



Luso-portugueses
RENÉ TAVARES

10.12.2025 - 28.02.2026

Kunsthalle Lissabon is pleased to present *Luso-Portuguese*, a solo exhibition by visual artist René Tavares, born in São Tomé. The exhibition brings together a new set of works conceived especially for KL and will be on view from December 10, 2025, to February 28, 2026.

Luso-Angolan, Luso-Santomense, Luso-Brazilian, Luso-Cape Verdean, Luso-Mozambican, Luso-Guinean, Luso-Timorese... but why not simply Portuguese? *Luso-portugueses* begins with this linguistic irony to challenge the historical, colonial, and identity boundaries embedded in the act of naming itself, in the very idea of “lusó,” and to question who is authorised to inhabit that category. Connected through histories of domination and circulation, territories in other latitudes were marked by a prefix that defines the “other”: the “almost,” the “not quite,” the “hybrid,” the “outside the norm.” An accent shifts from a distinctive feature to a marker of exclusion. Here, the term “lusó-” becomes a tool for critical reflection: who can be called “lusó”? Who is allowed to carry that prefix? And what does this unequal distribution of names, categories, and accents reveal?

René Tavares’s practice brings together memory, identity, and diaspora through painting, drawing, photography, and textile elements. His work reflects on processes of cultural creolisation, colonial legacies, and the forms of resistance inscribed in contemporary Afro-diasporic narratives. Through layered gestures and fields of colour, he creates compositions in which figuration and abstraction intertwine, evoking both the cultural heritage of São Tomé and Príncipe and the hybrid, shifting realities of a postcolonial world.

At Kunsthalle Lissabon, Tavares presents a new body of work that expands his ongoing investigation into historical memory and belonging. Several figures appear overlaid with the Portuguese Coat of Arms, a gesture that opens fundamental questions: what does it mean to bear a coat of arms? Who possesses one, and who is excluded from it? What traces of heritage, power, or lack of recognition are inscribed in such a symbol?

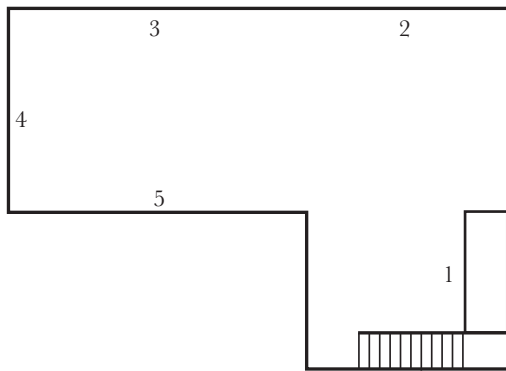
Among the new paintings are a series of figures placed within domestic interiors—unusual territory for the artist. In one, a family poses in what could be their living room, where a collection of Vista Alegre porcelain, commonly found in many Portuguese homes, stands out. The presence of these objects evokes a historical desire for integration within a specific imaginary of Portuguese identity, reflecting how signs of prestige and belonging circulate, are appropriated, and reconfigured. In another portrait, a woman seated in a green chair meets the viewer’s gaze with a firm, even defiant posture, asserting presence and agency.

Alongside the portraits, a triptych of still lifes features cotton branches—material deeply tied to colonial economies and their violence—used as elements of domestic decoration, placed in vases of the same blue-and-white porcelain, resting on traditional wooden furniture covered with white lace. These compositions create a tension between decorative beauty and histories of extraction from bodies, lands, and forced labour.

Completing the ensemble is a chair that simultaneously evokes the Portuguese monarchical throne and the presidential “Cadeira dos Leões,” today part of the Official State Cabinet. It is an object that raises questions of authority, representation, and legitimacy: who is permitted to occupy that seat? How is the right to sit in a position of power constructed or denied? In this dialogue, the seated woman becomes even more incisive: which body can claim that seat, and what history enables—or prevents—that claim?

Together, these works articulate different ways of staging presence, hierarchy, and memory, inviting reflection on how history is transmitted and transformed through images, bodies, and spaces. The exhibition not only interrogates how we see and are seen, but also how we are named, who holds the power to name, and what such naming produces symbolically, politically, and socially.

René Tavares (b. 1983, São Tomé and Príncipe) lives and works between Lisbon and São Tomé. His practice spans painting, drawing, photography, and installation, exploring themes of identity, memory, and postcolonial heritage. Trained at the National School of Fine Arts in Dakar and at the École des Beaux-Arts in Rennes, the artist has exhibited widely in international contexts, including the Ilha de São Jorge project at the Venice Architecture Biennale (2014), the Biennial of Art and Culture of São Tomé and Príncipe, and the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair. His work is held in public and private collections across Africa and Europe, and in 2022, he was a finalist for the EDP Foundation's New Artists Prize.



1)

My place of reflection, 2025

Natural pigment, acrylic, oil, stencil, charcoal on canvas
120 cm x 86 cm

2)

A Very Portuguese Family, 2025

Natural pigment, acrylic, oil, stencil, charcoal on canvas
184 cm x 176 cm

3)

The mirror of my story, 2025

Natural pigment, acrylic, oil, stencil, charcoal on canvas
120 cm x 80 cm each

4)

The next future, 2025

Wood, fabric
50 cm x 50 cm x 120 cm

5)

"Person" behind the veil, 2025

Natural pigment, acrylic, oil, stencil, charcoal on canvas
68 cm x 58 cm