

PHANTOM SENSATION

Vera Mota
25 March – 29 April 2023

VERA MOTA (Porto, 1982) has a degree in Fine Arts - Sculpture (2000-2005) and a Master in Contemporary Art Practices (2006-2008), from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Porto. Her artistic practice reveals itself mainly through sculpture, drawing, and performance, enjoying the breadth and permeability offered by these disciplines. With regular public presentations since 2005, her work involves a strong material component, in a process in which her body establishes itself as an indispensable agent. Performance is thus a means of production, composition, or even staging, promoting, and equating the involvement of the body as a generative methodology and axis for conceptual formulations. Recently, still focusing on the politics of the body, her work presents a sculptural animism that claims other perspectives for the body, other bodies and materiality, trying to perform processes of transfiguration, declassification of functions and transference between organic and inorganic, geological and biological bodies, as shown in her most recent solo exhibition "SEMI CORPO/ DISEMBODED" (Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto). Regarding exhibitions and performance programs, her work has also been presented in Galeria Municipal do Porto; MACE – Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Elvas; Matadero (Madrid, Spain); Ireland's Biennial (Limerick, Ireland) and SESC (São Paulo, Brazil), among others.

Workshop *Sonic Bodies* with Teresa Arêde

Saturday, 15 April 2023
10:00 – 13:00

Free participation
Registrations: publicos@sismografo.org

Following a guided tour of Vera Mota's exhibition *Phantom limb sensation*, the voice will be introduced as an extension of our own bodies. With artist Teresa Arêde, we find that the voice resides within the whole body, from internal utterances to fingertips, coming out inevitably through the larynx as expanded matter. What comes first? Gesture or sound? The voice is invisible yet present, sensorially undeniable, just like a phantom limb. With the various body parts we have at hand, blind sonic drawings will be created. With eyes shut, we will try to understand how sound takes its form, to then draw it as lines, stains, abstractions, and even cellular organisms that give actual life to graphic scores. In rearranging the body's expressiveness, where the hand becomes the mouth or the voice embodies the hand that is missing, we shall materialize our presence beyond ourselves.

Untitled, 2023
acrylic glass, steel
Variable dimensions

Phantom Sensation

Phantom sensation can result from errors occurring in the remapping process in the cortex, following the loss of a body part. In this reorganization of the body *image*, it can occur, for example, the invasion of the representational territory of the face over the territory of the hand, leading one to believe that it is the absent part that is felt.

The change we experience in our bodies — even without the loss of any limbs or organs — seems, however, to be quite different. It is not a matter of *feeling* a part that is not there, but of *not feeling* a whole that actually is. We find ourselves being consumed by a numbness, driven slowly from an anesthetic state to the loss of sense of the physical limits of the body or the erosion of the distinction between its own and other matters. This *phantom sensation* is no longer localized but takes on a generalized effect.

While we speak of *sentient* materials, of matters and objects with their own agency, the biological body we carry loses materiality itself. It ceases to perceive itself in its material existence and to establish relations of substance with others. Much as it virtualizes its relations and communications, it *virtualizes* its limbs, its organs, or at least its perception of them. Swallowed up by a capitalist system that dictates and sets parameters for all aspects of its existence — from what it consumes to its desires and most intimate aspects — this dormant body undergoes a growing abstraction of its forms, functions, or expressions. Alienated from its corporeality, it perceives itself in a distorted way, disfigured.

In *Phantom Sensation*, Vera Mota presents a set of sculptures that lead us to an imaginary of the organic, of something biological, reminiscences or residues of botany or zoology, microscopic observation of cells or geological formations that reveal themselves in the landscape. Organized symmetrically along an axis, they take on the character of different *evolutionary* or *germinative* stages, in which each element crystallizes what appears to be only one moment of an ongoing transformation.

These objects appear here in the aseptic, cold, and transparent material of plexiglass and steel. Sterile, permanent, and stagnant, as a whole these mirrored forms architect a structure that resembles a vertebral column, some kind of bones that, deposited here, expect to be intercepted by the shadows of the bodies that visit them, wanting these shadows to mix and interfere with their crystalline transparencies.

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