

João Onofre

November 20, 2021 - January 15, 2022



João Onofre, *Untitled (zoetrope)*, 2018-19, 4k video, 2.93:1, colour, sound, 141', variable dimensions

Of course, rhythm, repetition and time are characteristic of many contemporary artistic expressions, but in the case of Onofre they become a thick fog that fades in parts to reveal the melancholy of an action without conclusion or destination.¹

Daniel Faria Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of work by Portuguese artist João Onofre, his first in Canada. Onofre's decades-long practice spans video, installation, performance, photography, and drawing, often incorporating popular music, while referencing key developments in the relationship between sound, image, and text in art history. Repetition, duration, and failure are recurring themes in Onofre's work, and the humour that arises as a result is darkly shaded and ambiguous.

Untitled (zoetrope) (2018-19) features a four-person band, a gospel choir, and two-dozen rugby players gathered on stage around a single microphone that hangs and sways from the ceiling. The camera pans the stage in a circular motion as the band and gospel choir perform Foreigner's 1984 hit "I Want to Know What Love Is." One at a time, a single rugby player runs up to the microphone to sing the chorus, only to be tackled by another player. Sometimes a player will make it all the way to "what love" before being thrown to the ground, and sometimes they will have barely opened their mouths in preparation to sing. This action is repeated again and again for over two hours, the song played on a seemingly infinite loop that

¹ Delfim Sardo, "Fissure" in *João Onofre: Once in a Lifetime (Repeat)*, Exhibition catalogue, Culturgest, Lisbon, Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2019.

mirrors the repeated, Sisyphean action of the players. Caught in this physically exhausting cycle in which failure seems inevitable, the players never stop trying to complete the chorus.

Onofre's work often visits and re-visits the limitations of the body, time, and physical spaces. *Untitled* (1997) consists of a pair of stethoscopes, joined together so that two visitors can listen to each other's heartbeats merged in real time. Marking time like a metronome, the beat can be either abstract sound, or a reminder of the body's repetitive and continuous motions, the cessation of which means death. While visitors to the work dictate the duration of their sonic experience based on the number of seconds or minutes or hours they spend listening to the comingled beating, the physical object of the connected stethoscopes also acts like an event score. Regardless of whether one decides to listen, the action is implied and the sound is imagined (or, rather, the sound is *seen*). Similarly, with the title of Onofre's photographic work, *Your closed hand makes the size of your heart and together they make the minimum distance that it could be from another one* (2001), language becomes a kind of score, imbuing a still image with action and dictating how we read, and consequently, see the work.

In Onofre's work there is often a formal doubling: the circular pan of the camera in *Untitled* (*zoetrope*) echoes the looping soundtrack and repeated actions of the players, and the tubes of the stethoscope form a physical connection representing an aural one, that in turn represents a bodily one. It's a doubling that also exposes the distance between two things, creating a tension that unfolds in anticipation of an event that has yet to—and may never—occur.

João Onofre was born in Lisbon in 1976, where he lives and works. He studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon, earned an MA in Fine Arts from Goldsmiths College, University of London (1999), and holds a PhD in Contemporary Art from the College of Arts of the University of Coimbra (2018). He has had solo exhibitions at several international museums and galleries, namely: 1-20, New York (2001); MoMA PS1, New York (2002); MNAC, Lisbon, and CGAC, Santiago de Compostela (2003); Kunsthalle Wien. Project Space Karlsplatz. Wien (2003); Magazin 4, Bregenz (2004); Toni Tàpies, Barcelona (2005); Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art, Lisbon (2007); Galleria Franco Noero, Turin (2007); Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2011); Marlborough Contemporary, London (2014); Kunstpavillion, Munich, Germany (2015); Appleton Square, Lisbon (2016); MAAT, Lisbon, (2017); and Culturgest; Lisbon, (2019).

Onofre's work has been included in numerous group exhibitions, including: *Plateau of Humankind*- The 49th Venice Biennale; *Human Interest*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; *Performing Bodies*, Tate Modern, London; *Youth of Today*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; *Video, An Art, A History 1965-2005 New Media collection*, Centre Pompidou, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, Fundació La Caixa, Barcelona, and Taipei

Fine Art Museum; *Postscript: Writing After Conceptual Art*, Denver Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver.

His work is represented in public and private collections worldwide such as: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo; Centre Georges Pompidou - MNAM/CCI, Paris; The Weltkunst Foundation, Zurich; La Caixa, Barcelona; MACS - Museu de Serralves, Porto; CAM - Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon; MNAC - Museu do Chiado, Lisbon; GAM - Galeria D'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin; Norton Museum of Art, Palm Beach; Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Ministère de Culture, Paris.

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