



ALL THE NAMES

“The record card belongs to a thirty-six old woman, born in that city, and it contains two endorsements, one concerning marriage, the other divorce. As this record card, there are surely hundreds in the file, if not thousands, so it is difficult to understand how is Mr. José looking at it with such a strange expression, which at first seems attentive, but it's also vague and uneasy (...). Mr. José looks at what is written on the record card and looks it again, the handwriting doesn't belong to him, it has an old fashion design, thirty-six years ago another clerk wrote the words that now can be read, the girl's name, the parents and godparents' names, the birth date and time, the street, the number and the floor where she has seen the first light and felt the first pain, a beginning as all the others, the big and the small differences come later, some of those who are born join the encyclopaedias, the histories, the biographies, the catalogues, the manuals, the scrapbooks, the others, badly compared, are like the cloud that has passed without leaving the slightest trace, if it has rained it was not enough to watering the land.”

José Saramago, *All the Names*.

In the ancient vaults for rent of the Banco Nacional Ultramarino also was a box-file with all the names of those who kept here their property and personal values, but also, perhaps, memories and secrets, shared promises and object of major sentimental meaning. Time has already turned yellow the file's record cards, but they are still classified by the name, followed by the inherited surname, of each holder, matching it to a specific number: that of its respective safety deposit box. The handwriting is from past times, too, and its different styles show us different employees wrote it. Currently, the file is part of the historical record of the building itself, remaining at its original place, testimony from another time, slower and quieter, and a utility in the meantime lost.

Specifically designed by the prestigious British company CHUBB with Cristino da Silva, the BNU safety deposit boxes, especially the room with those 3552 for rent – in fact 3532, since 20 hide two small emergency exits – constituted between 1957 and 1964 an almost autonomous project, such is the volume of drawings, details of construction and time invested. Preceded by the “dona” Murano mosaic panel *Epic Maritimes Discoveries*, by Guilherme Camarinha, the safes with reception and hall, separate rooms for private consultation, independent ventilation system, combination locks, specific lightning and furniture, surveillance system, are a work of superior quality due to their safety, sophistication and beauty. To this aesthetic unity greatly contributed the materials chosen and the refinement of its work. The anodized steel ceiling design attuned to the lighting system, the walls, railings and the stainless steel and brass safety deposit boxes, the floor of green linoleum mosaic or of green marble with steel file, the lighting soft temperature and the heavy armoured doors built a cinematographic environment captured, previously in 1964, by Horácio Novais eyes. Its existence, full preservation and use as exhibition space inside MUDE turn it in a very especial museological equipment. Walking downstairs and transposing its doors, we dive into a place of silence where time seems to stop. Without mobile network the communication with the outside is also interrupted, even if we want it.

The names once connected with these safety deposit boxes will never be exposed and known by the public, but the strong identity of this place makes possible to each visitor imagine or fictionalize the life, the stories, the success and failures that occurred here. Since the opening of MUDE there was the desire to evoke in a symbolic way these individuals and their memories.



The nature of the project presented by Teresa Segurado Pavão made it possible. The idea was born when visiting the exhibition *Kukas – a cloud that collapses into rain* (2011) -, and from the impact this place raised. After developing specific projects for the Museu Nacional do Traje (1989), Museu Laboratório and Jardim Botânico de Lisboa (1996), Convento dos Cardais (2006), Museu Porto Santo (2007), Museu de Artes Decorativas da Fundação Ricardo Espírito Santo e Silva (2009) and Laboratório de Química do Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Lisboa (2011), where she explored always particular subjects of each place, through ceramic and tapestry work, Teresa Segurado Pavão proposed now to work on the rental safety deposit boxes' room.

The challenge was to fictionalize different “collectors”, with unique personalities, temperaments, tastes and interests, exploring issues of *memory and archive, heritage, collection and collecting*. Five concepts intrinsically present in this very place, as well as associated with the genesis and purpose of any museological institution. As such, it made doubly sense to have this project in MUDE safety boxes room. The result is the 3553 exhibition. To this end, 130 safety boxes were opened in order to present equal number of pieces, almost all designed and produced especially for this purpose. Each of these pieces reflects the abstract nature of numbers, while actual embodying them through shape, colour and material. Looking at the different pieces, we recognize in them formal and material affinities that allow us to reconstruct families of different natures. In parallel, we also fictionalize each collector who was in its origin and inquire about the possible reasons for this gathering: beauty, rarity, and historical or financial value... In this process we finally discover Teresa Segurado Pavão's creative and referential universe and, ultimately, ourselves, at the exact moment we start embodying each of these figures, giving them a face, specific garments, purposes and paths of life. That is what Jacinto Lucas Pires did, resulting in two little texts entitled *Male text and female text from the European Democratic Republic*. Let's follow his example, and discover our own characters. Maybe one of them is a thirty-six old woman, born in this very town...

“I chose the soil.

To form what is formless.

I chose the white soil.

Made of white clay polished and/or glazed are the pieces I am working on.

White is the colour of the paper. The colour of the untouched.

White is the sum of all colours.

Much transparent glazed turns into water green, few into creams and none into plaster
or chalk.

I will use some oxides such chromium because it is associated by colour to bronze,
manganese to wood, copper to oxidized copper and iron to rust and fire. If I want black,
I have to mix them all, because black is also the sum of colours.

I have a window-frame of black iron.

(...)

The thread is the agent which binds all states of existence among themselves and to its
begin.



The thread of thoughts.

Fragments.

Rituals of workmanship, the hands, times.

The threading of the needle is a symbol of passage.

Thimble, washer, ring.

Undefined cycle without any solution of continuity: the close circle in opposition to the spiral.”

Teresa Pavão, Impressions, Thoughts and Memories, 2008-2009

The words of Teresa Segurado Pavão perfectly convey the alchemic sense pervading all her work and creative process. *Ritual, Secret, White, Passage, Closed Circle, Gold, Ring*, are terms with a particular meaning, which lead us to the ancient practice of alchemy. In each piece in display is felt the desired physical transformation of metals into gold, “the most intimate secret of earth” according to her, therefore acquiring certain sacredness. Also the transformation of white soil, matter almost worthless, into polished or glazed objects, with utilitarian, decorative or artistic value take, in itself, a magical significance. To give the clay a desired shape with the own hands, make it go through the action of different oxides in search of a certain tint or stain, submit it to the power of fire and manage the different manufacturing times are all steps in a transmutation process. The copper, silver and gold meshes covering the pieces are the result of a patient work of weaving that takes an initiatory sense. In other words, along the manufacturing process take place successive changes of state, which may symbolically represent the transcendence of the subject itself.

Mention should also be made to the process of recognition of the materials by Teresa Segurado Pavão and the place that such moment holds in the creative process. On display there are traces of other earthenware and Chinese porcelain, pieces of coral, shell, ivory, and mother-of-pearl, glasses and mirrors, fossils and copper, iron or silver bids, bones and African woods, stamps, buttons, rings, pendants, spoons. Teresa Segurado Pavão takes these traces almost always as departure point of her work. Be it an ivory necklace or a set of bones found by accident in the Setubal peninsula. Then comes a moment of appropriation of the piece and recognition of other shapes that each one may contain or trigger. The choice of a particular shape arises, though, not from a drawing but from a forgotten or undervalued pre-existence. This creative process takes us back to BNU and its history, since some of the pieces in exhibition had its origin in bookbinding irons and bronzes coming from the traditional Fundação Ricardo Espírito Santo workshops, institution whose life was related to the Bank, having designed some of its spaces, as the Pereira Coutinho Room and the Governor’s Office. Almost by chance, after having submitted this story in the *Nacional Ultramarino* Exhibition, we evoke it again here.



Cups, symbol of life principle, milk, blood. In China people used to drink in the two halves of a gourd.

(...)

Cups with holes, pieces that do not contain, openings for the unknown. Basin, the water flowing.

Boxes, drawers keep and separate from the world that which is intimate and precious.

Drawers-secret have partitions and false bottoms.

Boxes-bags with covers with shuttles like handles.”

Teresa Pavão, Impressions, Thoughts and Memories, 2008-2009

In display we find cups and other containers, boxes, plates and pillows. Objects that seem to be aimed as practical, common and daily utilitarian, though existing in a territory hard to define, given its fragility, grace and delicacy. These features compromise that possible utilitarianism, referring them to another universe, more decorative or ceremonial. The extreme formal simplicity and the use of white clay, polished and glazed, give a timeless quality to each object. While evoking ancestral shapes that could contain, serve or store water, cereal or sacred oils, they claim the status of worship objects or collectables. This aestheticization of everyday objects is evidenced by the eyes of Eurico Lino do Vale, who records them in black and white photography, frontally before our eyes and in a classical framework.

The hybrid nature of these objects makes them an interesting subject of exhibition for a museum dedicated to design, mostly because we live in a time when the nature of common objects (its purpose, usefulness and intention), how we relate to them and their value, representation and language, undergo a profound change. Teresa Segurado Pavão's objects may not have an explicit functionality, but they can accompany us, take part in our life experience and grow old with us by their ability to communicate, impress and storytelling.

A final word of thanks to Teresa Segurado Pavão, Eurico Lino do Vale, Jacinto Lucas Pires and all the team who collaborated in another exhibition and its catalogue.