



# The Art of Gentrification: The Lisbon Version

- Ana Teixeira Pinto

On 7 August 2017 CNN published an advertorial about Lisbon titled ‘The New Berlin?’ To push the narrative that ‘austerity helped Lisbon’s creatives to succeed’ the piece deployed pictures of the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT), a waterfront building in Lisbon designed by architect Amanda Levete’s firm AL\_A, which upon construction quickly became a fixture of in-flight magazines.<sup>1</sup> To be fair the MAAT photographs well, rather better than it actually looks. In reality it feels cramped and crooked, and its function feels closer to a city branding initiative than a cultural institution: the wave-like shape ties old chauvinist tropes (Portugal as a nation of naval explorers) leisure fantasies (sea, sand and sun) and dynamic imagery (economic recovery) into the type of iconic landmark so appealing to PR-speak. The article reinforces this impression by advertising the city’s cheap rents to ‘creatives’ priced out of London. Seen from Berlin, where I am based, what is happening to Lisbon feels depressingly familiar.

As I land in Oporto, my taxi driver tells me he cannot afford to retire, his pension is too meagre. After 45 years as an industrial worker he took to driving, the only available job

he could find. He usually takes the night shift. His story also rings familiar: I heard it often from drivers in Berlin, whose GDR (German Democratic Republic) pensions all but evaporated after the reunification.<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say, the socialisation of losses

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## Ana Teixeira Pinto critically analyses Lisbon’s newfound status as a ‘destination of choice’ for the mobile artist class.

goes hand in hand with the privatisation of gains – aka space to be had on the cheap for those from abroad. In opening a direct conduit between contemporary art and gentrification, the MAAT is, in Lisbon, the first of its kind. This is not because the museum’s mission statement is in any way exceptional – from Oslo to Bilbao, contemporary art is routinely recruited to boost real-estate speculation – but rather because Portugal has entered the global markets at an exceptionally belated stage.

### From Colonial Power to Quasi-Colony

Portugal did not experience modernity, modernism or modernisation. Under a fascist regime until 1974, the country leapt directly into postmodernity: unlike Italian or Spanish fascism, which invested heavily in modernisation, Portuguese fascism was anti-modern, ruralist and insular.<sup>3</sup> From 1961 onwards Portugal found itself fighting a costly war with its African colonies, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, which by the 1970s had become unsustainable. Five families alone controlled the extraction industry in the colonies, and their economic activities were key to both Portugal’s isolationist policies and the dictatorship’s domestic survival. This situation pitted the regime against its increasingly disgruntled military, in a feud, which ultimately led to its downfall with the Carnation Revolution in 1974.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Mairi Mackay, ‘The New Berlin? How Austerity Helped Lisbon’s Creatives to Succeed’, *CNN*, 7 August 2017, available at <http://edition.cnn.com/style/article/lisbon-cultural-scene/index.html> (last accessed on 12 December 2017).

2 Wolfgang Schäuble, who as head of the Treuhand (Trusted Hand) presided over the fire-sale of the former East German public companies, is now the German finance minister in charge of the troika’s asset stripping. For an in-depth view of the Treuhand’s policies, see Dirk Laabs, ‘Why is Germany so Tough on Greece? Look Back 25 Years’, *The Guardian*, 17 July 2015, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/17/germany-greece-wolfgang-schauble-bailout> (last accessed on 12 December 2017).

3 ‘Orgulhosamente sós’ (proudly alone) was the regime’s motto; poverty was a state policy. In the 1970s, about 36 per cent of Portuguese households lacked electricity, 53 per cent running water and 42 per cent were not equipped with proper plumbing. Child labour was widespread, vast urban areas were occupied by slums and illiteracy ranged over 30 per cent. By the time the regime fell, over two million Portuguese people had emigrated to France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany to escape hunger and unemployment. See Luís Graça, *O Período de 1926-1974: A Modernização Bloqueada. 3.1. Nacionalismo e Corporativismo (1926-1958)* [Portugal, 1926-1974: the Blocked Modernization Process. 3.1. Nationalism and Corporativism (1926-1958)], Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1999.

4 The Carnation Revolution started as a military coup in Lisbon resulting in the overthrowing of the regime of the Estado Novo. This took place on 25 April 1974. The movement was supported by a popular campaign leading to the withdrawal of Portugal from its colonies in Africa.



After the transition towards democracy, Portugal joined the European Union in 1986 but its deep structural problems were never solved. They were rather masked by the EU's consolidation programmes, which were mostly channelled towards infrastructure. This period, from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, was the only moment in the country's history when immigration exceeded exodus, largely due to demand in the construction sector. It was also during this time that two of the biggest contemporary art venues in Lisbon were built – the Foundation Centro Cultural de Belém (CCB) and the Culturgest (1993) – and the now defunct Institute of Contemporary Art (IAC) was founded (1997). Though the country tried hard to appeal to investors and tourists, in the late 1990s low-cost carriers exploded, rendering 'exotic' destinations inexpensive. The efforts to internationalise Portugal's art scene also bore scant fruit, partially due to institutional ineptitude, partially due to circumstance. Whilst Eastern European conceptualism soared in the art markets, Portuguese presence in international venues was slight. By 2005 the urban landscape was peppered with white elephants: the already mentioned CCB, the Expo '98 and the several stadiums built for the Euro 2004.<sup>5</sup> While Berlin was 'poor but sexy' Lisbon was chintzy but stale.

To compound the problem, the apparent growth was misleading. Rather than endless prosperity, the highways the EU built brought cheaper agricultural produce and low-cost goods. The economy shrunk in inverse proportion to German export growth. From 2005 onwards the country entered into a recession. In 2008 the financial crash hit, and what began as a private debt crisis, driven by deregulation, swiftly morphed into a chauvinist narrative about the industrious north and lazy southerners predicated on the 'figuring of scarcity' (of resources) as 'excess' (of debt, of profligacy).<sup>6</sup> When the market collapsed, the Portuguese economy contracted, and tax revenues went down, while the deficit went up. Portugal was pressured to protect its financial sector, which in practice meant nationalising bad debt at the behest of the EU, to avoid contagion, and in the same breath had to start repaying loans to the bond markets provided on short-term contracts when the financial sector was in full swing. In 2011, to prevent a situation of insolvency, the newly elected social democrat centre-right party PSD, under the leadership of Pedro Passos Coelho, requested a 78 billion euro bailout. The result was disastrous for the Portuguese population: the austerity measures aimed at deficit reduction were heavily geared towards the downsizing

Filipa César, *Mined Soil*, 2012–14, installation with 29 objects and video, 32min, dimensions variable. Installation view, 'Golden Visa or the disposing of the discredited\*', Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art, Lisbon, September–October 2014. Courtesy the artist and Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art, Lisbon

5 1998 Lisbon world exposition. The Euro 2004 failed to find an audience, nationally as well as internationally.

6 Denise Ferreira da Silva, 'Unpayable Debt: Reading Scenes of Value against the Arrow of Time', in *The documenta 14 Reader* (ed. Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk), New York and London: Prestel, 2017, p.89.



Pedro Neves Marques, *A Relação Púdica entre Máquina e Planta* (*The Pudic Relation Between Machine and Plant*), 2016, video, 2min 30sec. Courtesy the artist

of the welfare state – for example, slashing education, unemployment and health benefits, freezing state pensions and salaries, and massive privatisation programmes – while aiming to introduce greater labour flexibility, via wage-repression, regardless of whether workers would be able to live on the resulting incomes. In spite of the sufferance exacted,

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the adjustment programme was equally damaging to the Portuguese GDP, leading to a spiral of economic decline as public sector contraction lead to further falls in aggregate demand, shrinking the economy as a whole. Unsurprisingly, the country voted against austerity in the subsequent election, and a Left-wing coalition formed by the socialists (PS), communists (PCP), greens (PEV) and the New Left (BE) secured a majority in parliament. The process was not devoid of polemics, however: the Portuguese president refused to recognise the result of the election. In his view an anti-austerity platform could not be allowed to govern, as this would send ‘false signals to financial institutions, investors and markets’.<sup>7</sup> For almost two months, from 4 October until 24 November 2015, Portugal had, de facto, no government,<sup>8</sup> until the coalition government – widely derided as the *geringonça* (jerry-built) – finally took office.

The two years that followed became known as the ‘Portuguese miracle’. I have no wish to be cynical about these accomplishments; the new government did manage to reverse the most punitive policies while propping up growth, and in Portugal the relief is palpable. That said, ‘anti-austerity’ is hyperbolic, the coalition’s policies are best described as ‘austerity-light’. The economic recovery is tied to, and contingent upon, the explosion of an utterly deregulated tourism industry, which is swiftly turning the country into a manufactured pseudo-folkish monoculture.

The MAAT was to succeed where the CCB formerly failed by virtue of the intersecting vectors of several crises: the immiseration, caused by imposed austerity led to a surge of ‘crisis investment opportunities’. Whereas in the 1990s the world was expanding, now it

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7 Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, ‘Eurozone Crosses Rubicon as Portugal’s Anti-Euro Left Banned From Power’, *The Telegraph*, 23 October 2015, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11949701/AEP-Eurozone-crosses-Rubicon-as-Portugals-anti-euro-Left-banned-from-power.html> (last accessed on 12 December 2017).

8 Fortunately the president did not hold the institutional power to dissolve the parliament since his mandate was too close to its terminus.



is contracting. The political instability in Europe's immediate vicinity (Egypt, Turkey and Tunisia) and the fear of terror attacks dented tourism to North Africa and the Middle East, making Portugal a safer holiday option. The former government's fiscal policies engineered a population replacement by actively courting affluent retirees and liberal professionals with a ten-year income tax exemption. While this triggered a realty boom in the historical centres of Lisbon and Oporto, the young and jobless were nudged to leave (in officialese: Europe's younger generation must be prepared to 'commute' in search of work). Last but not least, the recovery also has a seedy underbelly: under the Golden Visa programme, any non-EU citizen who would invest 350,000 euros in real estate would obtain a residency permit with minimal caveats: property cannot be resold before five years and the purchaser must remain in Portugal for a minimum of seven days.

### Decolonising Aesthetics

Artist Filipa César scrutinised this policy in her eponymous video installation *Golden Visa or the Disposing of the Discredited* (2014), which ties the sale of residency permits to the granting of mining permits to the Canadian corporation Colt Resources to prospect for gold in southern Portugal.<sup>9</sup> The colour gold (Golden Visa, gold rush) functions as an analogue for capital, in contradistinction to the blackness of the mined soil, and black as a signifier for everything that is devalued or degraded. The project's title 'Disposing of the Discredited' quotes French philosopher Michel Feher, according to whom the granting, and by extension the refusal, of credit functions as a necropolitical tool, typically deployed to manage the undesirable population surplus in Europe (migrants, unemployed, Roma minorities). As César's film *Mined Soil* (2012–14) sustains, there is a hidden racial dimension, which ties the structural racism that was born in chattel slavery to a colonial matrix, whose operations can be mapped onto current political events, like the sovereign debt crisis. The area where Colt Resources now operates was once studied by Amílcar Cabral, an agronomist – who would later become one of the leaders of the Guinean independence movement until his assassination in 1973 – whose project of nation-building César contrasts with the neo-imperial chastising of 'failed states'.

César's preoccupations are echoed by Pedro Barateiro, whose video essay *The Current Situation* (2015) conflates parasitic and financial contagions by juxtaposing two

Installation view, Grada Kilomba, 'Secrets to Tell', MAAT, Lisbon, 2017. Photograph: Bruno Lopes. Courtesy the artist and MAAT, Lisbon

<sup>9</sup> Two years after the film was shot Colt Resources folded and its executives absconded, leaving behind unpaid wages and contaminated soil.



Installation view, Jacopo Miliani, 'A Slow Dance Without Name', Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, 2016. Dancer: António Torres. Photograph: Bruno Lopes. Courtesy Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon

unrelated events: an anti-austerity demonstration in front of the Portuguese parliament, and the felling of the last palm trees that once stood at the entrance to the Príncipe Real gardens, infested by red weevil. As the chainsaw is revving up, the roar of the crowd merges with its rattle, creating a single, strident, sound wave. The deafening buzz could be construed as the soundtrack to globalisation as the process through which 'cheap natures' (labour power or natural resources) are torn from their surroundings and dragged into the global markets.<sup>10</sup>

Both César, who is based in Berlin, and Barateiro, are rather exceptions to the national norm when it comes to their subjects and formats of choice. Political or institutional critique, in Portugal, has rarely departed from the satirical, and as a rule contemporary art has embraced poetry rather than theory. Akin to Berlin-based Grada Kilomba or New York-based Pedro Neves Marques and Mariana Silva, they are also among the few who have addressed the imbrications of economy, race and empire. Neves Marques recently edited *The Forest and The School: Where to Sit at the Dinner Table?* (2016), the first wide-ranging anthology about *antropofagia* in English, and has been working through this concept as the way in which colonised cultures appropriate the symbols of the colonisers into their own cultural idioms.<sup>11</sup> Kilomba is an Afro-Portuguese artist and writer, whose performance works recounts the experience of colonisation from the perspective of those it hurt. In spite of having a thriving international career, her work was shown for the first time this year in Portugal with two solo shows: one in Galeria Avenida da Índia, in a project initiated by João Mourão and curated by Gabi Ngcobo, and an exhibition curated by Inês Grosso at MAAT.

It is not coincidental that Kilomba, César or Neves Marques are based abroad. Portugal remains disinclined to address its colonial legacy, or to acknowledge its pervasive institutional racism. Minorities are notoriously absent from public discourse, in spite of their immense contribution to public life. The refusal to engage with, or atone for, past atrocities, is coterminous with the refusal to redress present grievances. To say Portuguese culture has yet to be decolonised is a euphemism: Portugal romanticises its age of imperial expansion as a glorious, heroic epoch and wallows in nostalgia for its lost grandeur. Mainstream culture typically portrays the colonial relation as orderly and harmonious, if not outright civilising.

10 Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*, London: Verso, 2015, p.2

11 Together with Mariana Silva, he runs *Inhabitants*, an online channel for experimental video; see <http://inhabitants-tv.org/> (last accessed on 12 December 2017).

In October 2017, to give but one recent example, a statue of Padre António Vieira, a Jesuit priest – commissioned by the Santa Casa da Misericórdia, a Catholic lay brotherhood, to be installed in the historic centre of Lisbon – triggered a protest by SOS Racismo and the activist group Descolonizando.<sup>12</sup> Whatever one thinks about Vieira’s complex legacy (the Jesuits were not abolitionists and though Vieira advocated liberating Brazilian Indians he supported the trade and enslavement of Africans), the statue, representing Vieira surrounded by naked Indian children, one of whom kneels at his feet, is a grotesque monument to Western supremacy. Descolonizando intended to stage a performance qua demonstration in front of the recently unveiled effigy, but their event was thwarted by extremists waving Portuguese flags.<sup>13</sup> Even if one could find dissenting voices in academia and some lone voices in the media – like Mamadou Ba, a writer and activist or Carla Fernandes, a journalist who runs the audioblog Rádio AfroLis, or the platform Buala, an invaluable publishing site for postcolonial studies in the Portuguese language – the vast majority of the Portuguese *literati* fell over each other in the rush to heap scorn on the activists, rather than disown the far right.<sup>14</sup>

Though it would be tempting to see the growing interest in Afro-Portuguese voices – still vastly absent from the contemporary art scene – as signalling a changing sensibility, one could also note that their increasing institutional presence is coextensive with the surge of Angolan investment in the Portuguese economy (1.53 billion euros in 2014).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, ARCO Lisboa, the Portuguese leg of ARCO Madrid, which was inaugurated in 2016, could be described as an attempt to court Angolan wealth, as well as the affluent newcomers who benefited from the Golden Visa scheme.<sup>16</sup>

### Idle Institutions: Art as Financial Asset

The impact of these developments is by no means positive. As Mourão and Luís Silva who run the non-profit Kunsthalle Lissabon noted last time we spoke, the net effect is a changed relation to urban space: an empty or derelict building will no longer be made available to a non-profit or artist-run space; landed property is now a profitable commodity, both the city hall and private proprietors want to monetise rather than socialise. The Kunsthalle Lissabon opened their first exhibition space in 2009, in a vacant building, which the debt-stricken Banco Espírito Santo (BES) had permitted artists to make use of, located on Lisbon’s main avenue, Avenida da Liberdade. From 2009 to 2015 the Kunsthalle Lissabon ran a programme based on solo exhibitions, inviting emerging artists, who in spite of very solid careers were mostly unknown to the Portuguese audience.<sup>17</sup> Downstairs, located inside a former barbershop, curator Margarida Mendes hosted *The Barber Shop*, a programme combining artist residencies with a conference series, focussing on experimental film, cybernetics and philosophy. The upper floors were occupied by artist studios and by the collective Parkour, devoted to exhibiting a younger generation. The same informal networks that energised the Kunsthalle Lissabon extended to other projects emerging at roughly the same time, like Oporto, a screening programme devoted to experimental film, where one can delight in unknown gems of independent filmmaking. The liveliness of the alternative scene was palpable in these spaces, but it never managed to galvanise the city’s institutions, which remained trapped in their own parochialisms.<sup>18</sup>

The institutional landscape in Lisbon is generic, marred by mismanagement, corruption, neglect and political opportunism. As a rule, curators and museum directors are political appointees, who serve at the behest of the political hierarchy, and hence can be removed arbitrarily. This scenario ensures an absolute lack of institutional continuity. Though there are notable exceptions, such as Miguel Wandschneider’s programme for

Installation view, Oporto Ten Year Party, Oporto, Lisbon, 2017. Photograph: Lais Pereira. Courtesy Oporto, Lisbon

Installation view, ‘Mistake! Mistake! said the rooster... and stepped down from the duck’, Lumiar Cité, Lisbon, 2017. Photograph: DMF. Courtesy Maumaus / Lumiar Cité, Lisbon

12 Descolonizando is a collective comprised of artists, academics and activists, which is informally connected to the campaign #decolonizethisplace. Their intention was not so much to protest the figure of Vieira but rather the narrative of the ‘benign’ colonist.

13 Descolonizando had secured a permit for the event, the extremists did not, but the police refused to intervene nonetheless.

14 See <http://www.buala.org>.

15 See Paul Ames, ‘Portugal is Becoming an Angolan Financial Colony’, *Politico*, 28 April 2015, available at <https://www.politico.eu/article/angola-portugal-investment-economy/> (last accessed on 12 December 2017).

16 The ‘Golden Visas’ have raised 1.39 billion euros since 2012. Chinese investors make up over three quarters of the 2,290 visa recipients to date. Other nationalities include Brazilians, Russians, South Africans and Angolans.

17 For example, Amália Pica, Mariana Castillo Deball, Iman Issa, Jonathas de Andrade and Marwa Arsanios.

18 Oporto is run by multimedia artist Alexandre Estrela since 2007 from his own studio located on a former merchant sailors’s union perched atop Santa Catarina’s hilltop. The project never managed to galvanise the institutional scene, which remained trapped in its own parochialisms.





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Culturgest that had a carefully crafted identity,<sup>19</sup> or the programme curated by Liliana Coutinho for the Maria Matos Theatre, examples of mercurial management abound. In 2005 Delfim Sardo resigned from a short-lived stint as director of exhibitions in the CCB due to budget cuts. In 2009 Pedro Lapa was removed from the directorship of the Museu do Chiado in a polemic decision, contested by the art scene, after successfully lobbying for the expansion of the museum's curricula and facilities. The same museum lost a second director when David Santos resigned over the erratic behaviour of his superiors in 2015.<sup>20</sup> The official opening of the museum's new venue was overshadowed by an artist-led demonstration, protesting the government's cultural policy. Also in 2015, António Pinto Ribeiro resigned from the Gulbenkian Foundation due to executive overreach, and Isabel Carlos rescinded her contract as director of the Centro de Arte Moderna (CAM) following Gulbenkian's decision to merge the CAM with its ancient and modern art museum. In 2006, after languishing without funding or a proper programme for years, the CCB was officially converted into the Museu Coleção Berardo (MCB), an arrangement similar to the one found between the Friedrich Christian Flick collection and the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. This trajectory – from political vanity project to a private investor's vanity museum – perfectly illustrates the economic transition, which defines the pre- and post-crisis, from bloated public works to the private/public partnership scheme. In 2017, in yet another idiosyncratic decision, the MCB did not renew the contract of its director of exhibitions, leaving the museum to be run as a private fiefdom.

On a wider economic scale, the entanglements between finance and contemporary art are mired in opacity. Joe Berardo owes the Caixa Geral de Depósitos CGD (a Portuguese state-owned bank) something close to one billion euros.<sup>21</sup> Technically speaking the collection is no longer his – the creditors have requested his assets be mortgaged – but there is no political will to tackle the situation. Another failed bank, the BPN, nationalised in 2008 at a cost of 1.8 billion euros (the tip of what the press called the greatest financial crime ever in Portuguese history) had among its assets 85 paintings by Joan Miró, whose sale was halted by auctioneer Christie's after the opposition parties applied for a court injunction.<sup>22</sup> The bankruptcy of another nebulous financial entity, the Privado Holding, also left its Ellipse Foundation Contemporary Art Collection in juridical limbo, literally withering away in a warehouse on the outskirts of Lisbon. The perplexing nature of these processes, and of political management in general, contributes to a spawning graveyard of failed institutions, totally disconnected from the artist-run scene. To make matters worse, the stunted career paths of an older generation lead to an unspoken belief in seniority, the apex of which is the Venice pavilion – younger artists are supposed to wait their turn, rather than 'cut the line',<sup>23</sup> a policy which results in the notable absence of the best internationally known names, like Leonor Antunes, César, Barateiro, Neves Marques or Silva from the official selection – but whose effects can also be felt in the lack of open avenues, which would allow a younger generation of curators and programmers to transit into the institutional scene.

The Serralves Museum, in Oporto, remains the only internationally renowned Portuguese institution, and its newly appointed director João Ribas, who was formerly the curator of MIT List Visual Arts Center (2009–13), is one of the few examples of Portuguese returning, rather than leaving Portugal. The only Portuguese curator to favour the essay-exhibition model, Ribas served as Serralves deputy director under Suzanne Cotter, and curated 'Under The Clouds: from Paranoia to the Digital Sublime' (2015),<sup>24</sup> and more recently the 4th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art (2017). Serralves is also the sole Portuguese institution to consistently select its director via an international open call, in a process that was only recently mirrored by the Gulbenkian Foundation, when Penelope

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19 Under his tenure as curator for contemporary art from 2005 to 2016, Culturgest exhibited artists such as Asier Mendizabal, Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys, Jean-Luc Moulène and Dorota Jurczak.  
20 The controversy revolved around the collection of the SEC (Secretaria de Estado da Cultura), first promised to the museum, then suddenly moved to Serralves. The collection comprises 85 paintings by Joan Miró, which were formerly owned by the BPN, a bank whose immense debt was nationalised in 2008.  
21 The loan was contentious if not outright illegal. But unlike other figures implicated in the financial crash (the former Portuguese Prime Minister, José Socrates or the founder of BES, Ricardo Salgado) Berardo was never indicted.  
22 See Peter Wise, 'Christie's Pulls Miró Auction After Portuguese Protests', *Financial Times*, 4 February 2014, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/277c59a8-8dce-11e3-ba55-00144feab7de> (last accessed on 12 December 2017).  
23 The notable exception was the choice of João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva in 2009.  
24 The exhibition described the metaphoric trajectory computer networks undertook from ominous, life-annihilating military technology, to ubiquitous, life-style gadgetry via the emblem of the 'cloud', once a deadly radioactive gas, now an ethereal data-saturated ecosystem.

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Curtis, former director of Tate Britain, was appointed director. Though international open calls are a welcome development, in both cases, the selection process was supervised by the recruitment consultants Liz Amos Associates,<sup>25</sup> which in practice leaves the two biggest Portuguese institutions under the management of the same (heavily Anglo-Saxon) network.

### Non-Profits and Artist-Run Spaces

Non-profits such as the already mentioned Kunsthalle Lissabon, Oporto or Hangar have been occupying the overall void of content. Hangar is a residency and exhibition space that fosters transdisciplinary exchanges and public engagement, with a particular emphasis on postcolonialism and the Afro-Portuguese scene.<sup>26</sup> These more recent projects have been accompanied by the somewhat older Galeria Zé dos Bois, a cultural centre created in 1994 invested in music, performance and contemporary art, and by Maumaus. Maumaus is an independent study programme and artist residency that has played a major, albeit informal, role in the internationalisation of the Portuguese art scene, by, for instance, introducing a whole generation of artists, filmmakers and theorists to the local audience (Harun Farocki, Diedrich Diederichsen and René Green among them) or shaping the path of a younger generation of artists – such as Pedro Barateiro, Francisco Vidal or Bruno Leitão who went on to found Hangar after working with curator Jürgen Bock in the Lumiar Cité space – whose trajectories would radically change the spirit of the city’s art scene.

The study programme was founded in 1992 by Bock and now has an ancillary exhibition space (mentioned above) called Lumiar Cité. The exhibition programme began in 2005 in Lumiar, after the school was offered a space in an unusual location close to the outskirts of the city, in an area populated by a multicultural working class. Like Maumaus, Lumiar Cité has a strong emphasis on institutional critique and postcolonial studies. It has shown work by artists such as Green, Farocki and Antje Ehmann, Manthia Diawara and Allan Sekula (all long-time collaborators of Bock). Works by younger generations of artists including Francisco Vidal or Gabriel Abrantes have also been shown.<sup>27</sup>

But however professional these spaces may prove to be, their condition remains precarious: they are mostly funded by the DGARTES, Direção Geral das Artes (director-general for the arts), the public institute that came to replace the IAC, or by the Gulbenkian Foundation, and must reapply every two years. After the building in Avenida da Liberdade was sold to investors, The Barber Shop closed, and Mendes left Portugal to join the curatorial team of the 11th Gwangju Biennale. She is now developing a public programme for CA2M, Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo in Madrid. The Kunsthalle Lissabon had to relocate to the post-industrial area of Xabregas; and Sintaxe, another small non-profit space, is said to be closing due to lack of funding.

In a process comparable to what happened in Berlin, as the non-profits get marginalised or displaced, a new bevy of commercial galleries is in the process of opening storefronts in Lisbon, and a growing number of international artists are moving in to the city. The welcome effect of this uptick, according to local artists, is the destabilisation of the country’s stale hierarchies. The unwelcome effect, however, is felt in spiralling rents and overall real-estate pressure.

It remains somewhat puzzling that a country that never had a strong contemporary art scene could witness a contemporary-art-led gentrification. But that probably says more about what contemporary art is, at present, than about what Portugal became. In the last three decades the socio-economic space within which contemporary art circulates has been thoroughly imbricated with speculative finance and gentrification, instituting social and economic dynamics that run counter to the political aspirations of most artists. And yet, as Andrew Stefan Weiner argues, the field hasn’t been able to think through the contradictions between what it purports to do and what it inadvertently does.<sup>28</sup> It only compounds the problem that its models and modes of global circulation are particularly ill-suited for this task.

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25 Liz Amos Associates is a headhunting firm based in London whose clients include Frieze, Lisson Gallery and the Tate consortium, as well as Serralves and Gulbenkian in Portugal.

26 The space is run by Mónica de Miranda and Bruno Leitão.

27 In September 2017, Lumiar Cité opened the exhibition ‘Mistake! Mistake! said the rooster... and stepped down from the duck’, a collaboration with the project *Hubert Fichte: Love and Ethnology* (2017-19) (conceived by Diedrich Diederichsen and Anselm Franke for the Goethe-Institut and Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin).

28 Andrew Stefan Weiner, ‘The Art of the Possible: With and Against documenta 14’, *The Biennial Foundation*, 14 August 2017, available at <http://www.biennialfoundation.org/2017/08/art-possible-documenta-14/> (last accessed on 20 December 2017).