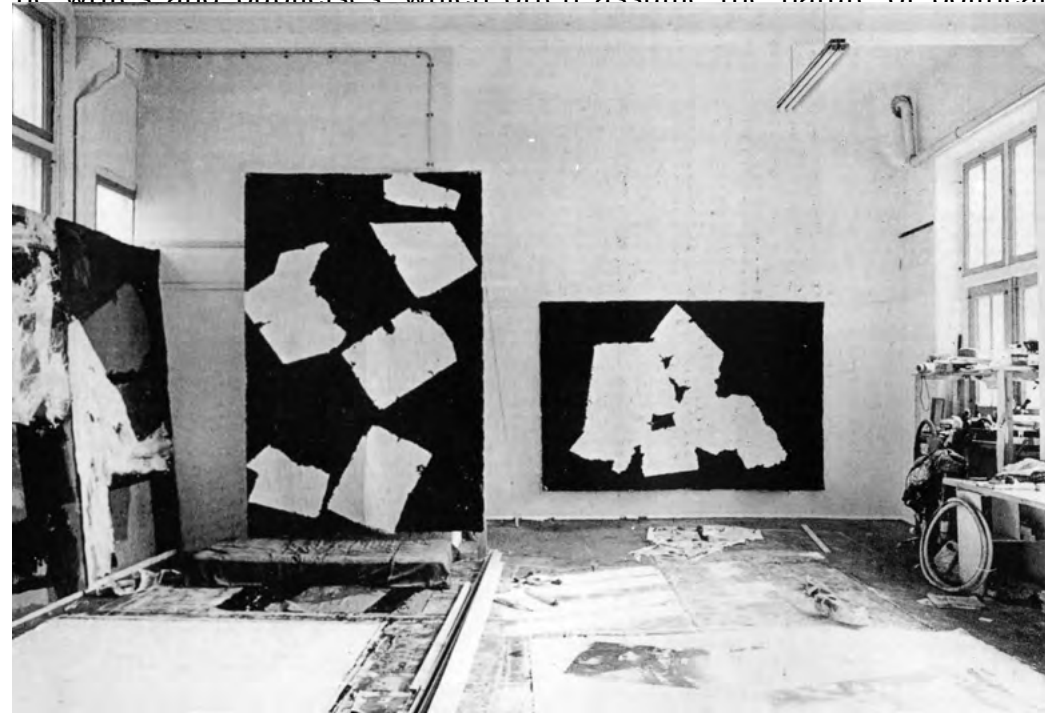
194 × 296 cm

one hand, his work as a painter is increasingly distant from what may have formally influenced him in Western art and, on the other hand, he uses these recognisable forms to communicate with the exterior.

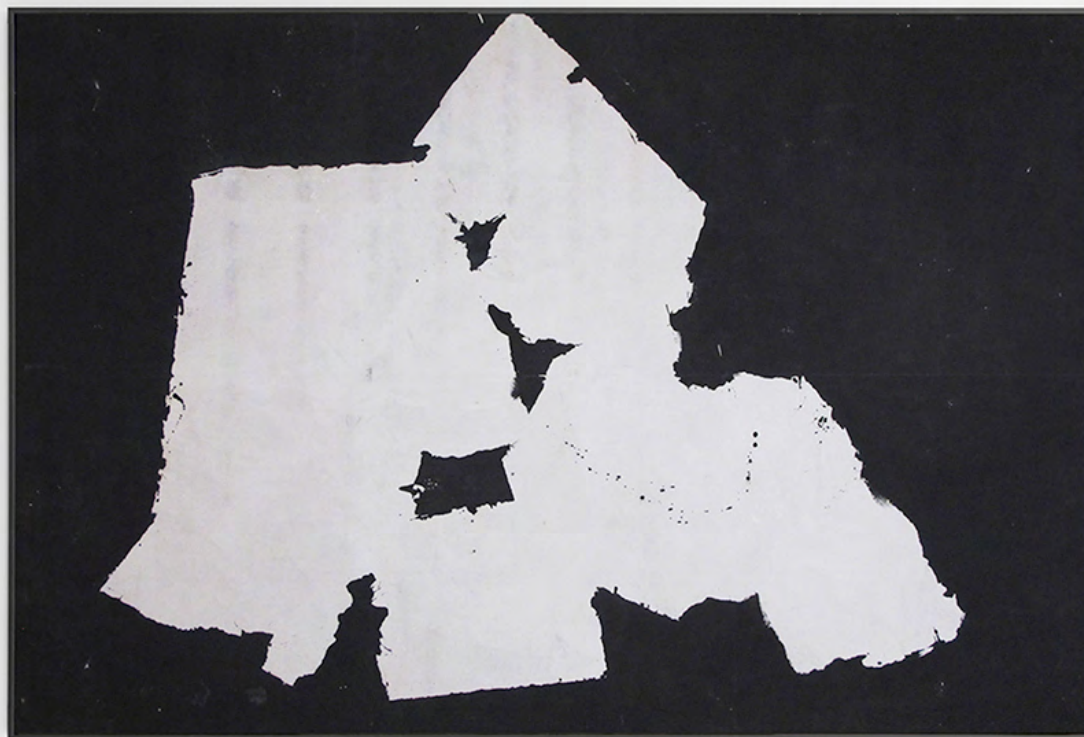
It is clear that expressionist abstraction and American gestualism are still formally present in the work of Vítor Pomar; but it is developed with a different dedication of body and mind. It is certain that from a certain moment or even within the specific nature and energy of the American abstract movements, on the West and East coasts of the United States there was an obvious liking for and significant integration of formal and performative (the writing calligraphy) and poetic and ideological (Zen Buddhism) elements of the Eastern philosophies and arts. Artists have rarely embodied this contact and influence in their actions and options in life and in the *raison d'être* of their work, but Vítor Pomar is one artist who has developed a close relationship with this influence. He does keep his work within sight of Western models: he works with the knowledge of a Eurocentric history of art, its techniques, formats and avant-garde models of rupture. He knows that it is only from these points of reference that he can be appraised by the public and generalist or specialised critics who are ignorant of the specific density of the vast body of Buddhist thinking. We can say that, as well as the core of subjectivity which prevents the total sharing of any work of art (and at the same time, makes it open to a multiple individual interpretations), for Vítor Pomar's work there is an additional area of misunderstanding – but also a growing area of freedom.

The artist uses numerous mediums: drawing and painting,

video, photography and photographic montage are the varied means he uses for a discourse which, just as it seeks a dedication of mind and body, also increasingly seeks a fusion of the verbal and the visual (or the support of the visual in the verbal). His objective is to develop this up to an ideal level at which degrees and levels of interpretation and intervention are neutralised. These levels are simultaneously individual (the search for inner perfection) and public (intended as civic and political warnings): Pomar seeks meanings for the individual and the collective. The inscription of key words, mantras or programmatic phrases on the canvases, and the numerous texts of reflection and intervention which he writes and publicises which often assume the nature of political



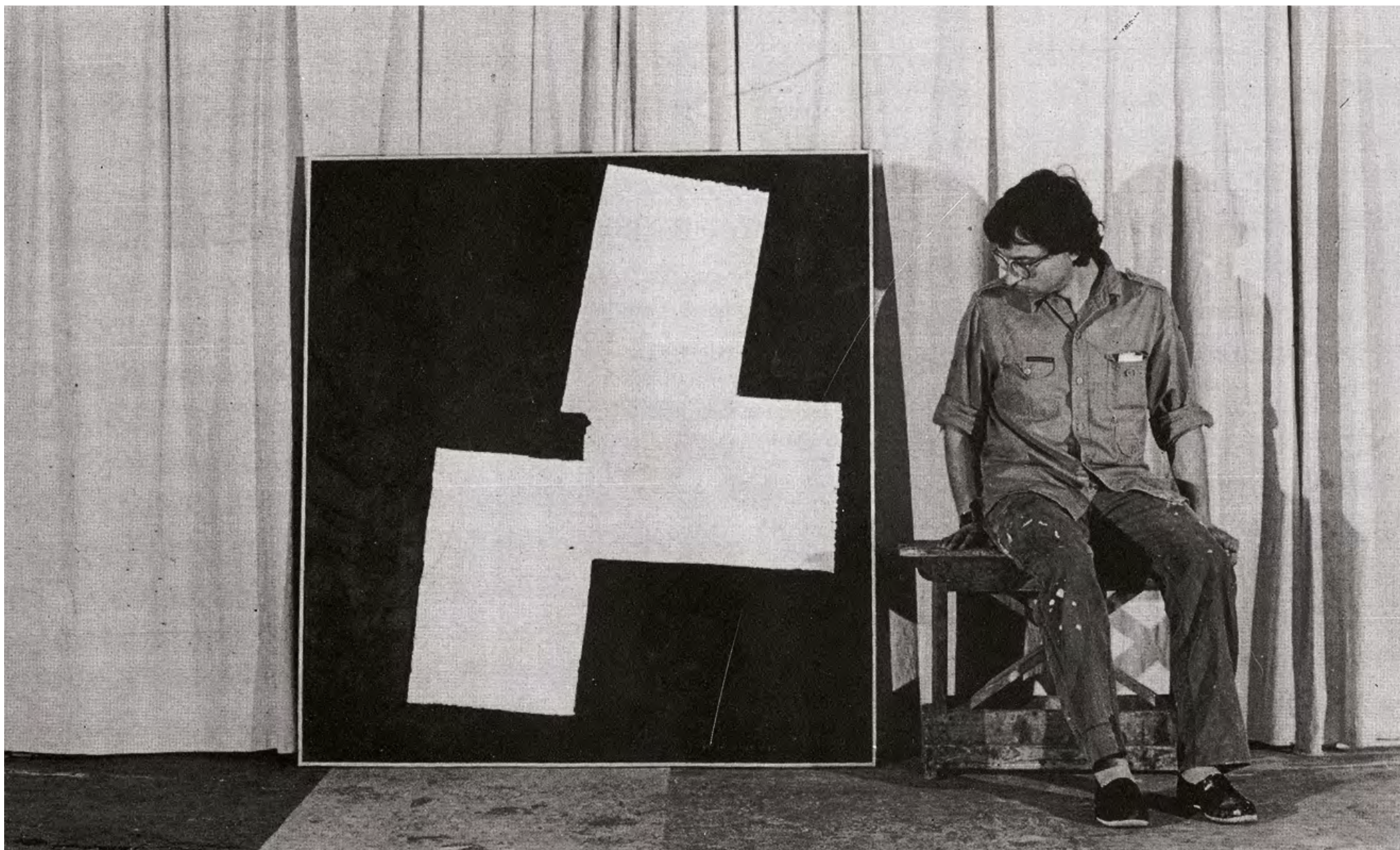
Studio view, 1981



Le passage du temps II, 1981

acrylic on canvas

194 × 291 cm



Studio view, 1981



Untitled, 1982
acrylic on canvas
176 × 147,5 cm



A alma também é nómada, 2003
painted wood | 276 × 254 cm
Installation view at Museu de Arte Contemporânea
de Serralves, Porto, Portugal, 2003



A alma também é nómada, 2003

painted wood | 276 × 254 cm

Installation view at Museu de Arte Contemporânea de
Serralves, Porto, Portugal, 2003



Untitled, 1980

acrylic on canvas
154 × 105 cm



Retrato (FQRA), 1978

inkjet print

52 × 77 cm (framed)



Tudo bom, 1977
color ptint
46 x 70 cm (each)

Reconnaissance (part 6)

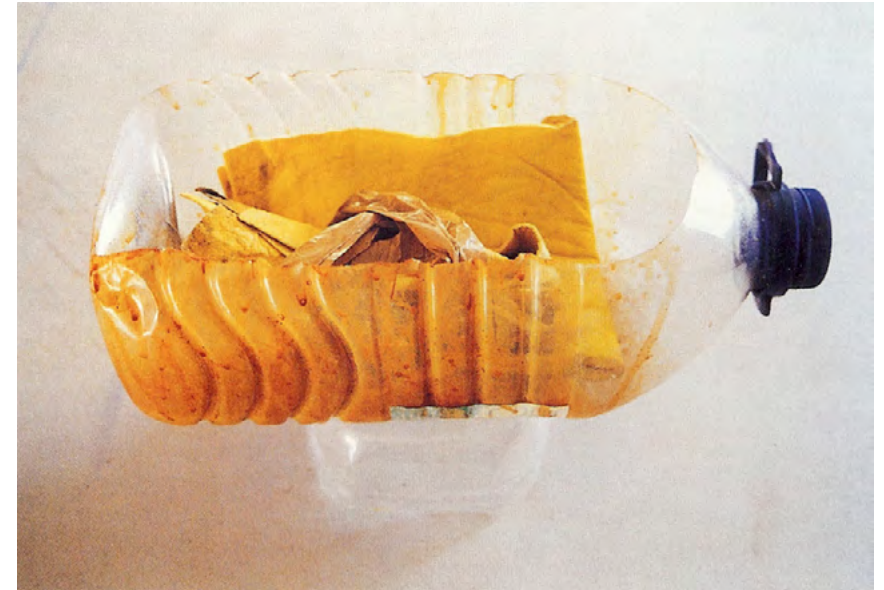
Vitor Pomar: *My own battlefield*, Museu Serralves, 2003

Delfim Sardo

Pomar stopped producing between 1984 and 1999, for fifteen years during which his curiosity in relation to the universe of art never diminished, a period during which his previous work was sometimes shown and curiously acquired by several different public collections (FLAD, Caixa Geral de Depósitos, etc.) because it was never at any time suggested he had stopped being an artist. As he himself says, the prospect of the future would deal with shrinking these fifteen years, with their errors of parallax. Perhaps this is true, but it does not prevent one asking about the nature of such a process of suspension, which allowed him to gain distance relative to the work of the seventies – in fact until 1984 – being able to view the later work as a retrospective.

Indeed, his last work from 1983 contained a precision that is symptomatic of exhaustion. 1981 had been the year of all experiments, with an astounding intensity of work. Between 1979 and 1981 his paintings acquired their scale, as we have seen. They also acquire the legitimacy of sucking in everything that arises as an accident in the studio – the plastic bags, the newspapers that stick to the canvas (and which had only been used to protect them during the painting on the ground). They acquire legitimacy.

In 1984, the painting had arrived at a moment of stoppage, because it was just so. There are some rare attempts with colour, taking up again experiments from the early sixties, and no more. When painting returns, 15 years on, it starts at the hypothetical point at which it had been suspended, like an interrupted conversation now taken up again. During these five years in which his activity was returned to, not only did the painting return, but also the capacity to find an interrelation among a whole creative activity (with the return of photography, now in colour, the



O coche de ouro, 1977

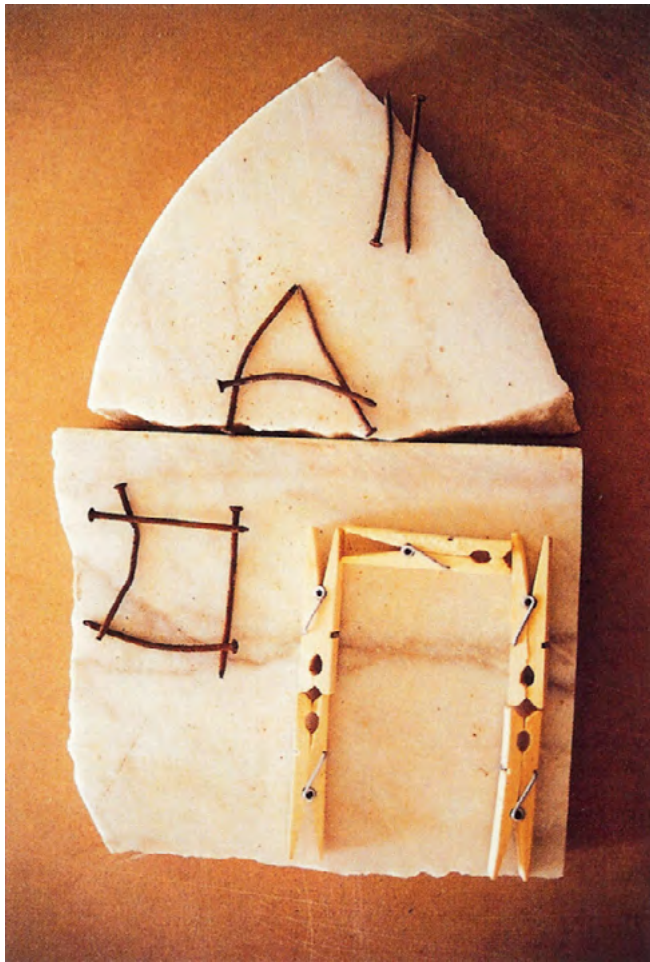
colour print

46 x 70 cm

Pajem, 1977

colour print

46 x 70 cm



Untitled (from the “Cinderella” series), 1977
colour print
70 × 46 cm (each)



Reconnaissance (part 2)

Vitor Pomar: *My own battlefield*, Museu Serralves, 2003 Delfim Sardo

Pomar began his artistic work very young, around six teen years old - along with Fernando Calhau - through drawing and engraving. During the seventies, after he emigrated to Holland, his activity is pulverised, both in person al terms and in artistic terms, and he produces sets of photographs, films, and engravings. From 1977 on he begins to use painting as a regular form until 1985, with exclusive use of black and white being very obvious in his painting until 1983, with a brief incursion into colour at the beginning of the following year.

There follows a period of creative pause, a suspension that coincides with Pomar's finding a spiritual dimension leading him to set aside his artistic activity in favour of another need. In 1999, after a long period of preparation (the construction of a place of work, with all the suffering, delays, and procrastinations inherent to a process of taking something up once again), Pomar starts painting again, but this time using colour, as if returning to the point at which he left off his painting fifteen years earlier. Over these last five years his work has been divided between painting, sculpture (for the want of a better term for the completely derisory works that define situations using very poor materials), photography and video, in a proliferation of supports that is as surprising as it is vast.

A fact that should be taken into account when considering this path has to do with the connection to the place of work, to the studio, which for Pomar has always also been a vital space - in the double sense, as a space for living and as a field of survival. All of his work is intimately linked to this primacy of the place of work as a specific (and inti mate, if this is possible)

battlefield, a situation that, to me, does not seem to derive from any choice, but from a need: for Vitor Pomar, one cannot work without a place, without a workshop. One thus understands that all those years of creative pause formed a period in which he had no place of work - because he didn't need one or because, as he didn't have one, he was also unable to produce. Like many Renaissance artists, or painters of Russian icons, Pomar also needed a long period of preparation before returning to artistic work.

Although the tradition of painting includes many methods of preparation for the creative process (fasting, immobilising one's painting hand, shaving one's head, like Gericault before painting "The Raft of the Medusa") invariably centred on a given manipulation of the body, for Vitor Pomar it is a question of defining the workspace, often starting with a sketch. Starting out by finding the terrain, drawing, going through all the bureaucracy of construction, building it, and inhabiting it. This enormous path consists of a preparation that derives from an irredeemably nomadic character that is true of the author but also of the working process, which is always diagonal and derivative in relation to any linearly drawn-out path: neither the painting, which is close to abstract expressionism, is expressionist, nor is the photography, which is close to the register of the documentary, documentary, nor do the films, which start out from a narrative gaze, tell stories.

Anyway, whatever might be the intimate reason presiding over this centring upon the studio, its importance is clear in his path, as well as is the place (geographical, ethnographical, and always affective) where the work is carried out. The paintings are often identified by an I-don't-know-what, perhaps a light, which determinedly links them to a place- these works are from Holland, or these are from New York; or from the Algarve, or Lisbon. What makes them belong to their place is indefinable, but they belong to it.



Se vê a pincelada, não vê (a pintura), 2010

acrylic on canvas

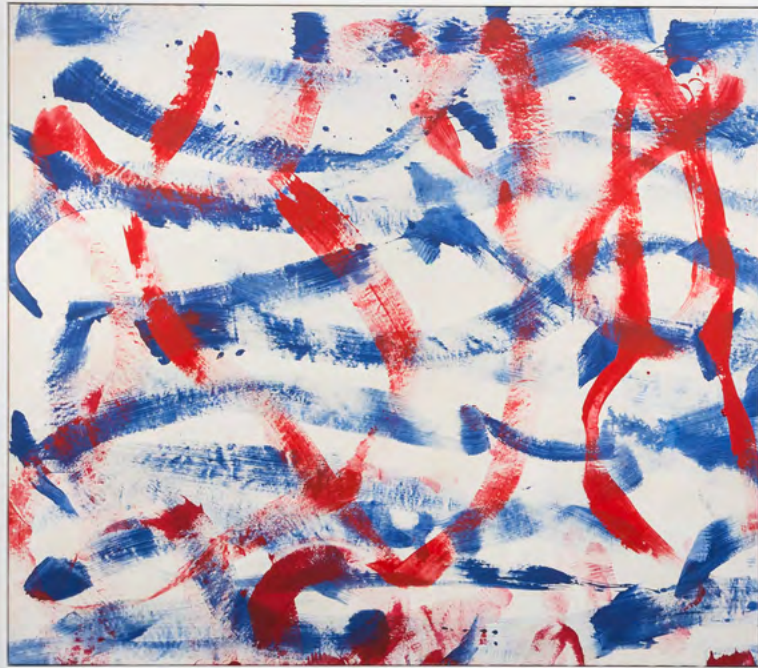
160 × 140 cm



Se vês a pincelada, não vês (a pintura), 2011

acrylic on canvas

235 x 310 cm





Just Now, 2014

acrylic on canvas

161 × 242,5 cm (framed)



Exhibition view *Spontaneous Fruition* at Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2017





CHUAC, 2011
acrylic on canvas
245,5 × 216 cm (framed)



mind free from meditation is the bliss, 2011

acrylic and graphite on canvas

155 × 228 cm (framed)



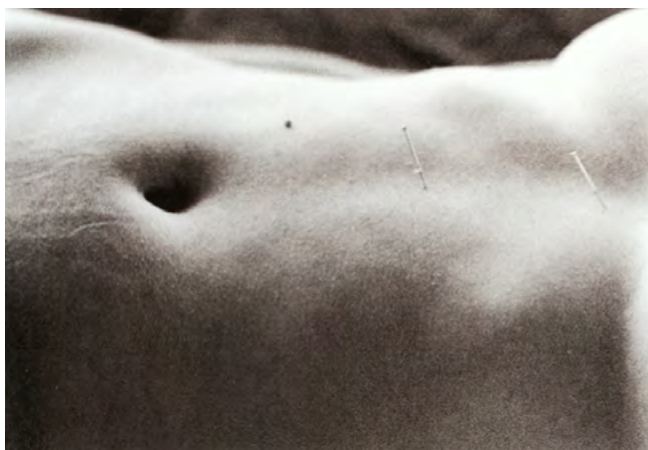
Exhibition view *apparent but nonexistent* at Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2014



Clear statement, 1976

inkjet print

52 x 77 cm (framed)



Vedana [SKT] - The 7th link of interdependent origin, 1976

inkjet print

46 × 70 cm (each)



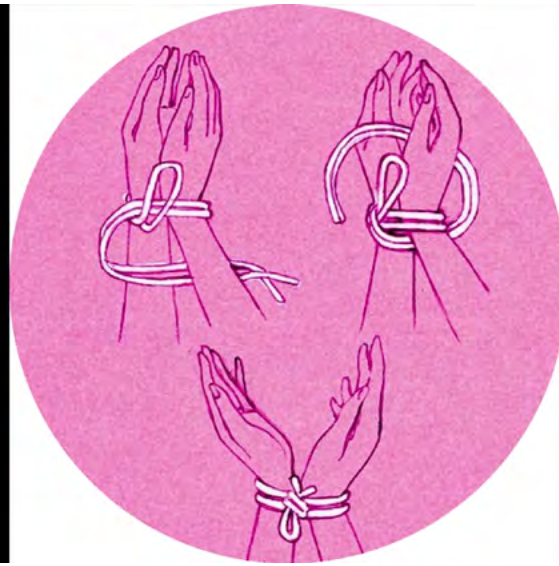
Exhibition view *apparent but nonexistent* at Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2014



Exhibition view *apparent but nonexistent* at Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2014

Sem título, 2010
acrylic on canvas
320 × 285 cm





Slow sex, 2014

slideshow with music by Luís Lopes (108 images)

20'



Slow sex, 2014

slideshow with music by Luís Lopes (108 images)

20'

Interview

***Nothing to do nowhere to go*, Fundação Calouste**

Gulbenkian, April 2011

Hans Ulrich Obrist

Hans Ulrich Obrist [HUO]: So I wanted to ask you to begin at the beginning. I wanted to ask you to tell me about your journey into the art world- You went to art school in Lisbon, and I was wondering if there was anything that influenced you in making this decision. If there was a kind of epiphany that brought you to art.

Vítor Pomar [VP]: It began a little bit earlier than that. When I was sixteen, I started making drawings, or rather grids, in the margins of my notebooks. And then I started using the whole page for grids, for the drawings. And then I began to do that at home, on large scale. Right from the start, it was very abstract; it was just black and white. Then I felt overwhelmed by what I was doing so I decided to go to art school. I was about sixteen. Actually, the background, the well-known background here, is that my father is one of the best-known painters in Portugal. He is still working. Unlike many of my colleagues, whose families were unconnected to the art scene, I wasn't. My mother had also been to art school, so that was kind of natural. The curious thing is that I had a studio for six months before I went to school. It was a friend that lent it to me. Then I really started to do some work, which was interrupted by my art school training, but which I resumed as soon as art school had finished.

HUO: It is interesting to hear about your father, because this certainly is very unusual. Although it wasn't unusual in previous centuries. There were painter dynasties, in which knowledge and skills were transmitted from generation to generation. In our time, this idea that there is a continuum within a family has become quite unusual. So I suppose that your father was obviously your first influence. Can you tell me how your father influenced you?

VP: I should point out that I didn't have much contact with him, as my parents



Inner / Outer, 1970-75

inkjet print

70 × 46 cm (each)



Inner / Outer, 1970-75

inkjet print

70 × 46 cm (each)

divorced when I was six years old. So I move from Lisbon to Porto with my mother and my elder brother. At that time, you could travel from Porto to Lisbon once a year. You would not go every week, as you can today. So from that point I saw my father once or twice a year, so he didn't influence me directly. There is his existence, his image and so on, which was present and increasingly present. When I arrived to Holland no one knew about him. When I left Holland, sixteen years later, it was already known that he existed somehow. That is quite curious. Since the beginning I have, whether knowingly or not, positioned myself in a certain way in relation to his image, and to his kind of work... but for me it's actual. It's something that I've worked on enough. It is more a question of discovering what it had already revealed and not taking decisions or choosing options. So I spent one year in Porto, at art school, because I lived in Porto between the ages of six and eighteen. Then I moved to Lisbon, where I spent two years before I had to leave. I didn't want to participate in the war in Africa, so I left quietly in the early seventies and I spent sixteen years in Holland. My father was spending most of his time in Paris, so that I could visit him regularly. After the Revolution in Portugal, I started coming back for vacations. I didn't consider myself an exile. Later, I took some years... I didn't think about coming back. In a sense, it was a bad idea for me: I never go back to anything. At some point, I came to Portugal, but it wasn't the same country any more, so it was ok. And I felt that need; somehow, I didn't relate much to Holland.

HUO: Your exile... I would still like to ask you about your beginnings and the first museum that you visited as a child.

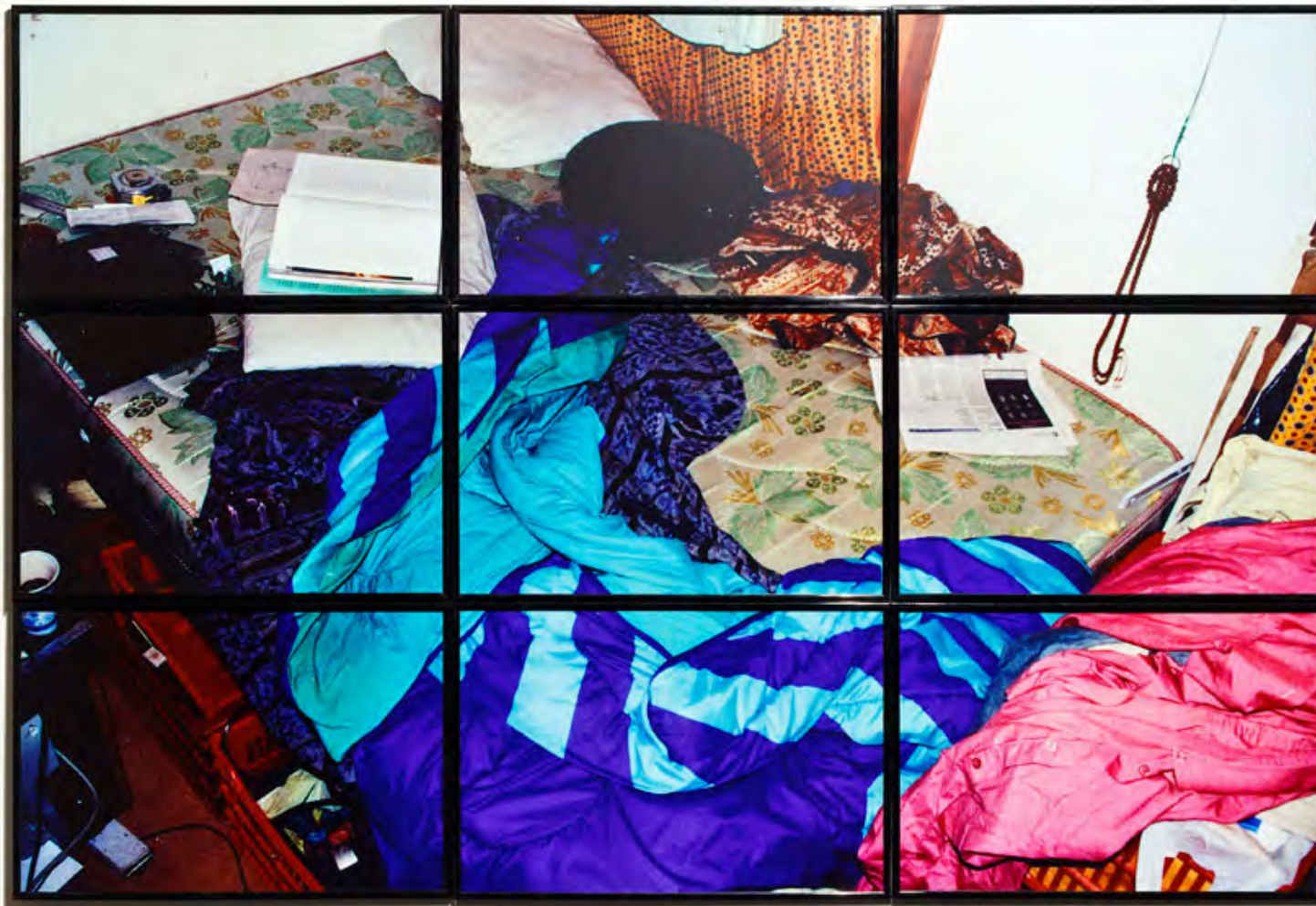
VP: In Portugal at that time there wasn't much to see. I remember I went to Paris in 1967 for the first time. I left Portugal to visit the first large retrospective of Picasso, with art students. That was my first step. Besides that, I remember that I had a good connection with Yves Klein, who was already closely related to Eastern philosophies. That manifested itself strongly later on. After my stay in Holland I felt that I had to do two things: I had to return to Portugal and I had to stop creating, stop painting for some time. I thought a couple of years



Inner / Outer, 1970-75

inkjet print

70 × 46 cm (each)



Permanecer na evidência, 1977

nine colour prints on photographic paper

9 x (46 x 70 cm) | 156 x 231 cm (total dimension)

would suffice, but as a matter of fact it was fourteen years. For the first fourteen years after returning to Portugal I didn't produce anything, any painting or photography or anything like that. But then I met my real first teacher - a Zen master from Japan - and I was absolutely fascinated by him, and practiced with him, but not too intensively. I've done some intensive retreats and I organised his visits to Portugal. After that I had many other meetings but they were never that close; they never involved that kind of contact, of the sort you experience on an intensive retreat to undertake the Zen practice of sesshin.

HUO: You can tell me a little bit more about the time of the dictatorship. I have interviewed several pioneering artist in Portugal, including Manoel de Oliveira and Álvaro Siza, and they talked about the difficult days of the dictatorship.

VO: Yes, the situation during the dictatorship was quite tough. That is why, for instance, when I arrived in Holland, I applied for refugee status, as a cultural refugee.

HUO: I wanted to ask you about the dictatorship and the way that you coped with it before your exile. What are your memories of the 1960s? Were you in touch with any of the avant-grade artists at that time? Was there an underground movement?

VP: Yes, the interesting things were happening underground, somehow. What was interesting during that time, and still today, were the extra curricular activities. Many things were happening outside of the normal routine of the art schools. And then, when I finished art school, I just resumed what I had been doing beforehand. But it is now so far away, so distant. Of course, when I arrived in Amsterdam I had a lot of art around me, the Stedelijk Museum. I could see large retrospectives of important artists. I remember Oldenburg [Barnet Newman] and others. And the Stedelijk, for instance, was functioning as a meeting point. We could go to every museum with a pass as much as we wanted, so we could meet our friends there. There was music and films. Many things were happening there. It was very interesting at that time for me.

HUO: That leads us to the question of Amsterdam. In 1970, you decided to move to Amsterdam.

VP: Yes, I was about to be drafted into the army. I knew that it was not for me, going to war and all that, so I left.

HUO: You once said in an interview that I read that it was important for you to get out of a country that was exhausted and retrograde. So you arrived in a country where you could continue to study and to do the work that you had to do. It was just that culture was part of life in Holland but also that 1970 was a very interesting time there. There was a great deal of post-minimal and conceptual practice happening there - Jan Dibbets, Ger van Elk. Obviously, the Stedelijk Museum was a very experimental place. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about 1970 and Amsterdam.

VP: Yes, let me just mention one curious detail. When I left Portugal, I left an exhibition ready there, with all the posters and invitations printed. I left it ready but I did not see it because I had to go in the meantime. So my first solo exhibition took place forty years ago. It's quite curious for me to recall that now.

HUO: I's curious to know more about this exhibition.

VP: It was mainly etching, because in Lisbon there was a studio for etching. I had followed a course for one year and then I became an assistant to the teacher, João Hogan. He was very interesting person. He had a fantastic sense of humour. The exhibition consisted of etchings that I had worked on there. That is as far as I can go with this exhibition. Then, when I arrived in Amsterdam I could enter the art scene and see what was going on. But the events that were taking place at the time, the hippies that were going to India, were an aspect that I could not connect with. There was the magic bus, all painted, travelling overland for two months all the way to India. There were demonstrations of alternative movements there. That kind of thing was a bit too much for me. I was coming from this situation in Portugal, so I took some time to recover from that.

HUO: What was the first work that you did in Holland?

VP: For six months I did odd jobs and it was terrible for me. Then that period ended and I moved to The Hague, to an academy called Psychopolis, the free academy. There was a very nice director there. He used to greet me by saying things like, "los fascistas no pasaran". It was a very nice, chaotic, anarchic



Beyond Acceptance & Rejection, 2017

acrylic on canvas

197 × 140 cm (framed)

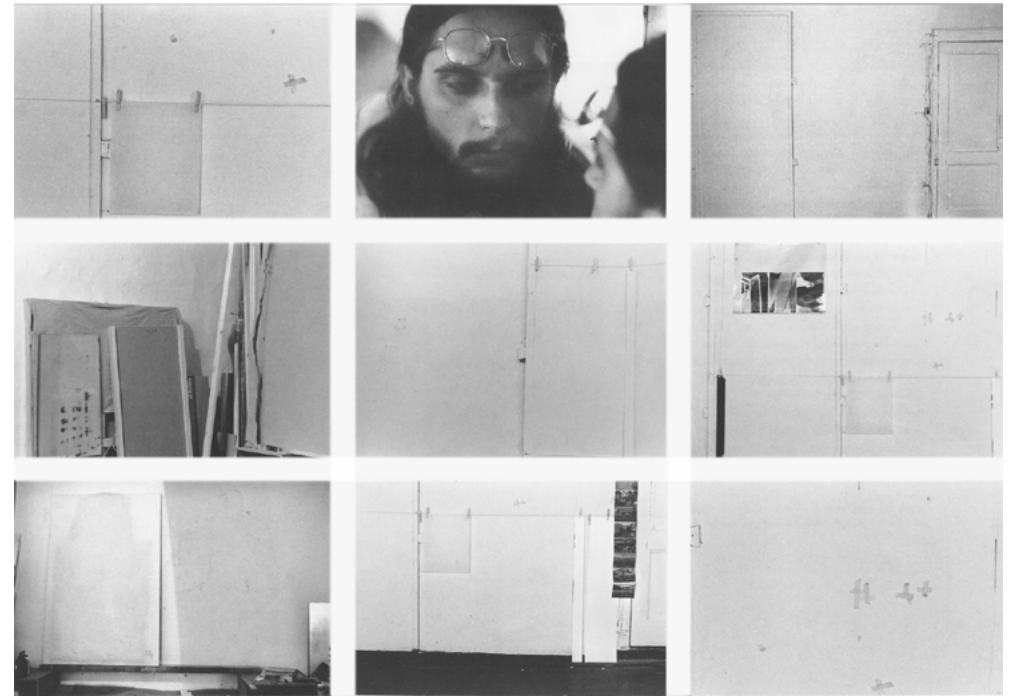
environment in a town that is mostly administrative and bureaucratic. That was how I spent some years there, and eventually I gave some classes in silkscreen. I completed my so-called studies at the Academy of Rotterdam, because at the free academy they did not award diplomas. I could do silkscreen. I had a scholarship to do a silkscreen project, just as I arrive. And then I could use the workshop for film. That was where I started making films, which are the main focus of the exhibition that we are preparing now.

HUO: My next question leads us to your films. When did you have the epiphany that led to your first film? Can you tell us about the genesis of your first film? I looked it up: the first films are still very painterly: somehow, they are closely related to painting, with photography, that is somehow synthesized in your films. I have the feeling that in your films you bring all of this together.

VP: Well, painting is where everything comes together. Everything else, like video, film and photography, is kind of an observation of real life. It is something that you can never grasp. So you have to take a detour in order to realize what is going on. Photography allows you to do that, to look into reality, into "nowness". Film is just the same. I've also recorded some exhibitions and added some texts over it. But I recorded it and created it in a way that was not just like a straightforward documentary. I have always felt a connection with photography and film. Since I was a child, when I used to go to the children's cine-club.

HUO: Can you tell me more about your first film? It is *Crush Proof Box*, from 1974. That seems to be when you started.

VP: I had taken photos in my studio, the first studio that I had in Holland. For six months I took pictures of the room itself. Of the room and me. Once I had filmed these 140 pictures, each which is shown for 8 seconds, that was the start. That was the first episode, called *Crush Proof Box*. Then I added two other episodes, which were real film in 16mm. This became "R" (for random). Finally, the last part was done in Portugal. I always have a lot of difficulty (or maybe embarrassment) explaining what it was all about, because only when it is



complete can you see it. But for instance, the second sequence was of a bull running through the fields in Portugal. I actually has a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to make that part of the movie and to produce the copies. But it was very difficult for me to say, "Ok, I want to film a bull running through the fields." That's kind of silly! Or "I want to film two bodies interacting a little bit". Then I added the sound of a sculpture by Jean Tinguely. It was a very beautiful machine and I recorded the brutal sound and put it together. That was the first film, "R", which was shot in black and white on 16mm film.

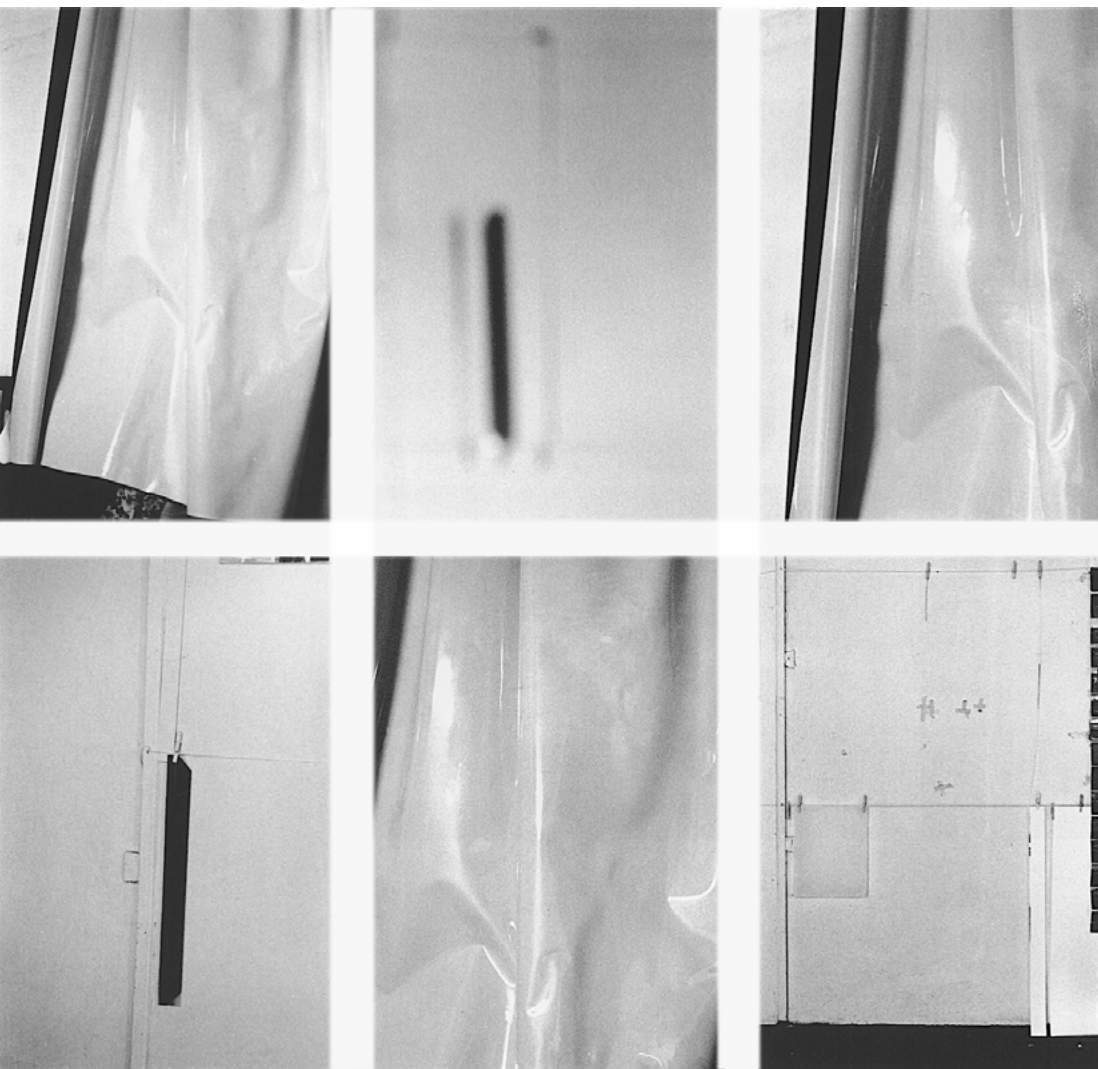
HUO: So in 1974 you started working on your first film, called "R" (A film in 3 episodes).

VP: Yes. *Crush Proof Box* is the first sequence of that film; it is the sequence

CPB (Crush proof box), 1972

inkjet print

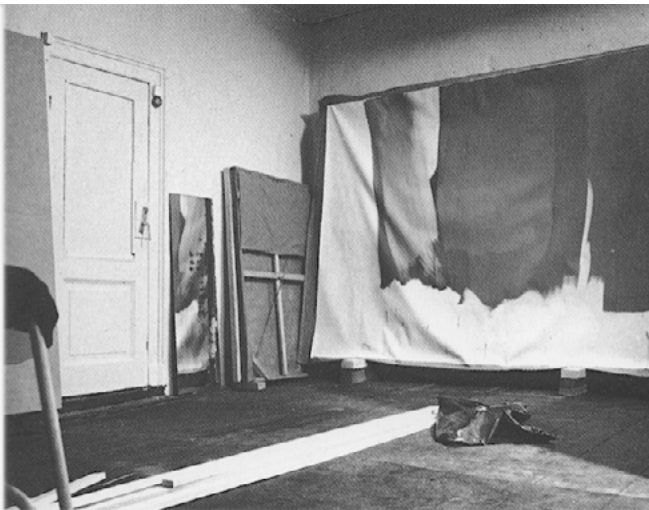
46 × 70 cm (each)



CPB (Crush proof box), 1972

inkjet print

70 × 46 cm (each)

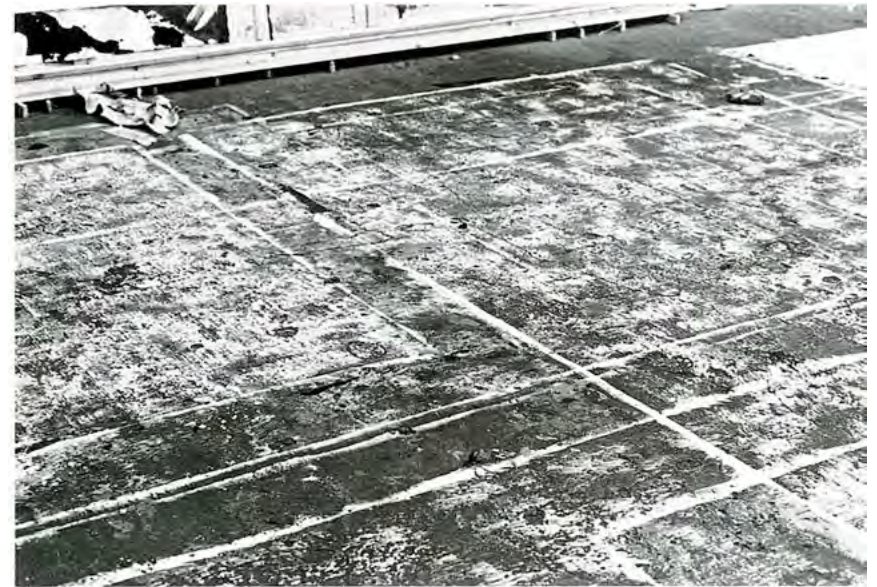


CPB (Crush proof box), 1972
inkjet print
70 × 46 cm (each)

of the pictures taken in the studio. It's about the idea that the studio protects you and allows you to express yourself. But as a matter of fact that's not true, because if you think that you're going to be crushed sooner or later. There is another sequence of this first film, called *Curriculum Vitae*, which mainly showed some clay masks drying in real time. There was music, an original piece of music by Han Bennink, a very great drummer, a musician from Holland. Then there was this work in Portugal in 1975-76, the sequence of a bull running in the field, called *Handle with Care*, because the bull, when he is taken out of his herd and isolated, immediately becomes completely anxious. He is completely fragile. You see this 500 kilo thing completely like a baby, a lost "[child] in a battlefield". That was a very curious experience. That was not the purpose, but the thing was very smooth. He was just running in front of the horses.

HUO: The word battlefield is also the title of another piece. It's called *My Own Battlefield*, from the late 1970s. It's interesting because, once again, as with *Crush Proof Box*, it seems to have to do with mapping. It's like you're almost mapping your studio; there is the floor of the studio...

VP: Yes... *My own Battlefield*. There was this sequence of photos from the studio in Amsterdam, mainly from the floor of the studio, as I paint on the floor. This title was also used in an exhibition many years later. It so happened that, at the time, I was preparing an exhibition in Fundação de Serralves in Porto, and this was started, the Iraq war. It was terrible, at the start of the Bush era, in about 2003. I had considered another title for the exhibition, but I thought "now I have to refer to this situation". But the other title, which I'm reprising now, was "Nothing to do nowhere to go". This title, which I have now reprised, comes from a teaching by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Zen master living in France. In one of his lectures that I listened to recently, he mentioned those precise words: "nothing to do, nowhere to go". That's a frame of mind that is appropriate for meditation. Actually, that was the frame of mind I have always considered to be the optimal normal situation for when I paint. I go to the studio. My last exhibition before this one was called "I only believe in miracles". It relates to this idea that there are these dimensions of reality that we become aware of as soon as we get out of our everyday situation.



My Own Battlefield, early 1970s

inkjet print

46 x 70 cm (each)



Untitled, 1979
acrylic on canvas
190 x 292 cm



My Own Battlefield, early 1970s

inkjet print

46 × 70 cm (each)

HUO: I'm very interested in the mapping of the structure of your studio. Maps produce new realities. Maps are always going beyond spacetime, the present. It's the idea of the drift.

VP: I don't relate strictly, directly to this idea of mapping. It's more a record of a moment, a situation; and it helps me to look, to see things as a process, interdependent and in constant transformation. It is said that to see is elightenment, when you see things as they are.

HUO: In your films the studio seems to become more like a stage, as in, for example, the *Musicians' Portrait*.

VP: Yes. Staging is a concept that is very important for me, because I think that it enables you to act indirectly. Because when you knowingly choose the ingredients and bring them together, then whatever has to come can manifest itself and function accordingly, the way that you have somehow chosen. But it is not directly the situation that you have built. This has to do with the idea of Karma, and so on, and working with that. The *Musicians* project [which was initially called *Film*] came out of my fascination with jazz musicians. At that time in Amsterdam the music scene was very lively and very interesting. For two years I was very fond of it, and I had two exhibitions at Bimhuis, which is one of the important venues there for jazz. So it was fun. I had these large paintings and, for once, it was really present in the room. And I shared a lot of experiences with musicians. I know them, and some of them lived in my house for a short time. After that, I saw how they lived with their instruments. Sometimes they wake up and start playing, and I was very interested in that. Because I don't have any musical experience or musical education but I'm very touched by it. Then I made this work. I didn't necessarily want them to perform a solo piece, for six minutes, but to...It's like they wake up and they play their instruments, or they practice. I think there is a quality that is very important in this kind of work. It involves respecting the audience. I think it's there. So you can find your way into the film like that.

HUO: Can you talk a little bit about intimacy in this film, like *Musicians' Portrait* and this journey into the inside rather than the outside.

VP: Yes, for a painter, performance is something very alien. There is the intimacy of the



Musicians' Portrait, 1979

inkjet print

46 x 70 cm



stills from Musicians' Portrait, 1979
16mm, black and white, sound
41' 30''



Musicians' Portrait, 1979
inkjet print
46 × 70 cm (each)





Mexico, 1974
inkjet print
46 × 70 cm (each)



studio and, before anything else, you must not have the feeling that someone is looking over your shoulder in order to be able to work. You have to forget about everything, somehow. Musicians perform live. It is incredible. It is a very big distance. They expose themselves. Of course a painter also exposes himself to a large extent, but not in real time.

HUO: What about intimacy?

VP: Well, that is what you always have to be in touch with. Even all the time, twenty-four hours a day. What do you mean by intimacy?

HUO: Maybe we should move on to traveling. It is also interesting that you have lived in different places. You lived in Lisbon, then you lived in Amsterdam, then from 1990 to 1995 you spent time in London.

VP: I visited London very briefly. I spent some time in the East, i India, with the Tibetan Lamas. That was in the early 1990s.

HUO: Then Mexico...

VP: I was in Mexico for two months, with a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture in Holland. I went there before coming to Portugal, after the Revolution. It was on the same day, the 25th of April [1974], that I heard that I had the money to go to Mexico and at the same time the Portuguese Revolution broke out. I felt that too many things were happening at the same time, so I went to Mexico first and then to Lisbon later. So I've never lived in London, I've never lived in Paris, I've never spent more than one or two months in Paris at a time.

HUO: These travels have entered your films. There was also the project in New York, which was integrated into a film [*Zen Sermon II*]

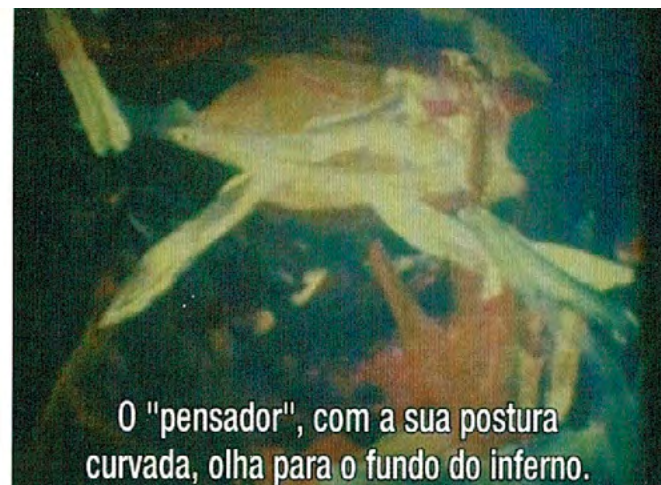
VP: Yes, I spent six months in New York. First I went for one month, and then I thought that it would be better to stay for longer and have a studio. So I swapped my studio and my apartment in Amsterdam with somebody from there, and that was it. It was an important place to go and see. So many things come from there. It was good to



Mexico, 1974

inkjet print

46 × 70 cm (each)



ZEN SERMON I, 1984

8mm, colour, sound
25' 22''

ZEN SERMON II, 1972-2003

MiniDVD colour, sound
90'

plunge into that. Afterwards I forgot about it. It was not important any more. I have always thought about alternatives to Holland since I have never felt very much at home there. I thought of Mexico as an alternative, but Mexico was also provincial, being culturally dependent on Europe and New York. So I was no longer very enthusiastic about another, second place. So shortly afterwards I started thinking that I might as well come to Portugal and see what happens. Actually, the return to Portugal was almost catastrophic. I took it in a very, very hard way. I did it all by myself, instead of asking for some support and making things very easy. But it was at that time that I stopped painting and met the Zen master that led me to spiritual practise. Somehow there is a synchronicity in that. Synchronicity is quite an important concept, and I think that art provides a link between the spiritual and the material world.

HUO: We haven't spoken much about painting yet. I read your catalogue, "MY Own Battlefield", which was published by the Fundação Serralves. And the exhibition now in Lisbon is obviously focusing on the films, but I suppose it's also important to speak about the paintings. Somehow, the films and the photography, in an almost realistic way, often highlight the circumstances of the act of making paintings, as João Fernandes wrote. In your work, you have always continued to paint. In Amsterdam you certainly abandoned painting, but you made films and continued painting. Is painting a daily practice for you?

VP: Painting is very central for me. It's where everything is exposed, where everything comes together. It's where the big challenges are, and where I'm overcome by what happens. I feel that every time I think about it I worry that I will not be able to produce work that is as good as what I've done in the past. That is the frame of mind that I enter to make things happen in the studio, to have a receptive mood. Because we always look at things as if we were processing information: we see the labels we project. That is not the way to be sensitive to things. The Japanese, for instance, have known that for a long time. That looking is something that happens from the outside in, not from the inside out. So I see what has to be done and then I try to make it happen. Besides that, I don't see what I can do directly in relation to painting, but all the work, all the

research, all the information, all the experience is then summarised in there, in the situation, in the expression of the painting. I remember that once a group of students from a private art school in Lisbon (I had a studio in Lisbon at the time, for four years) came to my studio. Later I got a call from the director, someone I knew, and he told me that one of the visitors, a teacher, had said that it was the best lesson in painting that he had ever had. And I didn't speak about painting. What did I have to say? I spoke about all kinds of things. That's sort of what happens, tendentially.

HUO: We spoke about Buddhism and your masters in Buddhism. Who are your masters in painting? Who inspires you? Is abstract expressionism important for you? Is there more of a connection to Asia?

VP: Yes, there are many painters, many artists that I find instructive, nourishing. Of course, abstract expressionism comes from the 1950s in America that, actually, was when Zen Buddhism arrived in America. Then there were many other artists that I know who I feel give me authorisation to follow my own direction. It is how I feel when I react very positively to their work. Recently I found out about Tulku who is an incarnated Lama. And he has this link with creativity. Of course I think he knows much more about Buddhism than about art. But he has established very clearly that what you do involves establishing relations, including the nature of the mind and being very natural about what you're doing. People that know about art don't know about Buddhism and meditation and so on. And then Lamas don't know anything about modern art. I have my intuitions, but I try to confirm them. For instance, at some point I related to Francisco Varela, who I know is a reference point for you too. I met some of Varela's Tibetan teachers, and it is very difficult not to be completely caught by that fascination, by that wisdom. So I'm happy that I arrived in India only twenty-one years later, at forty-two years of age, twenty-one years after I left Portugal. In a way, my late arrival to India allowed me to develop my relation with the artistic practice through the contact with the wisdom conveyed by Buddhism. Robert Filliou, for instance is the founder of the Fluxus movement, and he died in Dodogne while he was on a three-year retreat. I've been there. I know the Lama that runs this three-year retreat, and had the opportunity to receive some orientation for him.



Só acredito em milagres, 1979

white ink and photography

10 × 15 cm

I am spontaneity, 1979

white ink and photography

10 × 15 cm

His colleagues, his friends in Fluxus, were hardly aware of this attraction that he had to going on such long retreats and his relationship with Tibetan teachings. Abroad, many people are interested in the search for balance between the spiritual of the teachings and keeping the connection with art itself.

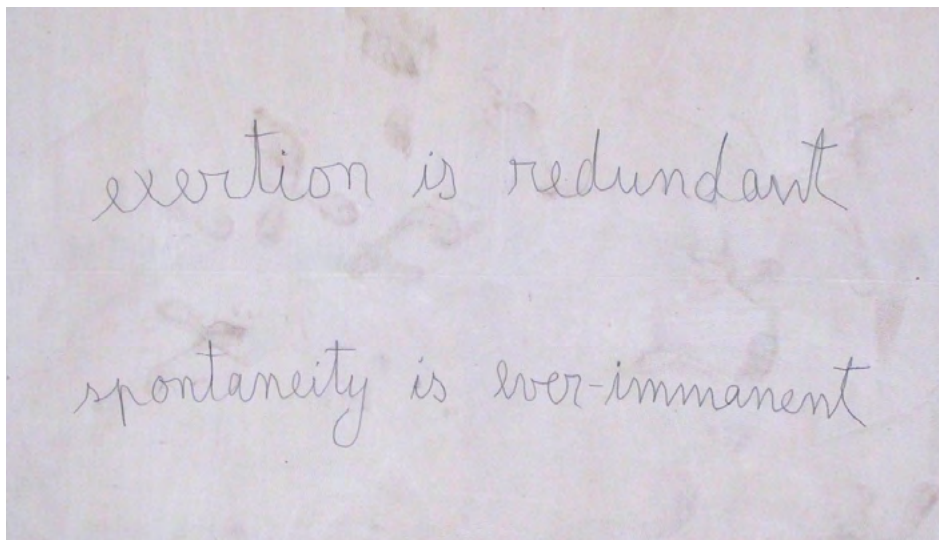
HUO: There is one thing tht we haven't spoken about yet: has experimental cinema influenced you in any way? Was, for example, structuralist cinema or Stan Brakhage importante for you?

VO: Oh, Stan Brakhage, yes! In Amsterdam at some point I saw all these underground movies at the Stedelijk Museum [a program organized by Peter Rubin, who later took one of the films of the artist to the Hyères Festival in France]. For me, real cinema means underground movies, experimental movies, as they call them in Europe.

HUO: We've spoken about your influences, but I'm also interested in your influences on younger artists. I was curious. Rainer Maria Rilke wrote a little book called *Letters to a Young Poet*. What would be your advice to a young artist or filmmaker today?

VP: Maybe to be attentive to the mind, to practising with the nature of the mind, with the expansion of the mind, and then to see how it works with the movies and art that you do. I think that is the point. I have never wanted to be a teacher because I don't know what I would teach. If I have anything to teach it would be to say, "ok, sit down on the zafu and get some hink of this practice. And then from there you eill restructure your enviroment, your perception of existence and everything".

HUO: One other dimension is your writing. Your work does not only include paiting and photography and filmn. There is also a lot of writing. On the one hand, it's your own text, which I read in the book, but it's also your text pieces [*Lembretes/Reminders*, 1998-2003], like "the path towards maturity is bliss", or "appearance is a magic spell" and "ride the horse of bliss and radioacne as



Untitled, 2007

acrylic and graphite on canvas

95 x 156 cm

the method of attention". There are all these text pieces, which are t-shirt, "the water of profound instructions cleanses the dirt of habit-forming thoughts", like...approaches for rubber stamps and stickers.

VP: I don't write for the sake of writing. I write as communication really, for specific situations. For instance, one of the texts that I intend to use in this catalogue will be a collection of most of my posts on Facebook over the last year. I had to go on Facebook because I organised a seminar. That text portraits my attitude towards several subjects, both regarding actuality and the spiritual practice. So the collection of these interventions, my participation there, will be in the catalogue. For instance, once I participated in a project for an artist's residence, and then this idea of "the consciousness residing in the body" came and I developed it. It was really in one stretch somehow that this text was written and it was quite provocative. So my writing has this kind of perspective.

HUO: What about the t-shirts, and the stickers? They are like slogans. "Watch the mirror of mind", "Crack the skull of egotism".

VP: Video also serves to share things that are important to me. It's a diary; it's like diary notes. In the sense of asking: What is important? What do I really have to share with other people? That's what it's about. These slogans were the same thing. Somethings with which I felt very comfortable. So I even translated them into Portuguese. I thought about making t-shirts with them, but there was something that I did not completely agree with. So that is also why I didn't make much effort to do that. It's something that might be misunderstood. Just like I dropped this title, "Nothing to do nowhere to go", because it could be misunderstood.

HUO: It also appears in your titles, and there's a very interesting conversation between you and Alexandre Melo, in which he says, "Visions of the absolute' is an interesting title", and you say, "titles aren't built merely or rationally; they



Exhibition view *apparent but nonexistent* at Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2014



Wish Fulfilling Gem, 2006

acrylic on canvas

145,5 x 351 cm (framed)



Estado de direito, estado de sítio, 2006

acrylic on canvas

240 x 480 cm

are welcomed. It's like a child being born. You receive that being and then once it appears you acknowledge it and integrate it." Can you tell me about the titles of your films and your work in general?

VP: They come to me and make sense and then I put them there. It's like I am trying to understand what's going on. So understanding things is the most challenging, the most interesting thing. I don't look for the titles. I make space and they come to me, they appear. Like when I had to give a name to my daughter, I did it in the same way. It's not mental in the sense of grasping something; it's in the sense of openness.

HUO: I have one very last question. I was wondering about your unrealised projects. Do you have any projects that were too big to be realised, or too small to be realised? Your unbuilt roads, your dreams?

VP: I would like to arrange a meeting between some spiritual teachers and maybe neuroscientists, psychologists and artists. Because this is something that hasn't been done yet. I know you organised this meeting between neuroscientists and artists, but what about spiritual teachers? They know about the mind. And they can share that knowledge. One of my teachers [Keith Dowman] came to visit and we went to Serralves. We met João Fernandes and it was very interesting. My teacher asked some unexpected questions about the fundamentals of art, of the artistic practice. In Portugal, I feel that people are very concerned about art, their careers and artistry, but not very concerned about anything else. There has to be a profound reflection on the creative process. My idea of the creative process is that is the essence itself of the present, which we don't grasp, which we are not aware of. And then, what happens in art? It's a mere reflection, a very light, vague reflection of this intensity of the present, of the mind, of the expanded mind [not trapped in thoughts and tasks]. So this goes against much of what is said about art. For instance, the notion that you have to relate to art history, and you can't do anything new. New? The present moment, experience, IS new. It IS new all the time. Sixty times a second, an instant! Of course, we are too weak, too polluted, so we cannot get in touch with that very easily. But that is what has to be done, that is something to develop. So I have made a

Notas duma Peregrinação a Locais Sagrados do Tibet, 2008

MiniDV, colour, sound

56' 43"





Sushuma I, 2002
acrylic on canvas
250 × 300 cm



Emaho!, 2008
acrylic on canvas
200 x 220 cm



Sushuma II, 2002
acrylic on canvas
250 × 300 cm



Marions-les, 2002

acrylic on canvas

149 x 122 cm



Nothing Ever Was Anyway, 2002

acrylic on canvas

147 x 110 cm



Sem titulo, 2010
acrylic on canvas
155 x 227 cm

Vítor Pomar

Born in Lisbon, 1949

Lives and Works in Assentiz, Rio Maior, Portugal

Solo Exhibition (selection)

- 2026 *Vítor Pomar: Lembrança da Palestina*, Torreão Nascente da Cordoaria Nacional, Lisbon
- 2022 *do as you please*, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon
- 2021 *Unsurpassable / Imbatível*, Palácio Anjos, Oeiras, Portugal
- 2020 *Moral da História*, Sismógrafo, Oporto, Portugal
- 2017 *Mind in Cave*, Greene's Tutorial College, Estoril, Portugal
O Silêncio do Coração, Ar.Co, Lisbon
Spontaneous Fruition, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon
- 2016 *Vítor Pomar. O carro à frente dos bois*, Galeria Sete, Coimbra, Portugal
- 2014 *apparent but nonexistent*, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon
- 2012 *Karma Mudra*, Guarda, Portugal
Uma Pária Assim..., EDP, Museu da Electricidade, Lisbon
- 2011 *Os Atributos do Ar*, Galeria Bloco 103, Lisbon
Nada para fazer nem sítio aonde ir, CAM, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon
- 2008 *Só Acredito em Milagres*, Centro Cultural de Cascais, Cascais, Portugal
- 2007 *Ilha do Tesouro*, Galeria Antiks Design, Lisbon
Acto Contínuo, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon
- 2006 *Nada de Especial*, Casa da Cultura de Rio Maior, Rio Maior, Portugal
- 2005 *Tirar Daí o Sentido*, Galeria A H, Viseu, Portugal
Deitar as mãos à cabeça, Galeria das Antas, Oporto, Portugal
Álbum de Família, Galeria Municipal TREM, Faro, Portugal
- 2004 *Micropráticas*, LISBOAPHOTO, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon
I love my photos, Galeria Neupergama, Torres Novas, Portugal

- New York City Blues*, 1982, Lagar de Azeite, Oeiras, Portugal
- 2003 *VP*, Fidelidade-Mundial Chiado 8 Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon
My Own Battlefield, Museu de Serralves, Oporto, Portugal
- 2002 *Coincidência Auspiciosa 1965-2002*, António Henriques, Galeria de Arte Contemporânea, Viseu, Portugal
Galeria Espaço Branco, Viana do Castelo, Portugal
- 2001 *Demasiado elevado para ser arranjadinho*, Galeria Diferença, Lisbon
Visões do Absoluto, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon
Portas da Eternidade, Galeria Trem, Faro, Portugal
- 2000 *Vive la France*, Cooperativa Árvore, Oporto, Portugal
- 1999 *On Intimacy*, Convento do Espírito Santo, Loulé, Portugal
idem, Fábrica da Pólvora, Oeiras, Portugal
- 1997 Galeria Paula Fampa, Braga, Portugal
- 1996 Galeria EMI-Valentim de Carvalho, Lisbon
- 1993 Galeria Graça Fonseca, Lisbon
- 1990 Galeria Graça Fonseca, Lisbon
Galeria EMI-Valentim de Carvalho, Lisbon
- 1989 Galeria Municipal da Amadora, Amadora, Portugal
- 1988 Casa-Museu Álvaro de Campos, Tavira, Portugal
Galeria Spatium, Tavira, Portugal
Casa das Artes, Tavira, Portugal
- 1987 Galeria EMI-Valentim de Carvalho, Lisbon
- 1985 Galeria Ana Flores, Lisbon
- 1984 Maison Descartes, Amsterdam
- 1981 PS122, New York
Galeria Bocage, Setúbal, Portugal
Cooperativa Árvore, Oporto, Portugal
- 1980 Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon
Bimhuis, Amsterdam
- 1978 Maison des Amendiens, Paris
Bimhuis, Amsterdam
- 1977 Bimhuis, Amsterdam

1974	Galeria Arvill, Mexico Casa del Lago, Mexico		Moreira, Viseu, Portugal <i>Caravelas</i> , Art et Littérature du Portugal Aujourd'hui, L'atelier, Centre d'Art et d'Echanges Culturels de Pignans, France
1973	Fotografia, tVenster Gallery, Rotterdam, Netherlands		
1970	Gravura, Galeria Quadrante, Lisboa	1993	Coleção Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Lisbon
	Group Exhibition (selection)	1992	Coleção Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon
2020	<i>Bring The Boys Back Home</i> , Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon	1990	<i>As Viagens de Gulliver</i> , Galeria Valentim de Carvalho, Lisbon
2019	<i>Summer Guests. Contemporary Jewellery in Portugal</i> , Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon	1989	Galeria Fluxus, Oporto, Portugal
2018	<i>Serralves Collection: 1960-1980</i> , Fundação de Serralves, Oporto, Portugal	1988	<i>Jovem Escultura Portuguesa</i> , Fundação de Serralves, Oporto, Portugal
2017	<i>O Fotógrafo Acidental: Serialismo e Experimentação em Portugal, 1968-1980</i> , Culturgest, Lisbon	1984	<i>Super 8 Film Festival</i> , Makkom Gallery, Amsterdam
2016	<i>Pomar & Pomar: Ver o que salta aos olhos</i> , Galeria 111, Lisbon	1981	Cinéma Different, Hyères, France
2012	<i>Entre Espaços</i> , 22 artistas da Coleção do CAM, F. C. G., Lisbon <i>Presenças</i> , Fundação EDP, Amarante, Portugal		Film International, Rotterdam, Netherlands
2009	<i>Presenças</i> , Fundação de Serralves, Oporto, Portugal		Bienal de Desenho LIS'81, Lisbon
2007	<i>Transfer, Obras do CAMJAP em Itinerância</i> , Tavira, Portugal	1980	Film International, Rotterdam, Netherlands
2005	<i>BESPhoto</i> , Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon <i>Micropráticas</i> , (LISBOAPHOTO) Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon	1977	Alternativa Zero, Lisbon
2002	<i>Zoom 1986-2002: Coleção da Fundação Luso-Americana do Desenvolvimento, Uma Seleção</i> , Fundação de Serralves, Oporto, Portugal <i>Arte Contemporânea: Coleção Caixa Geral de Depósitos – Novas Aquisições</i> , Culturgest, Lisbon <i>EDP Arte: Prémio de Pintura</i> , Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes, Lisbon <i>Na Paisagem: Coleção da Fundação de Serralves</i> , Museu Almeida	1976	16 mm Film Festival, Montreal, Mónaco
		1975	Gravura Contemporânea Portuguesa, Paris
		1972	Biennale Internationale de l'Estampe de Paris, Paris
		1970	Biennale Internationale de l'Estampe de Paris, Paris
			Films (selection)
		1993-94	<i>Dharma</i> , video, 360 min.
		1982	<i>In Templum</i> , video, 60 min. (unfinished)
		1982-85	<i>Diary Notes</i> , S8, 100 min.
		1983	<i>Portugal Revisited</i> , 16 mm, 15 min.
		1981	<i>My Education</i> , 16 mm, 35 min.
		1980	<i>Musician's Portrait</i> , 16 mm, 40 min.
		1976-78	<i>R</i> , 16 mm, 100 min.

Publication and Catalogues (selection)

- 2004 Delfim Sardo, João Fernandes, Maria Filomena Molder and Vítor Pomar, *Vítor Pomar – O Meu Campo de Batalha*, Museu de Serralves, Oporto
Nuno Faria, *New York City Blues – Fotografia 1982*, Oeiras, Lagar de Azeite, Portugal
Raquel Henriques da Silva, *Vítor Pomar*, Galeria Fernando Santos, Oporto and Lisbon
- 2003 Alexandre Melo, *Coincidência Auspiciosa: Vítor Pomar 1965-2002* (parte II), António Henriques – Galeria de Arte Contemporânea, Viseu, Portugal
- 2002 *Vítor Pomar*, Galeria Espaço Branco, Viana do Castelo, Portugal
Delfim Sardo, *Coincidência Auspiciosa: Vítor Pomar 1965-2002*, António Henriques – Galeria de Arte Contemporânea, Viseu, Portugal
- 2000 Jorge Calado, *Vive La France, Vítor Pomar*, Cooperativa Árvore, Oporto, Portugal
Miguel Wandschneider, *Vítor Pomar: Filmes*, ESTAGD, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal
- 1999 João Lima Pinharanda and Vítor Pomar, *Vítor Pomar: Foro Íntimo*, Câmara Municipal de Loulé, Loulé, Portugal
- 1998 João Miguel Fernandes Jorge, *Vítor Pomar: Fotografia 1970-1974*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon
José Gil, *Vítor Pomar*, Galeria de Tapeçarias de Portalegre, Lisbon
- 1997 Vítor Pomar, *Vítor Pomar: Pintura*, Galeria Paula Fampa, Braga, Portugal
- 1996 Vítor Pomar, *Vítor Pomar: Pintura*, Galeria Paula Fampa, Braga, Portugal
- 1989 Barbara Spielmann, *Peregrinação: Variações sobre 6 Quadros do Vítor Pomar*, Câmara municipal da Amadora, Amadora, Portugal

- 1987 Vítor Pomar, *Vítor Pomar*, Galeria Artefacto, Lisbon
- 1986 António Cerveira Pinto, *Vítor Pomar*, Galeria Ana Isabel, Lisbon
- 1985 *Vítor Pomar 1977-1983*, Galerie Suspect, Amsterdam
- 1984 Barbara Spielmann, *Vítor Pomar 1977-1983*, Maison Descartes, Paris
- 1982 António Cerveira Pinto, *Vítor Pomar*, Casa de Bocage, Setúbal, Portugal
Fernando de Azevedo, *Vítor Pomar/Pinturas a Preto e Branco 1977-80*, Galeria Roma e Pavia, Oporto, Portugal
- 1980 Vítor Pomar, *Vítor Pomar 77-80: Pinturas a Preto e Branco*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon
Vítor Pomar, *Vítor Pomar*, Museum Fodor, Amsterdam

Public Collections (selection)

- Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon
Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Oporto, Portugal
Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento, Lisbon
Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Lisbon
Ministério das Finanças, Lisbon