

**PORTUGAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition / VENICE BIENNALE 2007**

**Artist – ÂNGELA FERREIRA**  
**Curator – Jürgen Bock**

**Fondaco Marcello, Venice**  
**10 June - 21 November 2007**

**Organization and production:**  
**Institute of the Arts / Portuguese Ministry of Culture**

Ângela Ferreira is the artist representing Portugal at the 52nd International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, to be held from 10 June to 21 November 2007. The official Portuguese representation, organized and produced by the Institute of the Arts, is curated by Jürgen Bock.

Ângela Ferreira's work will be presented in Venice, following Helena Almeida (2005), Pedro Cabrita Reis (2003), João Penalva (2001), Jorge Molder (1999) and Julião Sarmento (1997).

The Portuguese exhibition is to be held at the Fondaco Marcello, a high profile venue located on the banks of the Grand Canal, between the Academia and Rialto bridges, a 2-minute walk from Palazzo Grassi. Under a lease concluded with the Portuguese State, this venue will also host Portugal's shows for the 2008 Architecture Biennale and the 2009 Arts Biennale.

Ângela Ferreira is one of Portugal's most engaging contemporary artists today. She has exhibited widely since the beginning of the 1990s. Driven by political issues, Ferreira scrutinizes the use of theories – in particular art historical theories – and their relationship with and impact on contemporary art, calling for art's inherent communicative potential to negotiate complex subject matter.

Ferreira subtly stimulates the viewer to articulate questions in their encounter with her objects, which take the shape of skillfully executed and aesthetically appealing modernist sculptures, often combined with texts, photographs and videos. The questions instigated interrogate what we have come to consider as 'given' in art history; however, if we consider history is a construct, one might ask: which history, whose history and history to what purpose? Venice – a city with its own unique track record of more than a century of biennales, with its national presentations of art in a wide range of 'national' modern buildings and its never-ending negotiations with (post) modernity – is a perfect platform for Ferreira to tackle these issues.

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**ÂNGELA FERREIRA**

Any attempt to classify the work of Ângela Ferreira soon becomes a real challenge, given that classifications are precisely one of the topics she tackles in her works.

Born in 1958 in Maputo (at that time, Lourenço Marques), capital of Mozambique, Ângela Ferreira lived in the city until 1973, then moving to Lisbon, where she lived through the intense revolutionary period following on from 25 April 1974. In 1976, like many Luso-Mozambicans, she moved to South Africa, studying visual arts in Cape Town.

The years she spent in South Africa were decisive for the development of Ângela Ferreira's cultural conscience, a conscience with a high degree of sensitivity towards political issues, which from an early stage translated itself in her work. During the 1980s, South Africa was the target of an international economic and cultural boycott that attempted to bring apartheid to an end.. Due to this blockage, and while she was an art student, Ferreira was politically constrained and physically distant from the established centres of art production and the discourses circulating there, which left her without the opportunity to make direct contact with the works and the artists, even though their work was studied as part of the Cape Town Art School curriculum. All the Modernist discourses from Europe and the United States were thus transmitted as theory but first hand experience of their materialisation never took place, or, as the artist once commented "the only materialisation that ever existed was through slide projection, the 'originals' never arrived".

This situation led to the practice of an art derived from the "originals" that existed on the far away walls of museums in the cultural capitals of the western world. This phenomenon can for geographical and political reasons be observed in peripheral locations, although it is also visible in the so-called centres of production of art and theory, a fact that was observed by the artist during her studies. This is still reflected in the ironic and autobiographical perspective of her work, both in relation to a culturally isolated South Africa and a pre- and post-revolutionary Portugal.

Geo-political questions are the starting point for all of Ferreira's work. They become vehicles for the investigation of the definition of "objective truths" in certain fields of art, history, and gender politics, or even for interrogating the cultural definitions of countries and their societies. . To put it in extreme terms, one might say that Ferreira uses and analyses the normative structures of Modernism to, from a two-fold perspective, African and European, question their necessity or uselessness. The appropriation and negotiation of these normative structures, as carried out by the artist in her work, is relevant in the African context because of the relationship of strategic cultural dependence initiated by European colonialism. But it also exists in the European and North-American context in relation to the methods of constructing meaning within art.

**Jürgen Bock, January 2007**

**PORTUGAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition / VENICE BIENNALE 2007**

**BIOGRAPHIES**



**Ângela Ferreira**

Born in Maputo in 1958, lives and works in Lisbon since 1992.

Ângela Ferreira has shown regularly since 1990. Her many individual shows include: “Ângela Ferreira”, Centro de Arte Moderna da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (1990); “Sites and Services”, South African National Gallery, Cape Town (1992); “Double Sided I and II”, Chinati Foundation, Marfa, USA and Íbis Art Centre, Nieu Bethesda, South Africa (1996); “Casa Maputo: An Intimate Portrait”, Museu de Serralves, Porto (1999); “No Place at All”, Museu do Chiado — Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon (2003) and “Random Walk”, Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon (2005).

She has also participated in various group shows and international biennials, including the 1st and 2nd Johannesburg Biennial (1995 and 1997); Istambul Biennial (1999); “Signs of Life”, Melbourne International Biennial (1999); “Squatters”, Museu de Serralves, Porto, and Witte de With, Rotterdam (2001); “In the Meantime”, De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam (2001); “Continue”, Maia Biennial (2003); “Re-Location / Shake the Limits”, ICCA-MNAC, Bucharest (2004); “L’Universel? Dialogues avec Senghor”, Joal Fadiouth, University of Dakar, Senegal (2004); “Territorio Oeste”, MACUF, Corunha (2006), “(Re)volver”, Plataforma Revólver, Lisbon (2006), and, forthcoming, “Troca de Olhares”, Instituto Camões, Maputo (2007).

Ângela Ferreira is a lecturer at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon.

**Jürgen Bock**

Born in Germany in 1962, lives and works in Lisbon since 1993.

An independent curator, Jürgen Bock has been responsible, amongst other projects, for the programme of the 1st Project Room at the Centro Cultural de Belém (2000-2001), presenting works from Eleanor Antin, Nathan Coley, Harun Farocki, Renée Green, Nuno Ribeiro, Allan Sekula and Heimo Zobernig, for the 2003 Maia Biennale and for the German Pavilion at the New Delhi Triennial/India in 2005, with the artist Andreas Siekmann.

He edited the book *From Work to Text — Dialogues on Practice and Criticism*, with texts by various authors (CCB, Lisbon, 2002), and organized the publication in Portugal of *TITANIC's wake*, by Allan Sekula (Portuguese version, Maumaus, Lisbon, 2003) and *Negotiation in the Contact Zone*, by Renée Green (Assírio & Alvim, Lisbon, 2003).

Jürgen Bock is director of the Maumaus School of Visual Arts, in Lisbon, and teaches on the Master's Course in Contemporary Art Practice, at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Porto.

**PORTUGAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition / VENICE BIENNALE 2007**

**EXIBITION VENUE – FONDACO MARCELLO**

The Fondaco Marcello is an exhibition venue located in a historic building in Venice, built in the 16th/17th century and originally serving as a warehouse (“Fondaco”), as its open space interior reveals. It has a total area of 360 square meters, and the renovation work carried out in 2004/2005 preserved the original brick façades and the spatial characteristics of its interior.

The Fondaco Marcello stands on the banks of the Grand Canal, very close to the Palazzo Grassi and between the Academia and Rialto bridges, in front of the San Tomà vaporetto station.



Fondaco Marcello - Exterior and interior views



Fondaco Marcello - Model

**Fondaco Marcello: San Marco 3415 (Calle dei Garzoni), Venice**

**PORTUGAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition / VENICE BIENNALE 2007**

**ÂNGELA FERREIRA – SELECTED WORKS**



**Die Vlermuys Huis/The Bat House**  
**(after the house *Die Es* designed and built by Gabriël Fagan in Camps Bay, Cape Town)**  
**2006**

Private collection, Lisbon

Installation view ['(Re)volver', Plataforma Revólver, Lisbon, 2006]

Photo: Ângela Ferreira

In 1966, Gabriël Fagan constructed a minimalist modernist building with a sculptural rooftop in Camps Bay, Cape Town. In Ângela Ferreira's sculpture, Fagan's building has been appropriated and has materialized in a skeleton-like structure, which, upside down, has become part of the roof structure of the exhibition space. The focus in the space is now the sculptural rooftop, elegantly floating a few centimeters above the gallery floor, literally underlining, in its wave-like appearance, the structure which holds and links it to the gallery roof. The sculptural functional roof in South Africa turns into the unused, abstract base of the architecture-evoking sculpture in Lisbon, generating thoughts not only about the intertwined relationship between architecture and sculpture, but also about the mutual involvement of African and European culture, and the centre and the periphery. *Die Vlermuys Huis / The Bat House* is not about the crossing of architecture into sculpture, but about the acknowledgement of a dependency and an inversion.

J.B.

**PORTUGAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition / VENICE BIENNALE 2007**

**ÂNGELA FERREIRA – SELECTED WORKS**



**Hotel da Praia Grande (The State of Things)**

**2003**

c-print, colour, 124 x 153 cm

Courtesy of the artist/Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon

A notion of History and its links with a range of other histories (political, art, cinema and architecture) are evoked in this photograph, which shows the artist leaning out of a pool in front of an abandoned, modernist Hotel on the coast of Portugal close to Lisbon. The title of the photograph and the performative act of 'remaking' a gesture that has become one of the most iconic of the 1974 Revolution (the distribution of carnations) evokes another event, which took place at this Hotel during the depression between the Revolution and 1986, when Portugal entered the EEC. In 1981, the director Wim Wenders filmed his melancholic movie *The State of Things*, a self-reflexive film on the working conditions of non-commercial filmmakers. The plot of Wenders' film is based on the story of a film crew stranded in Portugal during a remake of a Science Fiction movie. They have to interrupt their filming due to lack of funds from Hollywood. In Wenders' movie the plot and the real circumstances of making a film are intertwined (Wenders' crew stayed in the hotel which was used as the stage set for the film). Ângela Ferreira's photograph links these events to the myth of a melancholic Portuguese society waiting again and again for progress and departure, both essential drivers in modernist thinking.

J.B.



**PORTUGAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition / VENICE BIENNALE 2007**

**ÂNGELA FERREIRA – SELECTED WORKS**



**Random Walk**

**2005**

Courtesy of the artist/Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon

Partial installation view ('Random Walk', Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon, 2005)

Photo: Ângela Ferreira

The sculpture *Random Walk* takes the shape of temporary scaffolding set up within the existing gallery's main exhibition space. Conceptually, this piece is based on the economic theory with the same name, which refers to the unpredictability of the economic market. The installation is contextualized by a series of photographs, which highlight the fragility and instability of African currencies compared to European currencies. The installation enables the viewer to leave the conventional viewing space of the gallery floor and offers an alternative architectural random walk in space.

J.B.

**ÂNGELA FERREIRA – SELECTED WORKS**



**Zip Zap Circus School, 2000-02**

Courtesy of the artist/Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon  
Installation view (Cape Town, 2002)  
Photo: David Goldblatt



**Zip Zap Circus School, 2000-02**

Courtesy of the artist/Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon  
Installation view ('No Place at All', Museu do Chiado, Lisbon, 2003)  
Photo: Mário Valente

An unrealized project by the architect Pancho Guedes, who, like Ângela Ferreira lives and works between two cultures, inspired this installation. For the group exhibition 'More Works about Buildings and Food' (Hangar K7, Oeiras, 2000), Ângela Ferreira broadened her exploration of modernist discourse by adding Guedes's plan for a circus architecture to the exhibition architecture designed by Pedro Gadanhó. Her *Zip Zap Circus School* model used the same construction materials as those used for the exhibition architecture. The Oeiras *Zip Zap Circus School*, considered by the artist as a prototype, became a continuation of the 'white cube' exhibition architecture, whilst at the same time alluding to received notions of 'African architecture'.

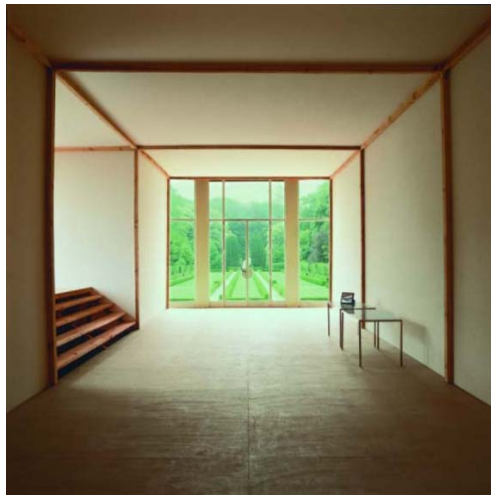
In 2001, for the exhibition *In the Meantime*, at De Appel in Amsterdam, Ângela Ferreira again used the *Zip Zap Circus School* architecture as a vehicle for her exploration of notions of modernity, underscoring the dichotomy between European and African interpretations of architecture. She presented the model of the circus school in the same materials used by Mies van der Rohe for his 1912 Ellenwoude model, thus connecting the discourse of Mies with that of Guedes. A photograph of Mies's model and a reproduction of Guedes's plan for the circus school referred to both 'originals', as well as their opposed – if not conflicting – philosophies.

In downtown Cape Town, on the 'non-site' of an ambitious, yet failed inner-city motorway programme in the 1960s, Ângela Ferreira presented *Zip Zap Circus School* as a temporary public sculpture. Here, there was no pre-existing exhibition or building whose spatial limitations could influence or interfere with the possible siting of her project. Viewed from one angle, each of the three components of the model conveyed the illusion that the site was occupied by a complete building. However, from different viewpoints, each section appeared to be cut in half, revealing three stage-like 'platforms', which the artist offered to students for performances during the installation.

Ângela Ferreira's installation in Cape Town in 2002 was again linked to Mies van der Rohe's model for the Ellenwoude museum/house in Wassenaar (NL). The circus school architecture project is still to be completed. Mies's technique of using a full-scale architectural model is here appropriated for a utopian installation, a possible future home for a community project.



**ÂNGELA FERREIRA – SELECTED WORKS**



**Case Study House #21**  
**2001**

Col. artist, Lisbon  
Partial installation view  
(‘Squatters’, Museu de Serralves, Porto, 2001)  
Photo: Rita Burmester



**Case Study House #21**  
**2001**

Col. artist, Lisbon  
Installation detail  
(‘Squatters’, Museu de Serralves, Porto, 2001)  
Photo: Rita Burmester

The Case Study House Program was an experimental architectural programme in and around Los Angeles in the 1950s and 1960s, in which American architects experimented with new materials and modular metal-framed construction. One of the essential modernist ideas in this project was to bring the garden into the home, the Case Study House #21 by the architect Pierre Koenig from 1951 being a perfect example of this new garden/house relationship proposition.

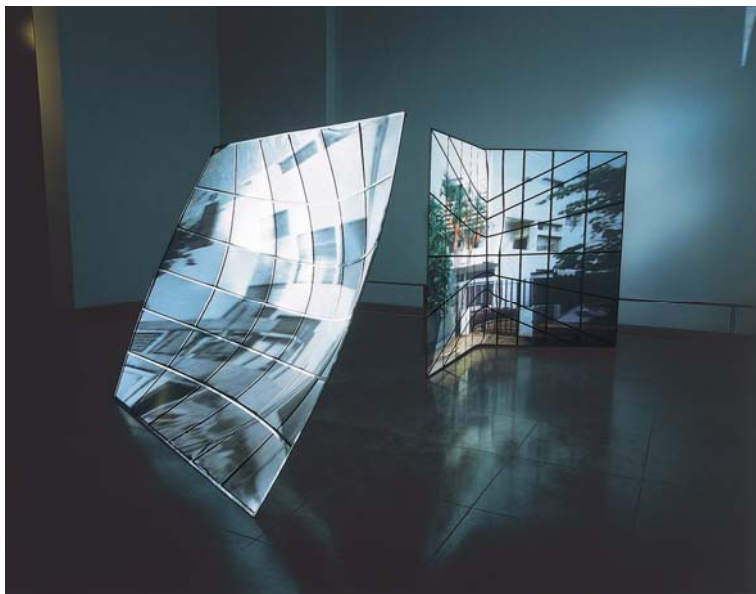
In Ângela Ferreira’s installation with the same title, the viewer’s full attention is turned from the exhibition building (the Serralves Museum in Porto) to the garden. Ferreira covered the interior of the Serralves Villa with canvas stretched on a wooden structure, introducing a Case Study House layout with a technique that evokes the trial architecture used by Mies van der Rohe for his unbuilt Kröller-Müller Villa in Wassenaar (NL) in 1912.

Some furniture is used to re-introduce a certain ‘privacy’ in the public museum, which uses a former private villa for its exhibitions. On a modernist side table, a small, framed photograph ‘intimately’ shows a pistol, contextualizing – together with the heightened view of the garden – the sound element of the installation: a reading of an adaptation of a text taken from one of the most fascist Portuguese publications on colonial history (*A Derrocada do Império Vátua e Mouzinho de Albuquerque* by Francisco Toscano and Julião Quintinha, 1930), describing the suicide of Mouzinho de Albuquerque, the ‘conqueror’ of Mozambique, who was unable to adapt to Portuguese life after coming back from Africa. In Ângela Ferreira’s adapted text, the garden of Albuquerque’s death has been replaced by the garden of Serralves, not only tainting the Museum’s garden with this episode from Portugal’s colonial history, but also the American architectural dream with its special references to gardens.

J.B.

**PORTUGAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition / VENICE BIENNALE 2007**

**ÂNGELA FERREIRA – SELECTED WORKS**



**House Maputo: An Intimate Portrait**  
**1999**

Col. Museu do Chiado – MNAC, Lisbon

Photo: Mário Valente

The installation is based on a three-dimensional transfer of cartographic projections (Robinson and Gnostic projection) forming two sculptural objects, which serve at the same time as screens for two video projections of images of a modernist house in Maputo. On one screen, the image projected is that of a 're-filming' of a black and white photograph of the house, taken just after it was built in the 1950s. The second image consists of a focused highlighting of details of the house in a color photograph taken at the time when the installation was produced.

J.B.

**PORTUGAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition / VENICE BIENNALE 2007**

**ÂNGELA FERREIRA – SELECTED WORKS**



**Sites and Services, 1991-92**

Col. Instituto das Artes / Ministério da Cultura, Lisbon

Partial installation view ('Continuare', Bienal da Maia 2003)

Photo: Mário Valente

*Sites and Services* consists of four semi-abstract sculptures, concrete assemblages with steel nets and plastic tubes that simultaneously reference modernist artistic practice and industrial building processes, shown alongside 12 colour photographs, in which we can recognize the materials and the shapes used in the sculptures. The photographs show an enormous area of land on the outskirts of Cape Town, equipped with rudimentary infrastructures and prepared for the construction of houses, established under the aegis of a government program called *Sites and Services*. The aim of this program was to respond to the urgent need for housing and to equip development sites with basic services – electricity, water and sewage systems – in order to house the great waves of migrants, who, violating the ruling Apartheid legislation, moved from the countryside into the main urban areas in search for work.

In the installation, Ângela Ferreira is interested in the discourses that articulate minimal art and those that articulate political and global art. The outline and documentation of this specific government program evoke the formal arrangement of objects within the context of minimal art. The use of building materials in her sculptures is, in turn, reminiscent of modernist practice in general. Ferreira's deconstructivist practice here becomes a metaphor for the analytical deconstruction of modern art theory. The artist appropriates modernist methods in trying to stimulate awareness of how cultural systems negotiate the concepts of 'here' and 'there', 'centre' and 'periphery', and the complexities of the 'original' and the simulacrum. In *Sites and Services* Ângela Ferreira is neither interested in documenting just for the sake of documenting, nor in the formal classical exercise of assemblage by using these practices as a means of offering an interface between the political and the aesthetic. The political references in the photographs, along with the formal method of art for art's sake used by the artist, create new routes of engagement with the audience.

J.B.