

OBLÍVIO

MOM

Galeria Belard is proud to present *Oblívio*, a poignant solo exhibition by multidisciplinary artist, MOM (Mafalda d'Oliveira Martins). Opening its doors at pm on January , , the showcase explores the profound impact of solitude on our collective consciousness, remembering those who die alone in the city of Lisbon.

In a poignant mass at the Church of São Roque in Lisbon, in October , names were read – a requiem for those who departed alone in Lisbon that year. While MOM had previously observed this annual ritual, this time, perhaps intensified by a world grappling with a global crisis, sparked a profound introspection in the artist, demanding reaction within her artistic expression.

From the desire to honor those who seemingly left no trace, MOM's curiosity led her to grasp the delicate balance between imagination and reality. The result is a visual and auditory ode to the lives lost, unclaimed by family or friends, in the shadows of Lisbon in .

Delicately crafted on paper, MOM creates a series of portraits of faces that never crossed her path. With no predetermined destination, using an open and expressive approach in a process resembling archaeological excavation, the artist breathes life into what could be someone's face, in search of the solitary figures whose stories remained untold.

The exhibition title, *Oblívio* (Oblivion), encapsulates both the theme and the artist's empathetic approach. The portraits covering the gallery walls, from floor to ceiling, suspended by pins, evoke an overwhelming sensation, confronting us with the weight of these lives lost in the ether. The main room then becomes a fragile sanctuary, inviting spectators into a space of contemplation, reaction, and silence, suggesting an ethereal connection with the forgotten lives behind the names.

Adding an auditory layer to this immersive experience, MOM, also a musical artist, composed a piece titled, 233. Performed live, at pm, at the exhibition's opening, a choir of voices will sing, at different intervals, what merges to create an unsettling melody – a tribute to the departed souls and an exploration of the idea that beauty can also emerge from death.

Oblívio is a visceral response to the artist's apprehensions about a society marred by loneliness and disconnection, that addresses these silent tragedies, so close and often overlooked. This exhibition transcends traditional memorials – becoming a registry, a testament to the imaginary, preserving the essence of those individuals who slipped away from the terrestrial realm, leaving behind no trace but the final exhale of their names.

We all fear loneliness. Although, we often do not often recognize it.

At the end of 2021, our habits resumed, our routines were re-established – meetings in restaurants and coffeeshops, on the street, in public spaces; the return to schools and socializing with friends, visits to nursing homes, to grandparents' and relatives' houses. With the end of the pandemic, normality returned.

However, that same year also revealed some serious fragilities at the heart of society. Out of sight, despite often so close – next door –, hundreds of people ended their days in solitude. And died without friends or family to reclaim their bodies.

On October 17, 2021, on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and Homelessness, a mass was celebrated in the church of São Roque in suffrage for the people who had died alone in the city of Lisbon, that same year. The ceremony began with the reading of each person's name. The community prayed in silence.



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233 names of 233 people were heard.

Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa and the Irmandade de São Roque ensure that the bodies of those who die alone have the dignity they deserve: first, by providing a funeral, and second, by mobilizing volunteers to assist them. This was already done before, but in 2021 there was an unprecedented increase in the number of people in these conditions.

In the silence of the ceremony, when only the names of the 233 people could be heard, I observed human wounds lurking unexpectedly close. I realized then that I needed to react on them through my visual investigation, answering one question.

How can you build the memory of someone, who apparently hasn't left none?

Each name hides a face. Not knowing these faces, nor could I ever come to know them – I had no access to information or data, except the names –, they urged me to look for them.

Through the use of simple materials, I began to shape the faces that could have belonged to each of these people. My imagination and the materials used came together to answer the question that plagued me. More than mere portraits, invocations were unveiled.

Oblívio invites us to participate in this space of contemplation, reaction and silence, bringing together, on paper, the possible memory of the 233 people who, that year, died alone.

MOM (Mafalda d'Oliveira Martins)

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