

*Irmão dos homens todos*

Mauro Cerqueira & Pedro Wirz

Curated by Samuel Leuenberger for SALTS (CH)

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Beyond the whitewashed windows of 161 Broad Street, a large scale sculptural environment has been formed - which looks at the everyday and yet evades the colloquial, Glaswegian language. The space is activated by architectural fragments, segments made of dirt and an abundant amount of seemingly random objects which form little islands of arrangements. The various nick-nacks can be interpreted as primitive codes, where images are newly assembled and alternate readings point to a string of narratives that speak of curious hidden eco-cultures, old folkloric tales and modern day (cultural) mythologies.

Mauro Cerqueira and Pedro Wirz both live in Porto where, for this exhibition, they shared a large studio in the historic city centre. Cerqueira is a native to Porto, however Wirz is a somewhat nomadic character with Brazilian roots and Swiss schooling. The artists have each developed a diverse body of the sculptural works for many years, which circle around the question of how narratives can be formed by inventing a new language through objects. Both use the historical potency of any given object, from the mundane to the instinctual, by observing the everyday. Cerqueira's work is frequently focused on a modern day or contemporary archeology of material culture while Wirz is more drawn to the superimposed folkloric qualities which imbue our collective thinking and thus influence our everyday actions. What happens once an object is stripped from its original use, what gives value over another whereas a third loses its value altogether? How are words and oral traditions still embedded in our Western Cultures and how do they influence our social behavior which in turn might describe our relationship to the objects we surround ourselves with?

For the exhibition at David Dale Gallery, the artists have created a site-specific environment that merges the symbolism of the architectural ruin, maze or spiral with the haphazard situation of a flea market; we face several rows of knee high walls which spiral in and out of the space, each wall constructed of bricks made of a potent mix of earth and humus, some containing cans and other debris. This series of

bending walls, partly broken, partly offering an opening to pass through, draw curves, like a radiant throughout the space, providing a saturated surface for snail shells, cocoon like eggs and other small life-like vessels. This is the work of Pedro Wirz, hand-made objects which suggest a weird, organic life-form but yet represents a strangely artificial mini cosmos that speak of the very essence of life. Where do we come from and what structure gave us shelter when we grew up, what traditions influenced us, and how does our body, as a vessel, function in regard to our own experiences relating to the natural world around us? This very experience of entering and leaving a space, may it be of a physical or emotional nature, is life on repeat. It draws images of poetic grandeur within their microcosmos and simultaneously and inevitably also suggests an emptiness and absence these vessels and encounters represent, like temporal loopholes, in which we choose to inhabit something or not – in which we value someone or neglect another.

*Irmão dos homens todos*, the title of the show stems from a poem written by Valdemar Lopes for Ferreira de Castro, celebrating the Portuguese-Brazil connection, it heralds the commonly shared 'universal' experience, essentially making us all brothers and sisters. This cultural and linguistic ties that have existed between Portugal and Brazil are also felt in the artist's' works and allow for a more homogenous, culturally defined reading. What lights inspiration, where are ideas born and poems written? One would think they emerge from such old, traditional cultures where folkloric tales are mixed with modern legends but as the American writer Joseph Campbell discusses in his book *The Power of the Myth*, "They do not come from the folkloric but from an elite experience, an experience of people particularly gifted, whose ears are open to the song of the universe. These people speak to the folk, and there is an answer from the folk, which is then received as an interaction." We are talking essentially of the post-ritualistic, Shaman, post-religious, Dias era, today where the contemporary artist fulfills this role.

Mauro Cerqueira's method of working is multidisciplinary and it includes photography, drawings, sculpture, painting and video. Recently his work has in many cases been inspired and lead by his environment in which he lives and works, the historical city district of Porto. It's an area which is undergoing constant changes, where derelict buildings are in make-shift use or being torn down, where his neighbours are burglars and thieves as well as normal families minding their own business. It is in these very streets that he finds an inexhaustible repertoire of everyday scenes, people as well as objects. He calls them his islands, the things that are not visible to the naked eye, the small hidden eco-cultures behind closed doors, in backyards, but in a larger sense they are also the things that happen on the street away from the touristic trail. Cerqueria has filled the room with objects he found, re-arranging them, reactivating them. There is a strongly felt presence of people through these objects and one gets the impression that he strives to capture the things around him before the city cleans up its act in the changing light of the massive tourist influx. In another corner of the room, a TV Screen lays on the floor, it's a film about one of the artist's

neighbour, a junkie who makes a living by stealing and re-selling stuff by day but in this video we get to see him from another perspective, as he wanders through the night, Cerqueira who records his invisible actions, his good deeds on the streets, his house. Leonel is his name and as he cleans away trash from streets and waters flowers in neighbouring gardens, he tells stories about his life. At one point he starts to fix the cobble stone pavement by inserting missing stones, crouching down like a stone-mason completing a puzzle. It's a touching portrait of a man who lives outside the societal structures but whose understanding of a city he calls home is synonymous to what we know as friendship.

Cerqueira and Wirz build narratives that weave in and out of our lives, they are talking about similar objects and re-coding them in their own manner, they look at the shit we produce; the ephemeral recycled stories that batter our minds numb and the lost quality of things with the hope to re-ignite a discourse that needs to take place, not inside the philosopher's walls, but on the streets we walk.

Samuel Leuenberger

Pedro Wirz (b.1981 in Sao Paulo, lives and works in Porto, Portugal) received a Bachelor degree of Fine Arts at FHNW HGK Institute of Arts in Basel, Switzerland. He also studied one year at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart, Germany. His work has been presented at Kai Matsumiya Gallery, New York; Tinguely Museum, Basel (2016); CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-On-Hudson (2015); Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Stuttgart; (2013), Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund; (2013), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013); Mendes Wood DM Gallery, Brazil (2013), Centro Cultural São Paulo, São Paulo (2013); Post Studio Tales, Berlin (2012); Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (2011); among others. He was also a resident at Swiss Institute in Rome, (2015/2016), Residency Unlimited (2014) in New York and at the Cité internationale des Arts, Paris (2012).

Mauro Cerqueira (b.1982 in Guimarães lives and works in Porto, Portugal) received a Post-Graduate degree in Arts/Drawing at ESAP in Guimarães, Portugal. His work has been presented at Múrias Centeno, Porto / Lisbon; Heinrich Ehrhardt, Madrid; Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Vigo; Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisboa; Galeria Casa Triângulo, São Paulo; among others. He was also a resident at Rauschenberg Foundation in Captiva Island, Florida, (2013), Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2011). Since 2008 he has run, together with André Sousa, the artist run space Uma Certa Falta de Coerência, Porto.