

JOÃO MARIA GUSMÃO. FOLLOWING THE WHITE TIGER

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**Infinite Light and Blessings
to our fellow masters, monks,
and disciples of the imperial arts!**

The following presentation is a showcase of cinematic materialism featuring the latest results of the Portuguese artist João Maria Gusmão's process-based experiments with analogue means and speculative concepts. Drawing from the seemingly mundane, the exhibition grapples with the moments when the transcendental realms of history, ideology, and aesthetics collide with their material correlates. As a counterstrike to our hypermediated present, Gusmão's approach to film emphasises the urgency of the indexical qualities inherent in analogue media, highlighting the dual layers of imaging: the tangible, technical construction of light-sensitive transparency, and the spectral representation of the symbolic order embedded within the imagery.

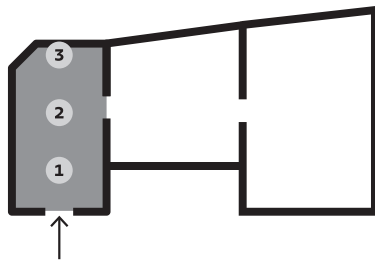
In an interview with an American journalist from August 1946, Chairman Mao Zedong remarked: 'The atom bomb is a paper tiger which the U.S. reactionaries use to scare people. It looks terrible, but in fact it isn't. Of course, the atom bomb is a weapon of mass slaughter, but the outcome of a war is decided by the people, not by one or two new types of weapon. All reactionaries are paper tigers. In appearance, the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful.'

Like the fearsome-looking but flimsy paper creations in Chinese parades, the revolutionary leader described a split between a subject's true being and their semblance, between the imposing images one shows the other, and the reality of an underlying vulnerability. It is not that bombs aren't a threat, but that imperialism has a dual nature — there are real tigers and paper tigers at the same time. Gusmão's overall proposal embraces this double paradoxical contingency as a general 'theory of illusion': first, of film as an apparatus which

produces the illusion of movement by describing reality as a sequence of still shots, and second, of the battle between the real vs reality as cinematic images adhere to the realm of the human, the technological, the animal, and the inhuman. Key to this disciplined *modus operandi* is a keen awareness of the relation between production and presentation, how the manipulation of technical conditions can re-train perception. The multichannel array of looping 16mm projected film works presented here prompts a double action — the experiencing of the illusion and simultaneously the introspection of it.

The title of the exhibition is drawn from Gusmão's recent work, *The School of the White Tiger* (2024), a sequence of vertical still shots capturing the titular kung fu dojo, where the cover up of graffiti at its facade is imagined as a form of animal-inspired kung fu abstract expressionist painting. The exhibition proceeds as if schooled in such techniques of analogue comparisons, image-making and mimicry, deploying an ironic conceit of a particular orientalism to ponder not only post-cold war imaginations, but of Western thought against Eastern myth. The artist's film work arrives at an apophantic materialist 'third way' resistant to binary thought processes that divide body and mind, the real and the imaginary, questioning our modes of existence and our self-referential representations of the world. One should note that the White Tiger is one of the 'Four Auspicious Beasts' in Chinese astrology guarding the West from fright, and thus the conjuration of this ferocious image serves as an analogue for the logocentric worldview of Western metaphysics. It is a catastrophic analogy, motivated by an inquiry into the choreography of film's illusion of movement and the limits and possibilities of its descriptive and deceptive nature. Technique, both as a routine and as a technological means of making and manipulating, is shown as a form of knowing and revealing the seen and unseen, uncovering an entanglement of the technical with the transcendental.

ROOM 1



1. *The School of the White Tiger*, 2024

vertical 16mm film projection, colour, silent, 2'30"
thanks to Società del Api

In Grasse, France, can be found a martial arts academy tutoring in the Imperial art of White Tiger Kung Fu, a mysterious, southern Chinese Shaolin style known for its violent force, claw techniques, and one-armed fighting. The sequence of vertical still shots presented here reports the whereabouts of this dojo. On the academy's façade, graffitied walls have been quickly painted over in hazy greys and whites like readymade abstract expressionist artworks. This assemblage of images invites viewers to contemplate the connection between martial arts and the pinnacle of all crafts: painting! The paintings seem inspired by a kind of kung fu pictorialism that mimics animal strikes, counterstrikes, dodge and defence movements. We know from martial arts movies that instruction can be disguised as a set of repetitive chores and menial tasks, wax on wax off, which through labour builds muscle memory and form. It's spiritual, invigorating, speculative, and performative – white tiger brushstrokes, pale grey over weathered cement walls, created with the one-armed 'claw-paint bucket' technique. Action painting, cinema, and martial arts are all reenacted on this film as descriptions of an absent movement. There is a theatricality to this weaponisation of the body, where aesthetics becomes a dynamic demonstration of athleticism and brushstrokes are gestures imitating animals deployed as pacified representations of war. The still shots invigorate these movements in an image theory and chain of appropriations: a kung-fu academy as painting school, a warrior monk that impersonates a tiger, a feline that enjoys action painting, an abstract painting which is not a painting but erased graffiti, etcetera, are regarded as some kind of dissimulated martial training. Here, the words scrawled on the walls of the school are replaced with a calligraphy of catastrophe, or rather a ghost signifier.

2. *Dojo*, 2026

16mm film, colour, silent, 3'47"

Following the *White Tiger* exhibition reimagines Zachęta's lower galleries as a martial arts studio for training and the presentation of an integrated system of techniques, and the technicality of film. Let's call them a covert or a dissimulated art form. It is a hall for immersive, embodied learning and meditation on ninja illusions, where gesture, representation, and repetition engender not only mastery, but also mystery. In *Dojo*, the tatami mats of old are replaced by the trampolines and gym padding of late modernity. Such jump arena enterprises have sprung up everywhere in the last years, occupying massive, emptied warehouses, factories, and shopping centres as family entertainment destinations. They are populated by a wide range of monumental geometric forms reminiscent of ziggurats and sport courts. Vacant, these sites of 'active leisure' appear in the film as the phantom ruins of a polychromatic post-productive world, a softened and abstracted representation of structures and obstacles in our lived reality. Leisure time is captured as a commodity, a form of abstract training for nothing in our world other than the tumble of life itself. The workers have left both the factory and the mall, but have returned to reach for momentary levitation. The colourful phantom images, bewildering in their stillness, are a springboard for the seraphic pleasures of self-exceeding and ungrounding. We yearn to soar, to transcend and defy the rules of gravity, but we inevitably return with a bellyflop. It is an exercise in experimental metaphysics, the re-training of the body and soul by falling into the void. It leaps into a domain where hardware meets software, where intention meets folly. The hard ground is softened and ceases to be a passive backdrop or platform. The subject's false flight generates a new algorithm, re-coding the hard and rigid with the pliable, an experiment with the dependence of human bodies on technical objects.

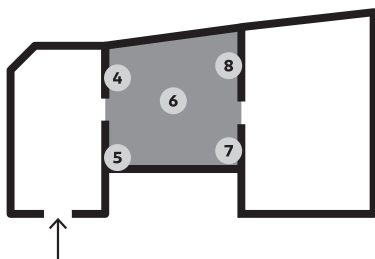
3. *Dojo d'Stilj*, 2026

vertical 16mm film projection, colour, silent, 5'55"

The Dutch early twentieth century De Stijl movement called for the renunciation of naturalistic representation in favour of a stripped-down formal vocabulary principally consisting of straight lines, rectangular planes, and primary colours. The premise was that every phase of painterly development reflected a specific perception of the world, and that the plastic expression of pure relationships could serve as a blueprint for a new society. By dispatching with traditional illusionistic depth and the tragic predicament of the perspectival imagination, these modernists sought to annihilate the particular in search of universal unity, reflecting an underlying cosmic order. Close-up and cropped vertical still shots of the trampoline parks bear an uncanny resemblance to this pictorial tradition of 'ideal'

geometric compositions, marking an aesthetic inheritance and its reduction to kitsch and entertainment. Just as De Stijl revolutionised spatiality by dissolving representational illusion, these padded and pliable planes appear here as subdivisions and convergences within a flat surface. The 'hard edges' of geometric modernism are replaced by cushioned platforms and softened thresholds. The screen of the image establishes an aperspectival ground: they are not shapes in some formless empty space or static background, but a dynamic, continuous grid of relationships rooted in the surface of appearance and its pure means of production. Like neoplasticist paintings, trampoline parks are based on the tension of opposing horizontal and vertical forces to chart new relationships between figure and ground. The painter Piet Mondrian called this tenuous balance and harmony of space as 'dynamic movement', which could access something of the profound rhythm of all that exists. One cannot help feeling disenchanted by how these utopian imaginations were so easily captured as banal corporate decor, an imagination of the modern with no upward mobility. Rendered into pure surface, timespace becomes annulled, perception is as flattened as the painting they refer to, and thus these future past impressions depict a stale state of proletarian melancholy.

ROOM 2



4. *I Can't Believe It's Not Butter*, 2026
16mm film, colour, silent, 1'55"

The ancient Greeks and Romans contemptuously referred to the communities beyond the empire's borders as 'butter-eaters' (*boutyrophagoi*). Many cultures, especially in east Asia, agreed: the fatty dairy product was a sign of the barbarian other's vulgarity, their inferior taste and 'uncivilised' habits. Yet others have seen butter as a sacred tool and medicine, an icon for transformation and a refined state of being, a separation of the heavy, spiritual 'fat' of enlightenment from the ordinary, liquid reality of worldly attachments. While restaurateurs believe that butter ennobles anything it touches, buttered bread is largely seen as simple, elemental nourishment. This humble association can be heard whenever politicians and pundits speak about bread-and-butter issues, those basic, fundamental matters that affect everyday people in tangible, material, ways, like

tax rates or road conditions. It all depends on what side of the bread is buttered.

I Can't Believe It's Not Butter features looping sequences of bread getting slathered with butter. These images will be familiar to anyone who has compulsively walked into the kitchen in a state bordering on panic, to breathlessly eat slice after slice of bread and butter – not even tasting it – until the panic can be drowned in an almost meditative routine of chewing and swallowing. It's an irresistible combination, perfectly merging carbohydrates and fat, and activating our brain's reward centres. But this is not the 'tasteful savouring' expected from the sensual consumption of art. There is no gratification to this never-ending ravenous routine, just a constant churning out of images that tease desire while repelling in their vulgar excess. Edited according to the 'cuts' of the butterknife, the film embraces overindulgence, an immoderate redundancy, that brings to mind the Polish colloquial phrase *masło maślane* ('buttery butter'), used to describe an absurd pleonasm, repetitive proposition, or tautology. Just as butter is generally plain and bland, no information is conveyed through reiteration, just more of the same, spread out *ad infinitum*. It's painterly, grotesque, sculptural, manifestly material, basic, and crudely elemental. It's too much, but somehow not enough. It is not butter, but also not *not butter* (margarine). Here is the treachery of images, a disconnect not only between word, image, and thing, but also a double bind between our essential needs and the endless appetite for more and more images.

5. *Shorter Wave Length*, 2026
16mm film, colour, silent, 8'15"

If Marshall McLuhan was indeed correct in his assertion that 'the "content" of any medium is always another medium', then *Shorter Wave Length* eats media with its protracted stare into the spatiotemporal principles of transmission and its discontents. Shot from fixed angles using a high-speed camera, the film depicts period-stylised dioramas of audio equipment at the National Museum of Technology in Warsaw through an extended zoom into their contents. The displays featured are part of an exhibition room in the hallowed halls of the Palace of Culture and Science titled *The Media of Our Times*, a staging of the evolution of media through store-like presentations of radio receivers and home stereos, as well as an electrical repair workshop, a throwback to a moribund age when our tools could be soldered and repaired.

The film is a (shorter) homage to Michael Snow's iconic 1967 structuralist film *Wavelength*, which features a continuous zoom of a New York loft over 45 minutes. While its predecessor zoomed past brief narrative events to eventually focus on a photograph of oceanic waves, *Shorter Wave Length* zeroes in on nothing in particular, building a tension that grows in direct ratio to the reduction of the field, but offering no explicit subject to focus one's gaze.

Here, we have a demonstration of the scientific conceit that getting close-up to a subject would reveal its inner workings but are left only with opaque surface and décor, a set of (mostly) black boxes. The materiality of communication comes into contact with radio's inherent cloak of invisibility, an ethereal mighty maze of mystic magic rays arriving from unseen sources removed from sensory experience. Staging a meeting of eye and ear, of explosion and implosion, of the visible and invisible, one could call the film a form of synaesthetic radiography, which seems appropriate given that the high-speed camera used was manufactured by the company Photo-Sonics. Hinging on the mental experience of time/image, the work stimulates a remote awareness in the observer both in discursive terms, reflecting on the conditions of visibility (the essence of image/theory, this interplay between the seen and the unseen), and in the phenomenological experience in general (duration/description). It is a metaphysical inquiry into the character of the image, the propagation of a non-objective description of these information receivers. The slow motion film zooms in faster than Snow's extended view, establishing a higher frequency of information than its forebearer, a shorter wavelength. As any amateur radio enthusiast or X-ray technician would tell us, shorter wavelengths can travel further, carry more power, and can even penetrate solid matter.

6. *Broadcast*, 2026

16mm film, colour, silent, 11'

The history of cinema is deeply intertwined with the horse race, and not only because of its natural drama. In fact, the very first sequence of moving pictures ever created was Eadweard Muybridge's 1878 study of a galloping racehorse, settling the debate of whether all four of a horse's hooves leave the ground at the same time. For much of human history, the horse was not merely an animal but a foundational economic technology, powering transport, agriculture, trade, and warfare. What was once essential infrastructure has gradually transformed into a symbol of leisure, prestige, cultural heritage, and high value speculative financial assets. The 'Sport of Kings' forms a complex economic ecosystem involving betting markets and entertainment industries, which are dependent on the generation and analysis of an abundance of information, and the immediacy and truth of these statistics.

By capturing thousands of frames per second, high-speed camera technology ensures fair outcomes, protects betting integrity, allows the analysis of equine and jockey movement, and gives fans and gamblers new thrilling perspectives. But here at the esteemed Służewiec horse racetrack in Warsaw, the high-speed technical device is not used to capture the animals' locomotion or the results of the race, but instead directed at the movements of the cameramen documenting the contest, as well the

'live' LED screen at the centre of the event. This focus on the videographers' choreography alludes to how studies of motion and time played an integral role in the history of scientific management, which sought to integrate the modern worker into an efficient fluid system of production. Breaking down gesture into its constituent parts, such images provided a striking new vision of the working body in industrial capitalism, not as a thing of flesh and blood, but as animated movement and lines of force within a coordinated human-non-human system. The cameramen have honed their motions and focused their perceptions to register as much vital information from the race as possible, spinning around on tripod turrets as the racers pass by, and zooming in and out of the action. The stakes of the bet depends on the precision of their view, the materiality of their time-critical machines, and 'real time' transmission. The slow motion registration of these movements shifts this action from recording facts to the technical operation of time itself. There is no 'photo finish' in this routine, only a succession of feedback and circular routines. As the racers speed across the LED screen, there is a discordance between temporal perceptions, bringing into view matters of latency and frame rates, of mechanical vs. lived time, of contests of speed at work in the spectacle. Confusing 'real time' with the time of the film itself, *Broadcast* generates a double index of the camera and its emblematic subject, the horse, to produce a metacommentary on cinema as a form of moving and transporting information through the manipulation of time.

7. *Lamp On*, 2026

vertical 16mm film anamorphic projection, graded blue filter, colour, silent, 2'43"

The philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote: 'As gas-light is found to be the best nocturnal police, so the universe protects itself by pitiless publicity.' Just as the advent of street gaslighting discouraged criminal activity in 19th-century cities by eliminating the shadows, transparency, truth, and public shame deter bad behaviours by simply making it impossible to hide. While street lanterns powered by gas have largely been replaced by electric fixtures, the Polish capital still boasts many dozen of these anachronistic artifacts in public space. *Lamp On* portrays a gas streetlamp found on the verdant Agrykola Street in Warsaw, serving as a figure for techno-social change, cinema and light, and, as a light bulb, for ideas in general. The film appears as a straightforward depiction of its eponymous subject, but something is subtly amiss: the lamp's mantles are burning but the sun hasn't set. Here we have a nighttime scene under a daylight sky, time and space are out of sync. The anamorphic vertical footage was shot using an inversion of the idiosyncratic cinematic tactic of 'day for night', where, in order to simulate the appearance of nighttime, filmmakers would underexpose indoor film stock in the daylight with a blue tint. In this case, the lamp was shot during the day

and then rewind and shot on the same film at night, producing an index of antipodal moments within a single image. The writer Maurice Blanchot suggested that the artist's purpose is to descend into the depths and bring back the night, giving it 'form, figure, and reality' in the daylight. In the film, night and day exist together, as if they are one in a sort of spatiotemporal interval outside the scheduled where night thoughts and daily life are in contact, and where the 'nocturnal police' operate 24/7. French filmmakers pejoratively refer to 'day for night' as *nuit américaine*, as they attribute the thwarting of cinematic realism and isomorphic resemblance in the illusion with the crass, commercial practices of Hollywood. Gaslit by the cinematic gimmick, we are manipulated into questioning our perception of reality, and are drawn into the narrative of light and shadow integral to filmic description. An impossible image and the image of the impossible simultaneously.

8. *Light Cone*, 2026

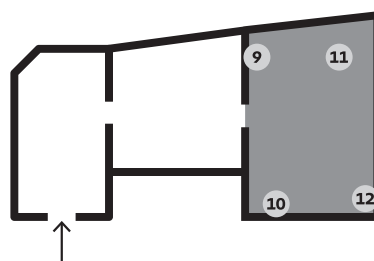
16mm film installation, three superimposed projections, RGB filters, colour, silent, 3 × 2'49" (continuous out-of-sync loop)

Three projectors beam three cones of light onto a single screen, forming the image of one ice cream cone, which is received by the millions of photoreceptor cones in your retinas and interpreted in your brain. Playing the same footage, each projected reel has been separated according to the principles of additive colour — red, green, and blue respectively — an inherent property of projected light, and the sensitivities of human vision. The intersection of all three colours yields a radiating white vanilla cone! Yet the projectors are played out of sync, and because the twisted dispensing of the soft serve never harmonises, the disagreement between projections yields a panoply of in between hues. Since white is commonly regarded as the absence of colour or character, with 'plain vanilla' serving as an image of anything basic, simple, ordinary, bland, fellow pagophiles will be pleased: this cone contains every and all possible and impossible flavours in its seeming blankness. Infinite flavours for the sweet teeth among us! A hallucinatory tutti frutti!

The style of *lody świderki*, extruded from a machine in a characteristic spiral, has become a summer staple since Poland's post-socialist transition, a permanent fixture on seaside promenades, town squares, city parks, and tourist traps. Yet by filming the dispensing of the frozen dessert with a high speed camera, the quick discharge is not exactly frozen, but stretched out and twisted, emphasising a choreography of visual embellishment developed in conversation with the machine. Physicists speak about the light cone as a representation and demonstration of how light (and information) propagates from a specific event. Here, the causal construction of spacetime comes into contact with the looping random accumulation of

temporalities from each of the projections. The serving of the cone never finishes, it is never consumed, and never melts. It is a light cone, a cone of light. The philosopher Jacques Derrida wrote about a certain 'white mythology' within metaphysics, which in its aim to produce 'pure, universal reason', appropriates and erases localised, culturally specific differences, treats Western thought as neutral and universal, and forgets the specific, sensory metaphors that construct its concepts. By breaking down light into its spectral channels, the work teases the relations between perception and depiction, and provides a materialist counterpoint to the seeming purity of metaphor.

ROOM 3



9. *Fixing Marco's Shoes & Warsaw Industry Automatica*, 2026

16mm film installation, 2 superimposed projections, black-and-white, silent, 7'17" and 7'25" (continuous out-of-sync loop)

Film is both an emblematic object of industrial modernity and a chief instrument in documenting its evolution. Projected on top of each other, a cobbler repairing a pair of shoes is combined with footage from a trade fair promoting innovations in the automation and robotics industries. This superimposition of black-and-white sequences engenders the co-presence of different planes of action within a single frame, forming a dialectical image that through convoluted juxtaposition solicits meaning hitherto unknown. The work draws from the lexicon and pantheon of cinematic depictions of labour and industry, a legacy that began with *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* (1895), and continued in productions on both sides of the Iron Curtain and in industrial and educational films, and is maintained now in television and social media content infatuated with the hypnotic processes of mass production. Popular narratives about labour have often chosen to reflect upon the tenuous relationship between the human body and machinery and the spectator's curiosity about it — a curiosity pursued only during out-of-work leisure hours.

One could be excused for interpreting the juxtaposition here didactically and dialectically, as setting up a tension between the specialised handcrafted labour of the

cobbler and the inhuman robotics on display at the industry event, which is perhaps as much about imaginations of time and progress as it may attend to anxieties associated with labour within an increasingly automated capitalism. Despite the importance of this localised, service-based labour, shoe repair is an anachronism, not only because it engages skilled human interactions with simple mechanics and materials, but also because it is a practice of maintenance and renewal among disposable commodities, preserving the 'sole' of work at a human scale. The Warsaw Industry Automatica convention can be seen as its antithesis: nothing is produced or repaired at the event, and the human is only an observer. The arms and conveyor belts in the demonstrative displays move boxes and items back and forth in looping spectacles which mystifies the reality that they will replace human action on the factory floor. When brought together, these conflicting forms of labour and human-machine relations are amplified, which brings into view a shared engagement with the choreography of production and how these are visualised by the camera and the obsolescence of the black-and-white footage. The stratification of movement in the double projection creates mesmerising harmonies and ghostly dissonances between the repetitive actions, a constellation of ephemeral, fleeting duration, and discontinuous production. As in the past, the machinic labour depicted is an analogue for the cinematic process and its own form-giving operations, generating a narrative not of progress but of emergent tensions in the representation of the means of production and labour power.

10. *Behold, a pale horse! (where the sun sets)*, 2025

16mm film, colour, silent, 11'6"

The otherworldly vistas presented here were exhumed from a 35mm Ektachrome colour-slide archive belonging to a Scottish amateur photographer from the 1980s. These images have been assembled in a triple in-camera RGB exposure to produce a constantly shifting landscape at twilight. An enthusiast of sunsets, cloud formations at dusk, and evening lakefronts, one can assume that this anonymous lensman sought not only to capture the grandeur of these fleeting spectacles, but also to provide an indexical relic for their momentary presence at the locales. Despite the particularity of the stunning scenery, these images are the epitome of the generic photograph, a form of ubiquitous sentimental visual confectionery that today is autogenerated by millions on their phones. Yet by excavating and splitting the analogue slide images into their red, green, and blue components, the manifest light, traces of the real ephemeral 'now' registered by the photographer, are rejuvenated, conflated, and combined, one on top of another, into a dissolving sequence of unnerving planetary scenery. Often with multiple solar bodies within a single frame, this agglomeration is a form

of sci-fi landscaping: a post-apocalyptic, pre-human, anti-human, or simply no-human *trompe-l'œil* of twilight vistas, incorporating all possible and impossible landscapes into a frame of convulsive beauty. Here the sunset as a local illusion is unmoored from time and space and encounters eschatology, the study of 'last things' whose Greek root refers to the literal edges of the earth, an ultimate spatiotemporal horizon, an end of the world. The title of course refers to the Apocalypse, describing the appearance of the horse of death in the Book of Revelation. The apocalypse is not something we wait for with trepidation but something that may have already happened, recalling the origins of the term, meaning a revelation, an unveiling, a discovery. In this sense, the apocalypse is not a distant event but an ongoing condition that is found. Both retrospective and prospective, the atemporal apocalypse visualises a horizon where we no longer play a part, a boundary at the extreme limits of being and comprehension. The sunset landscape looks West and draws its power from the generic and narrative typologies of the pastoral, the geographic, the exotic, the sublime, and the picturesque, not only rousing numinous experience and a primordial sense of wonder, but also demonstrating landscape as an instrument of cultural power, the dreamwork of imperialism, a collection of assets and backdrops. Contesting the givenness of the sunset as sight and site, the radiant image addresses 'the empire on which the sun never sets', and marks our own state of living in a perpetual 'sunset'. As the poet T.S. Eliot observed: 'This is the way the world ends.'

11. *Birds on Land, Mammals in the Sky*, 2026

16mm film installation, 2 masked superimposed projections, colour, silent, 11'34" and 15'29" (continuous out-of-sync loop)

The Biblical story of the creation of the universe uses the spatiotemporal narrative of a workweek to account for the emergence of existence: day one divides the darkness from light, day two the 'waters above' from the 'waters below', and day three the sea from the land. In each of the next three days, these divisions are populated: day four populates the darkness and light with the Sun, Moon, and stars; day five populates seas and skies with fish and fowl; and finally, land-based creatures and humanity populate the land. *Birds on Land, Mammals in the Sky* is a grand presentation of two superimposed projections that are masked complementarily so that one reel plays within a circular aperture within the other. As the title suggests, the days of Genesis have been switched: flying fowl remain tethered to the Earth, while mammals compose a heavenly backdrop in the air. This is an experiment with figure-ground relations according to taxonomical rank, a visual dithyramb about the unnatural order of beings.

Of course, the captured images take advantage of

the captivation of its subjects within the Warsaw Zoo, and how they are organised in micro-habitats according to species and type. The mini-worlds constructed in the displays simulate human imaginations of the animal's 'natural' habitats, providing safe access to the wild, but are only abstracted arenas for mundane survival, objectified into passive spectacles. Indeed, the conservationist aim of zoos follows a salvage paradigm which, in eradicating habitats and endeavouring to save and repopulate species, constructs an imaginary animal, isolated and classified, rendering life into an image. But here, in the projection, the animals are never alone, rather each organism is viewed through a kaleidoscopic lens which multiplies and repeats the subjects into floating patterns. It is a form of exponential animal reproduction outside biology, a perceptual cloning through optics. The prismatic diplopia multiplies movement into psychedelic affect, each level of the hierarchy reproducing according to what Genesis calls its own 'kind'. Mammals become a delirious backdrop merged with the skyscape, finally accessing the cosmic abode, while the land-bound birds are confined to a crystal ball circular field. Through a process of hallucinatory world-bending, the projected image amplifies and undermines their incorporation into the space of representation and its rules, their induction into a human-centred world that is conceived and understood as a picture, a world picture within a picture of worlds and its lore.

12. Post-production, 2026

16mm film, colour, silent, 2'51"

A portable toilet stationed at Warsaw's Saxon Garden is filmed using a high-speed camera. A beautiful shot of social realism if there ever was one, but someone disturbs the scene, slowly making a bee-line for the restroom. Did they not see the camera and crew? Could they not hold it for another few seconds? The incontinent intruder is none other than the curator Post Brothers, who has closely assisted in the production of the new works for the exhibition. Did he forget they were filming? Or did nature call too loudly? Let us get it out of the way and acknowledge, as the famous children's book attests, that *Everybody Poops*, and that even kings and queens, ideally of course, sit on their porcelain thrones once a day. Beyond the pun of the curator's name, the title demonstrates the intertwined relation between production and presentation, and calls attention both to the practice of post-production in cinema and to the use of the term by curator and theorist Nicholas Bourriaud to describe how artists since the 1990s have operated more as 'programmers', 'editors', and 'DJs' than makers by drawing from pre-existing cultural products, thereby scrambling the boundaries between consumption and production. While post-production in audiovisual contexts often refers to editing processes after 'production', digital media workflows today continually conflate these divisions as well.

Curators normally arrive after-the-fact, providing secondary information, but here the supportive worker's presence takes centre stage. The portable commode is an essential part of any production, film or otherwise, it is a means to eliminate breaks, to keep work flowing. From skyscrapers to the silver screen, even the most lofty and elevated production nevertheless must attend to our vulgar embodied materiality. In a society where continuous production is expected from all of us, there is no pre- or post- production, everything is assimilated as capital, even our most base needs. Production is merely the physical residue left behind after the artist has ingested and processed the vast, pre-existing sea of cultural information, media, and images, reprogramming the given. Like a portable toilet, the artwork is an open-ended script that invites ongoing re-use by others. As the artist Seth Price once wrote, 'Production, after all, is the excretory phase in a process of appropriation.'



During opening hours on 28 August, 2 October, and 30 October, there will be a looped public screening of João Maria Gusmão's film *Clownwork (take 1, 2 & 3)* in Zachęta cinema.

Clownwork (take 1, 2 & 3), 2025

16mm film, colour, silent, 21'09"

Three clowns in painter coveralls enter a circus ring and attempt to renovate a statue high up on a pedestal. They bring with them the basic equipment needed to perform their task: buckets of paint, brushes, ladders, planks, and so on. As can be expected of a troupe of clowns, mayhem ensues, they slap and kick each other, playfully spill paint all over the place, and laugh at each other's clumsy foibles and failures.

It matters not who the plaster bust represents, they are a head of power represented in the requisite Greco-Roman style of philosophers, elites, and despots. The incorporation of this icon of classical 'high' culture within the lowly 'mass art' of circus clowning suggests a rebellious lampooning of highfalutin authority and values, yet the giggle of tricksters are enlisted in the maintenance of this symbol, whitewashing the statue. Though the red-nosed buffoons are engaged in the specialised para-artistic labour of the conservator-restorer, this is a proletarian performance, an abstraction of the labour and stupefying struggles of everyday men and women rendered into entertaining spectacle. All work is shown as a performance first, a donning of a costume and an enactment of a routine. Their gag is a practical embodiment of the abstractly preconceived character of the prototypical worker, and their humorous failure is a direct result of their earnest, optimistic commitment to complete

their task. Utterly artificial and completely inadequate, they abandon production proper in favour of a game of pretence.

It's a sad and violent film, where the job is never finished, and the workers can only engage each other through slapstick and ridicule. Mocking productivity and artistic labour, the clowns nevertheless adhere to the crucial principle in conservation that treatments must be reversible and able to be undone and repeated. As Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa famously wrote: 'If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.' Rather than observing the knockabout act from above, we are set in the middle of the looping action, ourselves as clowns enlisted in the tragic-comic rejuvenation of the same art of bygone days.

João Maria Gusmão.

Following the White Tiger

until 31 October

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camera & location assistant: Marco Bene
studio Project manager & production Francisca Bagulho
studio assistant: Simão Carneiro
16mm film equipment expertise by Pato em Pequim
film prints and lab work: ANDEC Cinegrell Filmtechnik GmbH
web developer: Joel Domingues

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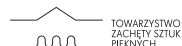
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