

Situations in which the explicable and rationally comprehensible are confronted with the impenetrable represent one of the central areas of interest of the artist duo João Maria Gusmão (b.1979 in Lisbon) + Pedro Paiva (b.1977 in Lisbon). Their work consists of films, photographs and camera obscura installations as well as sculptures, and it presents physics experiments, natural processes and everyday or historical episodes. These are usually associated with mysterious and not infrequently also extrasensory aspects. The seemingly scientific, objective view of things that simultaneously defines many of their works introduces the inexplicable into our familiar reality, but without ridding it of its enigmatic quality.

The works' distinctive effect quickly drew substantial attention to the duo, so that the two Portuguese artists are already able to look back on an impressive history of exhibitions. They have thus exhibited at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco (2008), at the IKON Gallery in Birmingham (2010), at the Kunsthaus Glarus in the Swiss town of Glarus (2012), and at the Hangar Bicocca in Milan (2014), among other institutions. In 2009 they also represented Portugal at the 53rd Venice Biennale.

In the context of the exhibition at the Kölner Kunstverein the duo's sculptures will be placed in the foreground for the first time. These have been presented only rather rarely in previous exhibitions, and in the recent past they have taken on increasing importance in the practice of Gusmão + Paiva. As in their films and photographs, the Portuguese duo also use this specific group of works to examine our relationship to reality and to turn it upside down with great subtlety, meticulousness and – not least – with humour, as well. The works are generally cast in bronze and deal with everyday objects, scientific instruments, architecture and animals, among other things. These are subjected to a sometimes surreal semantic shift by means of unusual and occasionally contradictory constellations.

The sculptural works to be placed in the pavilion are supplemented by new works on film, which were conceived specifically for the cinema and for the Riphahnsaal of the Kölner Kunstverein and can be seen as prime examples of the two artists' exploration of the moving image. A camera obscura has additionally been planned for the lower level of the institution: in this way the exhibition will not only provide an opportunity for visitors to occupy themselves with Gusmão + Paiva's sculptures in greater depth, it will also plainly demonstrate the relationship between this specific group of works and the other areas of their artistic body of work.

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