

CB: How do you feel about spells?

NA: I try to be as little superstitious as possible. But that doesn't mean that I don't have the feeling of being "under a spell" from time to time. Politically, I think it's important not to leave too much to fate and rather to cast the "spell" myself. When it comes to art, I do think that it can achieve something "transcendental" - something that perhaps reaches out and touches outside of rational thought processes. I really like the English verb "bewitched" though.

How do you approach the process of working on a special topic, like the personification of a phone?

CB: I think it comes from an early conviction that objects are alive. I read somewhere that bonding with objects is a sign of trauma, but it could also be a sympathy for animism. I've worked on and around the camera for many years, and as the smartphone now is the most dominant camera on the market, I began to imagine what this object might feel like. Schizophrenic, guilty, conflicted. Built with components from dubious trades, assembled in exploitative conditions, a consumer gadget that is so close to its user but is also just a shell, the content on the heavy cloud ready to be passed onto the next model. Anthropologists are wont to say that the way a society treats its dead says a lot about the way it treats its living. It could be the same about the way we treat objects.

What type of Querelle are you looking for?

NA: If you mean Querelle as an argument, I'm not an avoider, but I don't enjoy it either. But I take Querelle here as an allusion to Jean Genet's book and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film adaptation of a sailor's story of the same name. It's been a long time since I read the book and watched the film. I found both fascinating at the time, and my work has always tried to expand this explicitly male homoerotic space with female herstories. In texts as well as in my artistic works a female ship crew has often played a role as a starting point to anti-patriarchal ideas. This is certainly found in this exhibition, with works made in Portugal, a former seafaring nation that has yet to properly come to terms with its colonial past.

In your work, we often see the phone lying on the analyst's couch. What kind of "inner struggle" are you engaged in here? Why does the phone seek out the psychoanalyst?

CB: Smartphones also do yoga, swimming or work out on a regular basis. They go to clubs and cafés too, generally with friends of the same generation.

I've got the images, but I haven't downloaded them for printing yet.

Smartphones are growing up and evolving within the society we live in. They are confronted with the fears that inhabit us, with the narcissism that energizes our creative and neoliberal capitalism. They understand very well the limits of growth, and are all aware of their impotence.

Like us, they seek to be free and self-determined. It's only logical that they lie on the couch. They have a fragile psyche. When they first appeared, they were huge objects of desire. Now their banality, the speed of the market and new sensations like chatGPT makes them anxious. They already dream beyond their borders.

Is the Bacalhau victim and punishment at the same time?

NA: The bacalhau, cod fish, has accompanied Portuguese history for a very long time, since the 14th century. Actually, it was fished in Norway and first exported to Portugal. As a salted dried provision,

it accompanied the colonial voyages and gradually acquired the status of a national food - especially when in the so-called Estado Novo, the military dictatorship of Portugal, own cod fisheries were promoted. The idea of the well-known colorful fish tins that tourists like to buy actually comes from this period. Bacalhau is also a pretty horrible slang term for vagina. In my four years in Lisbon, I had the feeling that the revision of Portuguese history, both the military dictatorship and the colonial history, is happening very slowly, or is just beginning. The sea woman in my prints appropriates this dried thing and repurposes it in a practical, lets say necessary way.

Would you say, your phones have a soul or work like fetish objects for humans, so they get their own characteristics and life?

CB: Each new model comes with the promise of the next upgrade. So it's more a question of optimization than of relationship. The phone's fetish character has become almost non-existent over time. The aim is to make them indistinguishable from us, to create a continuation of our being in the digital world. For me, personifying phones clarifies the boundary; from a tech point of view, it would probably be read as an iconoclastic gesture.

Are conquest, dominance and accumulation the domain of men?

NA: From the present political moment in which we live - or, when we think of territorial, violent "conquest," whether that of the body or of land - it would be easy to answer a clear YES. In principle, I don't like to think in binary terms, so I don't think in systems of good and evil. I certainly wish for the end of patriarchy. However, affect and humor are important elements in my work in order to open a positive space in which new possibilities can arise.

In contrast to the new phones being produced daily, cash seems to be slowly disappearing. Can you say something about the dollar bills with holes in them? Is a dollar no longer worth anything?

CB: America is probably the most indebted country in the world, but pension funds, insurance companies and foreign countries own its debt. All these interdependencies mean that a dollar is still a dollar. Punching holes in dollars is a very simple gesture, but it generates complex images. For example, you say that cash seems to disappear, but at the same time perforated dollars create lots of coins. This reminds us that once a certain rate of accumulation has been reached, money multiplies itself, the trick being to have the right legal system.

But maybe the perforated dollars turn into confetti and celebrate waste, or it's a hallucination of the smartphone who feels squeezed by the speed of time.

What do the five men in your collages have in common and why is Kevin Spacey present three times?

NA: In the end, we don't even recognize the faces in the collages anymore - for me, it was also about emphasizing the very masculine gestures, or, in the case of Spacey, which image of masculinity is being reproduced here. Whether Weinstein, Ventura or Bolsonaro - for me they stand for abuse, corruption and violent politics. Unfortunately, I think the list of men for my collages would be endless.

In your imagination, what would be a great day in the life of your phones?

In my imagination phones have - and I think it's the same for us - a really good time when they are switched off!