

VOLTERRA

Eurico Lino do Vale

The ones who look at us, photographs by Eurico Lino do Vale

In the course of his work, Eurico Lino do Vale chose portraiture very early on as a way to embody characters of various typologies. Eurico does not just photograph a person or a viewpoint from inside a palace (“Survey of the Palácio da Rosa”, 2012), and the same goes for a celebration or a festive event. As a photographer, he pursues a methodology, sometimes unplanned and thus random, of proceeding to record the various characters he encounters to the limit of the material and temporal possibilities available to him at that moment. That is what happened with this series, entitled *Volterra*, which results from an opportunity created by a summer trip, in a vacation period during his stay in Germany, where he was studying at the Academy of Fine Arts, in Düsseldorf, going to Tuscany with friends for a leisure trip. The works in the present exhibition, dating from the late 1990s, are found in a period of his creative process that has particular incidence on the portrait of people and communities he has selected, such as: “Portraits of Alfama”, in 1999; “Portraits and other staged situations”, in 2001; and in the extent of his work, “Portraits of Aldeia da Luz”, in 2009.

Lino do Vale absorbed the environment and context of Düsseldorf during the time he attended the academy and studied the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher, understanding the historical heritage that New Objectivity revealed to him, and to which he associates from very early on a like and an interest for the portraits of August Sander, in Weimar, where we recognize figures in the center of the frame, with no other reference than the pose of the portrayed body and his gaze. In this exhibition we encounter the gaze of each person (exceptionally a couple) and a tree.

The portrait of these figures reveals, however, a social context of local workers, people with modest clothing. There is nothing but the pose and that look that João Pinharanda identified in this passage from a review published in 2001 in the newspaper *Público*: “Eurico Lino do Vale’s photographs are concerned with characters rather than scenery. In some cases they are there: showy gardens, fragments of rich architecture and great presence, rare anonymous walls. But in the foreground, in an individual dynamic, of pairs or of more numerous groups and in paralyzed movement, there the characters are looking at the photographer, indefinitely returning his gaze.”¹

A photograph representing two trees (two olive trees), isolated in this series, which presents itself as an abstraction in relation to the portraits, also requires careful observation. It is like a sculptural object, of natural, telluric matrix, that indicates to us the panorama of the journey that was not circumscribed to the urbanity of the scenery inscribed in the portraits, thus accentuating the paradoxical character of Eurico Lino do Vale’s photographs: the search for a gaze that is not hostage to the visual memory of a place.

Volterra is also a travel log, like a scrapbook annotated a posteriori by images and brief notes, which presents itself as an artist’s book.

João Silvério

¹ Cf. João Pinharanda, “Eurico Lino do Vale: Para uma teoria do retrato”, *Público*, 17 de Novembro de 2001. 1

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