

LAVOR

Fredrik Værsløv, Sarah Affonso, Jeff Perkins/João Simões

July 2th – July 24th, 2026

Figura Avulsa

figuraavulsa.com

Opening: July 5th, 2026, 6–8 PM

Figura Avulsa is pleased to present LAVOR, a group exhibition bringing together curtain paintings by Fredrik Værsløv, early 20th-century *lenços de Viana* (or *lenços dos namorados*) from the collection of Sarah Affonso, and documentation of a collaborative performance by Jeffrey Perkins and João Simões. The exhibition opens on Sunday, July 5th, 2026, at 6 PM.

Værsløv's latest works are long strips of painted cotton, hung bunched as curtains. They refer back to an early memory: the bright fabrics his mother chose for the windows of his childhood home, which seemed to him, before he had words for it, deliberately artful. In small-town Norway in the 1980s that was as close as anything came to art. The memory is not incidental; Værsløv's caustic, workaday experiments in high-end painterly abstraction have always also been a question of class.

Painting now tends to justify itself in one of two ways: abstraction argues about how images are made and circulated, figuration argues about who gets represented. Værsløv's curtains take neither job. They hang in the gallery the way curtains hang in a house, as furnishing; what they record is the making of their own fabric rather than a position in the argument. If that is a retreat into the interior, it is a deliberate one.

Interwoven with these works are early 20th-century *lenços* from the collection of Sarah Affonso, the modernist painter who also worked extensively in embroidery. Popularly known as *lenços dos namorados*, these hand-embroidered kerchiefs from the Minho region are less narrowly romantic than the name suggests. The artist and researcher Sara Brandão prefers the plainer name *lenços de amor*: the loves stitched into them include friendship, self-love, jealousy, revolt, and longing. "Not that there is anything wrong with embroidering for a boyfriend," she explains, "but these women asserted themselves through text when they could not go to school. They embroidered the access they did not have."

The verses often keep the phonetic spelling of regional speech. Passed discreetly to a beloved, or kept for oneself, they were declarations of affection, longing, and independence. Affonso grew up in Viana do Castelo; she embroidered and knitted throughout her life, and the motifs of these textiles recur in her modernist compositions. In LAVOR the *lenços* appear as labor in two senses: the work of the needle, and the work of women who wrote themselves into cloth when other means were closed to them.

Anchoring the exhibition is the documentation of a collaborative performance by Jeffrey Perkins and João Simões, published as a magazine titled *Mobile*. The documented action is the repainting of a room from green back to white. Neither artist has much affection for painting; both come out of a moment when it stood for bourgeois convention, the obstacle to anything new. It appears in their performance accordingly, not as a medium but as a task: the coat of white that returns a room to use. That the task rhymes with Værsløv's curtains is one of the exhibition's ironies. From opposite directions, the painter and the performers arrive at the same place: painting as work done to a room.

The exhibition takes its title from an old word for ornamental handwork. It proposes no thesis about labor; it puts three kinds of it in one room: curtain-making, embroidery, house-painting.

Figura Avulsa is located at Rua de Santa Catarina 12, Lisboa.

For press inquiries or more information, please contact figuraavulsa.office@gmail.com.

fig. avulsa