A Cartography of (Un)Belonging

MÓNICA DE MIRANDA
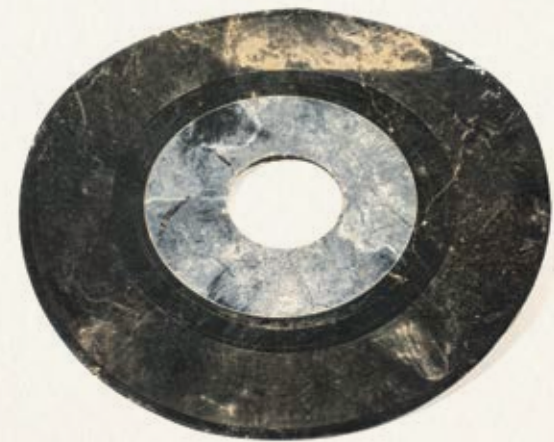
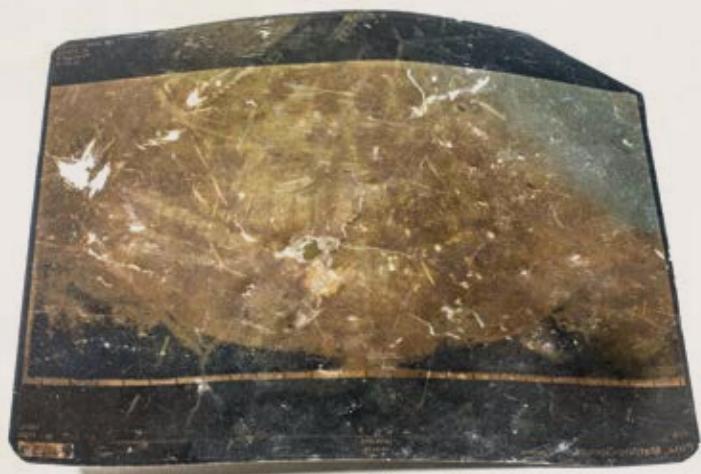2

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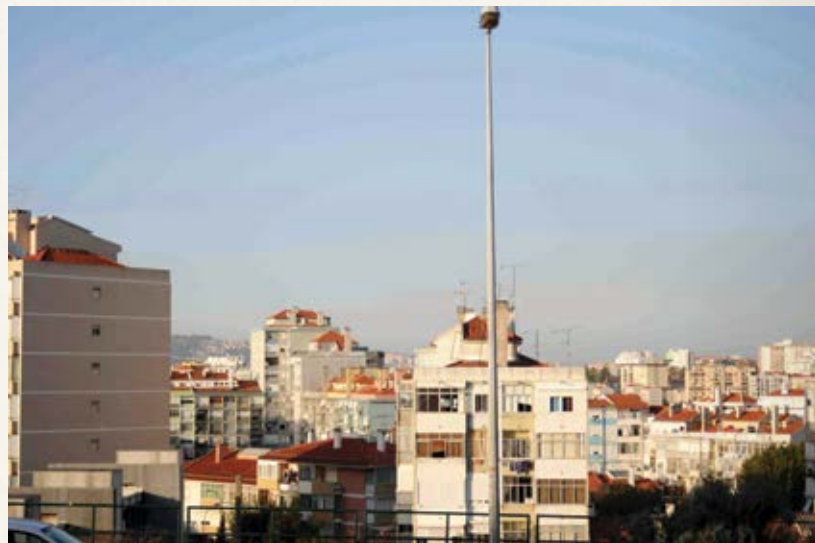27

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Mónica de Miranda:
"A Cartography of (Un)Belonging"

Cartography is defined as the study and practice of making maps (composed by the Ancient Greek words "chartes", "map" and "graphein", "write"). Both an art and a science, it has always been situated at the intersection of technology and aesthetics, building the premises for a true and authoritative representation of place, and controlled territory and socio-spatial relations.

"Maps and visualizations are thought to be factual, objective, transparent" (Ricker, Kraak, Enegelhardt 2020, 3), detached from politics, mostly if framed in the contemporary context, within the currently predominant format of daily lives' digital maps. Offered as different objects as before, now usually immaterial and displayed on technological devices, they seem not to convey more than direct quantitative information. We are brought to forget that maps are made by people with a specific intent of surveilling individuals and collect relevant data that compromise any expectancy of safety. Rather than focusing on what can be seen, questions on what is not visible should be addressed when relating to urban landscapes' policies and politics.

A Cartography of (Un)Belonging (2021) takes its origin from an inquiry on possibilities of action for a decolonization of map-making practice. Indeed, Mónica de Miranda's *Post-Archive* (ongoing since 2010) is a research reflecting on borders, landscapes, places, and spaces, namely the demolished neighborhoods in Lisbon that develop along the Military Road and that have

slowly been torn down, and hidden by on-going real estate speculation.

A reflection on affective memories of migration from Africa rather than a cold mapping practice, the visual journey presented in this book is one impregnated with emotions, felt by the mapmaker when drawing the map and bringing out her research, and the one felt by the people that used to live in the represented neighborhoods. Through a decolonizing act that seeks to re-create a space of belonging and community, Mónica de Miranda resists the dogmatic mapping practices activating, and arising perceptions, questions, and emotional responses through aesthetics, nostalgia and the information conveyed.

Quinta da Vitória, Mira Loures, Quinta da Serra, Ameixoeira, Azinhaga dos Besouros, 6 de Maio, Cova da Moura, Talude, and Terras da Costa: these are the disappearing neighborhoods. Starting in 2009, Mónica de Miranda has collected photographic notes for a visual archive of the Military Road, formerly a set of fortifications built at the end of the 19th century as a defense towards external invasions. Nowadays, the road keeps being a kind of fort against immigrants from mostly African countries to force them to stay in Lisbon's peripheries, in a limbo, instead of starting a new, more established life.

What is there to be mapped in this limbo, now apparently void, yet saturated with symbols of af-

fection? Different objects witnessing former living communities and identities. Items that talk, and revoke sounds and unfold narratives. Dishes rattling, flourishing music, pages scrolled through: all gone. The absence of sound: all that remains there to be felt. A desert made up of unreal, possible echoes, rather than the overwhelming presence of ruins and fragments of *azulejos*. It is not about what it is there, but what it was and could have been.

Unfolding the map, we embark on an intimate journey along the neighbourhoods of the Military Road. Coming across overgrown ruins and objects that have been left behind, we pick up a videotape: the plastic case is damaged, in deconstruction, the tape remains a relic of a recorded but buried (hi)story. In the void that surrounds this fragmented document lies the space for the (re-)creation of memory: What is recorded on the videotape? Who does it belong to and who belongs to it?

Rather than being a static archival apparatus, the *Post-Archive* is an affective and transformable space that attempts to preserve the past for the present, inviting the imagination to (re-)assemble the fragments through a personal approach. The stories that come alive, tell us of belongingness, of a search for identity and home, of a sense of (un)belonging when there is nothing left. Inspired by the *Post-Archive* and as part of Mónica de Miranda's exhibition *Tales of Lisbon* (2019), different writers have created nar-

ratives around the objects. In one of these short stories, the Angolan writer Telma Tvon poses the question: "Where is my bed?" ["*Onde anda a minha cama?*"]. It is a question that is connected to the diasporic condition of (un)belonging to manifold spaces, oscillating between feelings of displacement and feelings of belonging.

In the diaspora situation, identities become multiple and undergo constant transformations (Hall [1999] 2019, 207): "Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past." (Hall 1990, 225). Identity belongs to the future as much as to the past, and so does the *Post-Archive*, by seeking to construct a space of belonging and for imagined communities in the light of the diaspora experience.

Humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan express-es, almost like a poetry, that "place is security and space is freedom" (2001, 3). But when displacements and detachments besieged a city, and have stripped the urban of its very security and freedom to bits and pieces, what make of it? If people are always connected to a sense of place, what emerges? What loses? What remains? How does it relate to a person's identity and sense of (un)belonging?

The Military Road, through which all these neighborhoods traverse, serves as a site of regu-

lation and filtration, a disconnection in the guise of protection, a delineation between the regimented ideas of the foreign and the domestic, a boundary stuck between exclusion and inclusion—"a politics of societal management forged out of deep insecurity about a future perceived as calamitous and out of control" (Amin 2013, 5). The road should facilitate a space for connections but instead failed to mediate understanding, as it structurally and metaphorically withholds neither communal interdependence nor civil engagement.

The subjectivisation of place and space is intimately woven to these intimate yet distant cross--cultural encounters and construction of identities, revealing, to an extent, emerging forms of conflict and conviviality, portrayed by the works of Mónica de Miranda. One realizes the utmost importance of the interlinking between a person's perceptual feeling of rootedness in relation to one's neighborhood, which ultimately allows one to make sense of one's participation within locality, regionality, nationality, and globality.

Through (hi)storytelling, Mónica de Miranda offers a pensive cartography—mapping senses of tangible and the intangible, unearthing cultures, identities, and the everyday.

**CURATED BY
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ILARIA SPONDA**

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**MÓNICA DE MIRANDA
(B. 1976, PORTO)**

Mónica de Miranda (Porto, 1976) is a Portuguese artist and researcher of Angolan origin who lives and works between Lisbon and Luanda. Her work focuses on postcolonial issues of geography, identity and history, mainly narrated within a subjective framework associated with the African diaspora. Through the interdisciplinary use of different media—drawing, photography, sound, video, and installations—including documentary as well as fiction, she looks at the convergence of politics, gender, memory and landscape. Metaphorically, yet realistically, the urban and the peripheral come together under her performative documentary approach. De Miranda first became known for her photographic documentation of the ruins of modern hotels in post-war Angola, and of its socio-political significance. Her work has been internationally exhibited at art biennales, some of which include Dakar Biennial in Senegal (2016); Bienal de Casablanca (2016); Encontros Fotográficos de Bamako (2015); 14ª Bienal de Arquitectura de Veneza (2014); Bienal São Tomé e Principe (2013); and Estado Do Mundo, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (2008). Major galleries and museums also keep her work in their permanent art collections. Moreover, she is one of the founders of the artistic residencies project, Triangle Network in Portugal and founder of the Hangar Center for Artistic Research in Lisbon.

The Fold(s)

The Fold(s) is a curatorial project composed of four books operating as four individual exhibitions. Under the artistic direction of Luísa Santos, *The Fold(s)* was developed in the context of the Seminar in Curatorship by the MA and PhD students in Culture Studies of The Lisbon Consortium, Faculty of Human Sciences, Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

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1 Solanum chenopodioides
   Lam. (2019)
   Talude
   30 x 40 cm

2 Muro branco (2010)
   Quinta da Vitória
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

3 Mesa (2010)
   Quinta da Vitória
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

4 Untitled (2010)
   Quinta da Vitória
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

5 Bloco notas (2019)
   Casa Cruzado, Mira Loures
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

6 Azulejo decorativo (2019)
   Casa Cruzado, Mira Loures
   Detail from the series Tales of
   Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

7 Destroços pormenor VI (2010)
   Mira Loures
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

8 Vinyl partido (2019)
   Casa Kapunga, Mira Loures
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

9 Vinyl EP (2019)
   Casa Kapunga, Mira Loures
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

10 Vista com destroços (2010)
   Mira Loures
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

11 Raio-X (2019)
   Casa Desconhecida, Bairro da
   Serra
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

12 Camisola de seda (2019)
   Casa Desconhecida,
   Bairro da Serra
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

13 Quercus suber L. (2019)
   Mira Loures
   30 x 40 cm

14 Untitled (2010)
   Quinta da Serra
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

15 Untitled (2010)
   Quinta da Serra
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

16 Casa de telhas (2010)
   Quinta da Serra
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

17 Untitled (2010)
   Quinta da Serra
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

18 Varal de roupas III (2010)
   Quinta da Serra
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

19 Untitled (2010)
   Quinta da Serra, 2010
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

20 Parede de lata e madeira (2010)
   Ameixoeira
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

21 Fachada vermelha (2009)
   Azinhaga dos Besouros
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

22 Casa rosa e casa amarela
   (2009)
   Azinhaga dos Besouros
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

23 Mesa com cadeira em quarto
   azul (2009)
   Azinhaga dos Besouros
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

24 Casa destruída II (2009)
   Azinhaga dos Besouros
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

25 Bobine filme (2019)
   Casa Luzia, 6 de Maio
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

26 Persicaria maculosa Gray
   (2019)
   Talude
   30 x 40 cm

27 Amaranthus caudatus L. (2019)
   Talude
   30 x 40 cm

28 Glebionis coronaria (L.) Cass.
   Ex Spach (2019)
   Talude
   30 x 40 cm

29 Centaurea aspera L. (2019)
   Talude
   30 x 40 cm

30 Aula Inglês (2019)
   Casa Luzia, 6 de Maio
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

31 Diskette 2 (2019)
   Casa Luzia, 6 de Maio
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

32 Eucalyptus robusta Sm. (2019)
   Talude
   30 x 40 cm

33 Planta, dois caixotes e
   banheira (2010)
   Cova da Moura
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

34 Vista I (2010)
   Cova da Moura
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

35 Vista III (2010)
   Cova da Moura
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

36 Telha vermelha (2010)
   Talude
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

37 Azulejo Cozinha (2019)
   Casa Aurora, Talude
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

38 Dicionário (2019)
   Casa Aurora, Talude
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

39 Pista de carros Hot Wheels
   (2019)
   Casa Aurora, Talude
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

40 Cassete audio (2019)
   Casa Aurora, Talude
   Detail from the series
   Tales of Lisbon
   30 x 40 cm

41 Madeiras (2010)
   Terras da Costa
   From the series
   Underconstruction
   30 x 40 cm

42 Military Road (2019)
   90 x 120 cm

ESTRADA MILITAR

— MILITARY ROAD —

DEFESA DE LISBOA - LISBON DEFENSE

L E G E N D A
L E G E N D

Ruas / Streets
Segunda Circular / Second Circular
Estrada militar séc. XIX / Millitary Road XIX century
Estrada militar séc. XXI / Millitary Road XXI century

○ Primeira Linha de Defesa / First Defense Line

○ Segunda Linha de Defesa / Second Defense Line

○ Terceira Linha de Defesa / Third Defense Line

⋈ Obras Militares / Millitary Structures

⊚ Bairros Informais, Sociais e Demolidos
/ Informal, Social and Demolished Neighborhoods

Mira Loures
Quinta da Serra
Ampixoeira
Quinta da Vitória
Azinhaga dos Besouros
6 de Maio
Cova da Moura
Talude
Terras de Costa

N NE NW W E SW SE S

0 1 5 (km)