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PRESS RELEASE
20th November 2015

Finalist works on show at Museu do Chiado until 31st January 2016

SONAE MEDIA ART AWARD EXHIBITION OPENS TO THE PUBLIC TOMORROW

Sonae and the Museum present the exhibition with original works developed by the finalist artists of the most important national art award in the field of new media. The winner will be announced next 11th December.

Sonae, in partnership with the National Museum of Contemporary Art – *Museu do Chiado*, will open to the public, tomorrow, the exhibition of the finalist works of the Sonae Media Art Award, the most important national art award in the field of new media.

Diogo Evangelista, Tatiana Macedo, Rui Penha and Patrícia Portela, as well as the *Musa paradisíaca* collaboration of Miguel Ferrão with Eduardo Guerra, were selected among more than 150 applications to develop original pieces exclusively for the Sonae Media Art Award. Their works, which benefitted from a €5,000 allowance granted by Sonae, will now be on show to the public at *Museu do Chiado* until next 31st January.

The winner of the Sonae Media Art Award will be chosen among the five finalists, upon evaluation of the works on display. The awarding panel will include: Lori Zippay (executive director of Electronic Arts Intermix in New York), Marco Martins (filmmaker) and João Silvério (curator of contemporary art). The decision on the winner shall be announced on 11th December 2015.

The awarding panel will privilege works expressed in a multimedia language, concentrating particular on the interdisciplinary dynamic of the works presented that are coherently corresponded and corroborated by the artistic background of the five finalists, meeting all the artistic and conceptual quality conditions, project innovation and interdisciplinary ability for the comprehension of the media art concept.

The Sonae Media Art Award is biennial and the winning artist receives a €40,000 prize. This initiative is part of the patronage agreement celebrated between Sonae and MNAC-MC, integrating Sonae's corporate responsibility policy, which looks to promote creativity and innovation, trigger new trends and bring society closer to the Arts, especially through relevant cultural manifestations that can allow enriching experiences of personal and collective development.

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Original works question the limits of art

The Sonae Media Art Award aims to promote spaces for experimentation and encourage the development of new concepts in the field of media art, with a versatility and quality that have become consistent with the main lines of action of the world's most influential centres of art. It acknowledges artists whose work contemplates multimedia as a support and/or theme, both in an exploratory and innovative manner and from a critical and historical perspective. The award comprises forms of contemporary creation that range from image to sound, including explorations into the media such as video, computation, sound and mixed media, in which other forms of art like performance, dance, cinema, theatre and literature can be incorporated, thereby claiming its stake as the most important art award in Portugal.

The five finalist artists selected for the first edition of Sonae Media Art Award present a group of original works of art showcasing the diversity and complexity of artistic languages that are involved in the concept of media art.

These five finalist projects question the perceptive limits of art, in which concepts such as interactivity and the performative and immersive aspect are emphasised in the creation of a dialogue with the spectator. These projects also reflect upon the traditional limits of art and science and the roles of artist and spectator, confronted with a new artistic map in which communication will likewise be forged within an increasing virtuality.

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Works on display and authors' testimonies

Diogo Evangelista (1984)

DOWN IN THE VALLEY by Diogo Evangelista, presents a set of video installations questioning the relationship between the human, the robot and the primate.
IRRATIONAL MAN observes the limits of human cognition. In a slapstick narrative that appeals to a synesthetic nostalgia, the audience is taken by the chromatic oscillation that questions our cerebral hemispheres, in a rhythmic imbalance that breaks the linearity of perception. This oceanic sensory feel, tested by the voice over that confronts the gap between body and mind, provokes a strange realization of our doubts that are reflected in the primate's machine-like gestures in front of us. IRRATIONAL MAN brings us closer to that Uncanny Valley where we are confronted with our similarity with robots. Could we accept the mechanism of the production of emotions and aesthetic sensitivity?
SPINE POEM dazzles us with the gestural agility of a culinary artisan on a close-up journey to the makings of an unlikely recipe: fish spine. The deconstruction of the animal is choreographed with the meticulous precision of a ritual while we are overrun by a storm outside. In this science fiction, the sublimation of an element is brought upon by the mechanization of surgical gestures, as a cry out to the maximum exponential of human sophistication. The syncopic structuralism of the spine is accompanied by acid sound cuts that burst into the film sequences.
MAGICIAN´S END consumes the exhibition hall with a radioactive tone by presenting the surprise outcome that defeated the great master Houdini (1874-1926). The notorious magician that became known for his remarkable escapes from situations of great danger, as well as for fighting the frauds that populate the illusionism world, revealed himself to be a mere mortal when he was struck off-guard by a rival. In MAGICIAN´S END the audience is daunted by the fatal path of this kryptonite punch, which, in stop motion, hunts us *ad aeternum*, proving that in the end every illusion is eventually unmasked.

Musa paradisíaca – Eduardo Guerra (1986) and Miguel Ferrão (1986)

For the SONAE Media Art Award, *Musa paradisíaca* presents an original installation centred on the projection of *Fome Animal*, (Animal Hunger), 2015, a 16mm film, and on *Cantina—Fábula*, (Canteen-Fable) 2015, two tables where a ceramic sculpture is continuously being replicated in bread, to be consumed throughout the duration of the exhibition.
Cantina—Fábula
Canteens are meeting spaces where specific shapes are shared and eaten. Each canteen presents a group of objects both in ceramic and in bread, with the latter being an eatable replica of the former. These two means (ceramics and bread) are similar as they share a manner of creation that is, in itself, a manner of thinking. Through these shapes that are conceived, created and consumed, in a cycle of constant compliment, offering and sacrifice, these objects and, thus, the *Canteens*, present a new medium where being, thinking and eating are coincident and collective.

Created in collaboration with Diogo Cavaleiro and Tomás Fonseca, present since the inauguration of this work series, the *Cantina—Fábula* is also a canteen-film. For the first time, this *Canteen* is focused on the quest for an individual need, that of the animal hunger, which gives title to the film with which it is associated and which is substantiated in the indefinable animal sculptural shape presented here,

replicated and transformed into food. Its division in parts, both in the ceramic object and in the bread object, exists so that from it one can obtain what it is one desires.

Fome animal

The film medium stands, for *Musa paradisíaca*, as a way to think impossibilities, as it constitutes in itself a compound of irremediably lost shapes, although temporarily salvageable. *Fome animal* is the film in which those that eat are observed from the perspective of an animal. Gathered at a bakery, a group of people prepares and celebrates the unrepeatable bound around a dead animal for its purpose.

Patrícia Portela (1974)

PARASOMNIA

Civilization as a whole is on the verge of "losing a basic human faculty: the power of bringing visions into focus with our eyes shut."

Italo Calvino

"Sleep is the last unleveraged form of human activity and it is violently threatened by a world in which the divisions between night and day, between rest and work, are disappearing (…)."

Megan Heuer in *Who sleeps?*

Based on Acácio Nobre's unfinished essay on sleep, insomnia and the absence of dreams (1890) and a study of the discoveries of how birds sleep by neurophysicists Luigi Rolando (1773-1831) and Jean Pierre Flourens (1794-1867), Parasomnia is a visual and sound installation that intends to promote the "stimulation of the production of melatonin" and the "sleeping vapours fit to induce a regenerating sleep favourable to a lucid dream".

In the first antechamber, where the main goal is to achieve a subtle breathing through a multiple frame, each visitor is asked to wait. A wall of paintings unravels in an imperceptible movement to those who gaze inattentively, but constant to those who stare inquiring.

In the second chamber, visitors are asked to surrender to gravity and they are proposed to plunge into the inertia of a siesta. Accompanied by a feminine voice that grows old by a bed worthy of a sultan, visitors, laying down, remain on the edge of a performative contradiction: if they remain awake, they will miss out on the experience the installation is proposing; if they fall asleep, they will miss out on the experience the installation is presenting.

Each visitor decides when to leave the chambers and, thus, bring about the «death» of the voice that is telling 1001 tales.

Continuous duration: in loop.

Performance:

On 19th December, the longest Saturday evening of the year, will be the celebration of the 90th anniversary of Acácio Nobre's original essay that inspired this work. On that night, invited artists, writers, scientists and researchers will occupy this installation from sunset to sunrise and invade our sleep with their voices, ideas and gastronomies revealing how, when and what it means to sleep in a society that considers sleep an avoidable disease.

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Rui Penha (1981)

RESONO

Among humans, the reciprocity of an interactive experience depends on the absence of a script, on the mutual availability to construct a sense of empathy that will elevate a certain contact, even when random, to the quality of a singular moment. The relationship we establish with machines is, on the contrary, a relationship between masters and slaves: we expect them to always be available to readily execute any chore and any emotional reaction on our part happens only in case of error or cessation of the gentile collaboration on their part. The same happens at an interactive installation, where the machine made performer is forced to react to any stimulus diligently and submissively, for the exclusive pleasure of its temporary master. The question remains: could there be interaction without choice? Could true empathy arise among beings that are not free?

Resono is an interactive installation that assumes the level zero of autonomy is the ability to say: no! It is an ecosystem of fifteen beings that await, with various different balances between anxiety and curiosity, for the arrival of a visitor. It is up to the latter to take the first step towards building an interaction, conquered by the gentleness with which the visitor approaches the beings and by the affection with which he/she sings to a small group of them. Slowly, and if patient, the visitor might begin to hear shy resonances, which are simply the way these beings learn to communicate with unknown stimulus, through imitation. From this point on, the story of each interaction will be unique and will depend on the delicate understanding between the states of mind of all participants, where, in truly exceptional cases, it is possible the entire ecosystem may come together for a collective performance. Each successful experience will live in the dreams of each of the *resono* beings and mark the ongoing development of their personality.

If reciprocity is in fact a condition for empathy, the same will happen with the visitors.

Tatiana Macedo (1981)

1989

1989 is an original work created for the Sonae Media Art Award and is presented in the form of a multichannel video installation with space-like sound.

Based on my relationship with the images and sounds I have been capturing throughout the years and that constitute my personal archive, as well as on semi-staged shoots recently filmed for this piece, I see this film as an expanded essay, demanding a constant reconfiguration of reality.

The film is articulated through the "geopolitics of knowledge and feeling", in order to create a dialogue between the matters of perceptive subjectivity and its interaction with the power structures of language and thought itself.

Lara has been a conference interpreter for over 10 years. She was born in Mozambique, lived in Rhodesia until she was 5 and studied in Swaziland until she was 17, at a school known for its apartheid struggle. I film her at an interpreting booth, reading the script that I have put together. As she reads, one can perceive that the lingering thought in the texts translates her experience. The situation becomes inverted, as the borderline thought and the translation of borders are her own life. Everything is translated, the translator included. Universalising European and Western Values are questioned in translation. 'Europe must reflect on its (post)colonial and post-Cold War past. Asia is part of Europe, and vice-versa.'

I was 8 years old in 1989, when I witnessed live on TV, the fall of the Berlin Wall. 'The images spread since the 80s serve not only to represent a given event, but are, themselves, catalysts for action.' This is an idea associated to the "events" that led to the execution of Ceausescu in Romania in 1989. In Beijing, thousands of people protested and were murdered that same year.