

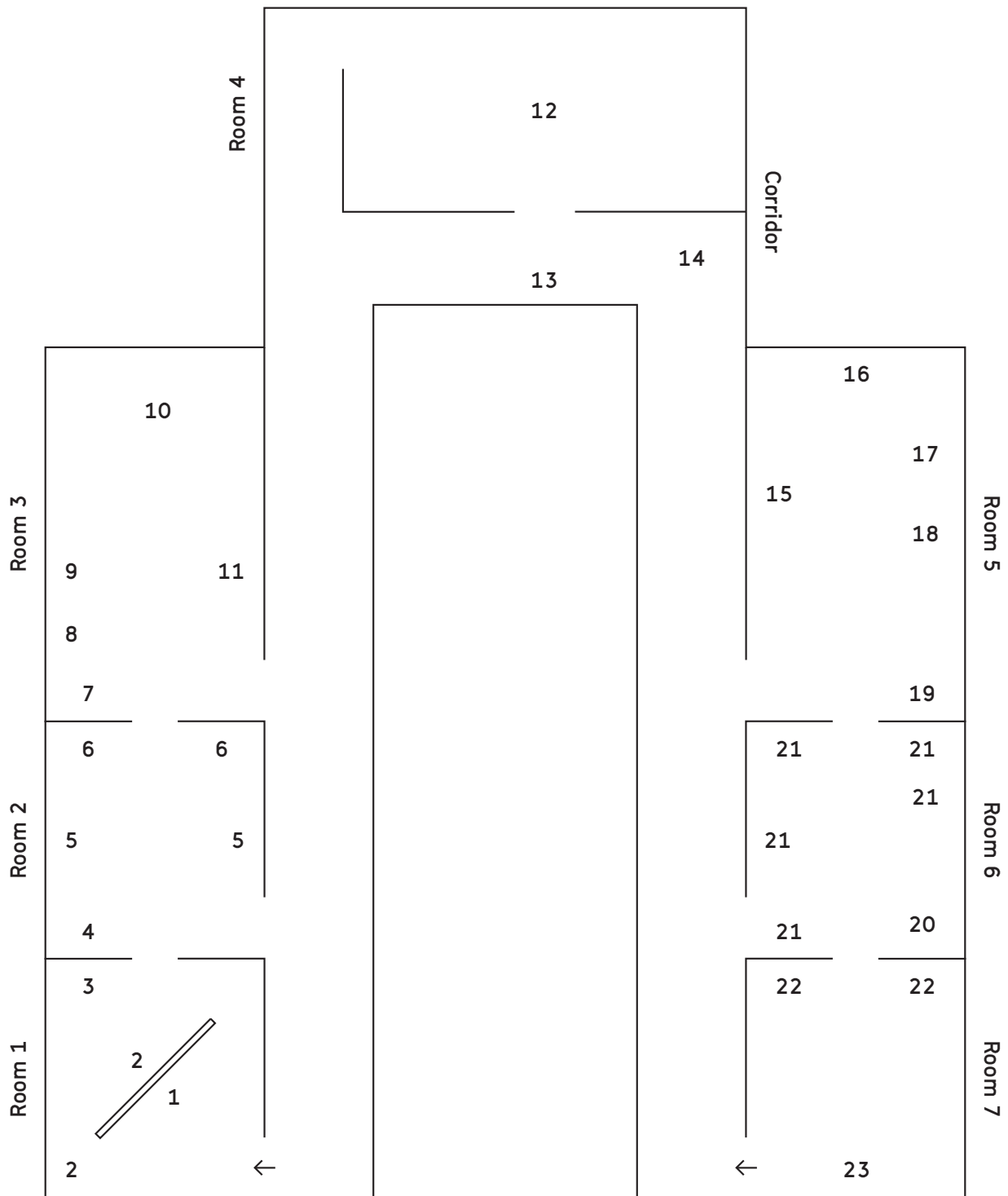


Culturgest
Fundação
Caixa Geral
de Depósitos

Visuals Arts ×

Júlia Ventura 1975–1983

18 MAY – 29 SEP 2024



1
Untitled (FCM), 1975
 Gelatin silver prints
 (recent prints)

2
Untitled (FTA), 1975
 Inkjet prints
 (recent prints)

3
Untitled (TPA), 1975
 Inkjet print
 (recent print)

4
Untitled, 1977
Untitled, 1977
Untitled, 1977
 Indian ink on paper

5
Untitled (FLPB), 1977
 Gelatin silver prints
 (vintage prints)

6
Untitled (FLPB), 1977
 Gelatin silver prints
 (recent prints)

7
Untitled (MC56), 1978
 Gelatin silver prints
 Portuguese State
 Contemporary Art
 Collection

8
Untitled (MNC), 1978
 Gelatin silver prints
 (recent prints)

9
Untitled (PNS), 1978
Gelatin silver prints
(recent prints)

10
As Mãos, 1981
U-matic PAL video
transferred to digital,
black and white, no sound
10'50" (loop)

11
Untitled (CCL), 1979
Gelatin silver print
(vintage prints)

12
Place of Enlightenment, 1982
Audio recordings,
sound speakers, lighting
Installation

13
Double Bound (n.º 2), 1980
Gelatin silver prints
Collection of the artist on
deposit at Museu Nacional
de Arte Contemporânea
do Chiado, Lisbon

14
Body Mapping Space, 1980
U-matic PAL video
transferred to digital,
color, no sound
4'31" (loop)

15
Untitled (MBFP), 1982
Gelatin silver prints
(recent prints)

16
*Modèles Inimitables
d'Intuitions Possibles*,
1983–86
Gelatin silver prints
(recent prints)

17
Untitled (SCRV), 1981
Gelatin silver prints
(recent prints)

18
Untitled (LOMW), 1981
Gelatin silver prints
(recent prints)

19
Untitled (MIDP), 1982
Gelatin silver prints
(recent prints)

20
Why?, 1981
U-matic PAL video
transferred to digital,
black and white, no sound
8'15" (loop)

21
Phototext (#1–6), 1980
Gelatin silver prints
(recent prints)

22
Traits d'Esprit #1, 1982
Gelatin silver prints
Galeria Filomena Soares
Collection, Lisbon

23
Untitled (FHTE), 1983
Gelatin silver prints
(recent prints)

Room 1

The first series of works conceived by Júlia Ventura simulate fashion shoots. The apparent simplicity of this proposal comprises a whole programme that came to be developed and refined in subsequent years. There are indications here, from the outset, of the artist's tendency towards performance and the creation of characters and her interest in deconstructing codes and systems that, like the fashion industry and the magazines that promote them, seek to establish and disseminate canons about notions of beauty, elegance, style and femininity. More than a simple game of mirrors, these series signal the emergence of a critical awareness and of an impulse to deconstruct apparatuses and expectations in the field of representation that culminate in the striking androgyny of the figure in *Untitled (TPA)*.

Room 2

The series of images displayed here represent a set of performances that obeyed a single logic and protocol. Initially, the artist was photographed in the dark, using a long exposure, while creating a light drawing in the space with a laser. At one point in the performance, the space was illuminated, allowing the drawing inscribed in the frame to overlap with the image of the artist's body mid-action. Imbued with an experimental spirit appropriate to the structuralist practices of the time, this series plays with the fundamental elements of photography to present us with a representation where drawing, writing and photography merge, giving rise to a collection of hybrid and multidimensional images.

Room 3

One of the most remarkable features of Júlia Ventura's early work is its economy of means. While, on the one hand, she concentrated almost exclusively on the creation of images in which she herself featured, on the other, what happens in these series (and even between series) is the result of a work limited to the variation of poses, expressions and gestures. Everything revolves around modifications, sometimes more subtle, sometimes more obvious, of a very small set of resources. Under the aegis of the video that pontificates in it, this room is dedicated to explaining one of these resources—hands. Essential elements in the art of portraiture, hands are seen as gateways to the disposition of the subject. Here, however, they appear to be more than passive symbols of a state of mind; they appear to be agents of an external force that imposes dynamics on the body which drift ambiguously between affection and aggression, kindness and cruelty.

Room 4 / Corridor

This room recreates, with some modifications, one of the few installations conceived by Júlia Ventura over the course of her career. Originally presented in Groningen, in the Netherlands, the work begins with the artist subjecting the visitor to visual overstimulation before leading them to a dark room where they hear recordings of her voice reading texts that deal with silence, darkness, memory, image, revelation, desire and loss. In the corridor, this reflective and melancholic approach finds a less operatic, but no less complex, antecedent: in *Double Bound* (n.º 2), two recordings discuss twin images — one in the voice of the observer, the other in the voice of the subject — which, although symmetrical, coincide in their final observation that, in the moment of comprehension, something escapes them. While this absence is, on the one hand, the nostalgic reason for the tone of these works, it is also the relentless driving force that fosters momentum both through the production and experience of new images.

Room 5

One of the most surprising characteristics of Júlia Ventura's work is the range of images that she manages to extract from a very limited set of resources. The series on display in this room — so varied in terms of the moods, tempers, postures and states of mind captured in them — are a clear testament to this ability. Despite this range and variety, it is not unusual for us to feel there is something familiar in all of the series by the artist — something that concerns us. Naturally in all of us, spectators, there is a vast and varied world, but what ensures the level of identification we can feel here is the careful gesture the artist makes of the *interval* between each one of her images. This means she uses only as much information as is necessary for us to feel impelled to fill the elliptical spaces that remain between images with our own projections (also in the psychoanalytical sense of the term) and make from the whole an entity that incorporates, in part substantive and not merely interpretive, our own subjectivity.

Room 6

Alongside a video of the mouth of the artist repeating, like a mantra, the expression *why?*, there is a series of works that Júlia Ventura refers to as *phototexts*. These are a set of photographs of sentences printed on acetate and arranged on white backgrounds. Most of these sentences come from the book *The Pleasure of the Text*, by Roland Barthes, one of the most renowned French structuralists, and, despite the allusive richness of the excerpts, none of them feature the subject of the sentence. Thus, these works are the textual equivalent (the illustration in text, so to speak) of the omission of the subject that Júlia Ventura's images impose. Forced to be made up of only predicates, verbs and adverbs, these texts, like the images, are absolutely depersonalised; they are pure sensation, capsules of a sense without a defined body or context.

Room 7

The grand gesture of criticising and deconstructing the symbolic and ideological content of the image carried out by Júlia Ventura touches a particularly sensitive nerve when dealing with issues related to the representation of sensuality and/or female sexuality. In the last room of the exhibition, this nerve is repeatedly struck by the ubiquitous presence of the rose — the only external element present in Júlia Ventura's work during this initial period. Its status is, of course, dubious, as the rose moves infinitely between its proverbial sense as a symbol of female delicateness and virtue and its function as a tool for the unequivocal assertion of a space of carnal desire and pleasure. As in all the other series of this exhibition, it is not precisely a question of using the image to resolve moral or social tensions, but rather the instigation of a crisis in the heart of the image that undermines its rhetorical edifice, which weakens it from within just enough to reveal its structures more clearly.

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Silver bromide prints (recents prints)

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