

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Coord.: José Reis
A collective work by CES

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Centro de Estudos Sociais
Universidade de Coimbra



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STAYING HOME

António Olaio

To say that an artist is an individual obviously seems like an unnecessary statement, because we all know that yes, everyone is an individual, regardless of what they do or choose to do. An individual is an individual. But artists exercise, as artists, that condition; making, out of that condition, the work they do. More than they would if they asked what that means, which would make them philosophers – which they are not. Although they may get close to philosophy, as they walk their path when making art, artists pass by it and keep on walking.

Above all, the artist transforms the experience of being an individual into an image that will be the experience and the reflection of that condition. And that's an experience that one has and thinks about while having it. It's an experience of such breadth and spatial plasticity that it configures the dynamics of being and, at the same time, the consciousness of being beyond time. Realising that an individual is the relationship with all things beyond himself, all the things that, being the negative space of his body and his identity, shape him.

In this condition, the artist finds out that the time to be with himself in seclusion has been expanded, sees his consciousness of self densified. Being an artist, one will certainly keep on making more art. And the fact of being left to oneself does not increase the consciousness of any singularity. Quite the contrary, as one already knew, what is densified is the consciousness of being someone else, the condition of being, defined by the possibility of

being someone else entirely. Because it's beyond the skin that we find the inner self, as it forms and expresses itself in its relations.

Left to oneself, each individual intensifies self-perception and, with it, the expectation of the presence of the other. In this absence there grows the awareness of what one already knew: the other is part of oneself. Or rather, it is the relationship with the other that defines us and, at the same time, self-awareness is not so important. Because the individual is someone you pass through when you think about yourself. And, though to be an individual is the condition to be, it happens by always being something else.

One is at home as if with oneself, in a body that expands into what you recognise as your house, a house that begins to be the moment it is no longer strange to you. Having in it what one needs, and what one needs beyond the things one most easily associates with utility.

And we remember that the house, over time, increasingly assumes its condition as house. But, as with the issue of being an individual, the house is a house when it transcends itself. That is why we have walls, which, more than creating rooms, and hence bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens, bathrooms... serve to place things, to hang things so that they look like they belong to the walls, images that dematerialise the walls and take them to other places, to others.