

Galeria **Francisco Fino**

**João Motta Guedes**

Portfolio



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# João Motta Guedes

João Motta Guedes (1995). He began his academic career with a degree in Law at the University of Lisbon (PT), participated in the Pontifical Catholic University exchange program in Rio de Janeiro (BR), and completed an International and European Master's Degree in Law at the NOVA University of Law in Lisbon (PT), having participated as a researcher in various academic publications and conferences. In 2019, he decided to dedicate himself to his artistic thinking and practice, which have always gone hand in hand through poetry over the years, finishing his Master's Degree in Painting at the University of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon (PT).

His solo exhibitions include: "You came to start the revolution" (2023), at Galeria Zé dos Bois; "How to Live?" (2023), at Galeria NAVE; and "No feeling is final" (2024), at Galeria Municipal da Boavista. He recently held the Glogauair residency in Berlin (DE); and among others, he has taken part in several group exhibitions such as the "Young Art Prize" (2023), "False twins" (2023) at Appleton Square, "The garden of forking paths" (2023) at Buraco, and, promoted by Galeria NAVE, the exhibitions "A dream brought

me here" (2024); "Be my guest"(2024), at Galeria NAVE; 'Wanderlust', at Artes Mota Galiza in Porto and '(0 /1) o zero e o um'; at the National Museum of Natural History and Science (MUNHAC), in Lisbon.

João Motta Guedes explores concepts of freedom, vulnerability, love and violence. His artistic productions reflect life as a metaphor for a journey where different paths emerge, allowing the discovery and sharing of experiences about the meaning of feeling and being human. His artistic language appears in media such as installation, sculpture, photography, drawing, the written word and poetry, and has a predominantly projective and experimental character. Based on a discourse and poetic narratives, he seeks to question the way forward through dreamlike expressions that elevate the observer to a utopian look at society and life, resulting in a comprehensive record of symbolic and metaphorical images that highlight poetry as an answer to the questions posed.

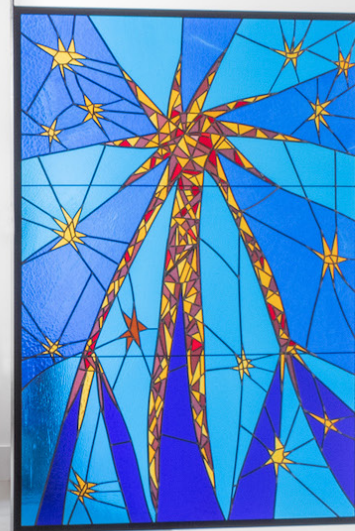
[More about the artist](#)



*No feeling is final*, 2024

Stainless glass

130 x 180 cm



Installation view of *No feeling is final*, Galeria da Boavista, 2024

## Luís Silva

The work of João Motta Guedes (Lisbon, 1995) constitutes an ongoing reflection on a set of ideas and feelings that can broadly be defined as freedom, vulnerability, love, and violence. At times closely related, at others in explicit contradiction, but always starting from a deeply personal perspective and from a place of self-exposure, these concepts give rise to a body of work in which life can be better understood through the metaphor of the journey: a continuous inner journey that is built on the infinite possibility of individual and collective trajectories which facilitate the exploration and sharing of experiences about what it means to be and feel human. To this end, he makes use of a non-hierarchical multiplicity of expressive means – installation, sculpture, photography, drawing, sound, poetry – in an approach that can be understood as the successor to a post-conceptual ontology of the artistic object. Yet this programme does not prevent him from developing a strongly poetic and narrative

discourse, in which a dreamlike universe leads us through a utopian vision of life and the world around us.

In *No Feeling is Final*, a project the artist developed specifically for his solo exhibition at Galeria da Boavista, the concept of travelling is understood through the transience of the emotional states that define human experience. The title of the exhibition is taken from *Go to the limits of your longing*, a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke, in which the Austrian poet declaims 'Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final.' Recognised for a body of work that celebrates the transcendental union between the world and humanity in a kind of 'cosmic space,' it is no surprise that Rilke lends Motta Guedes the emotional intensity and transcendence required for the path the artist suggests we take.

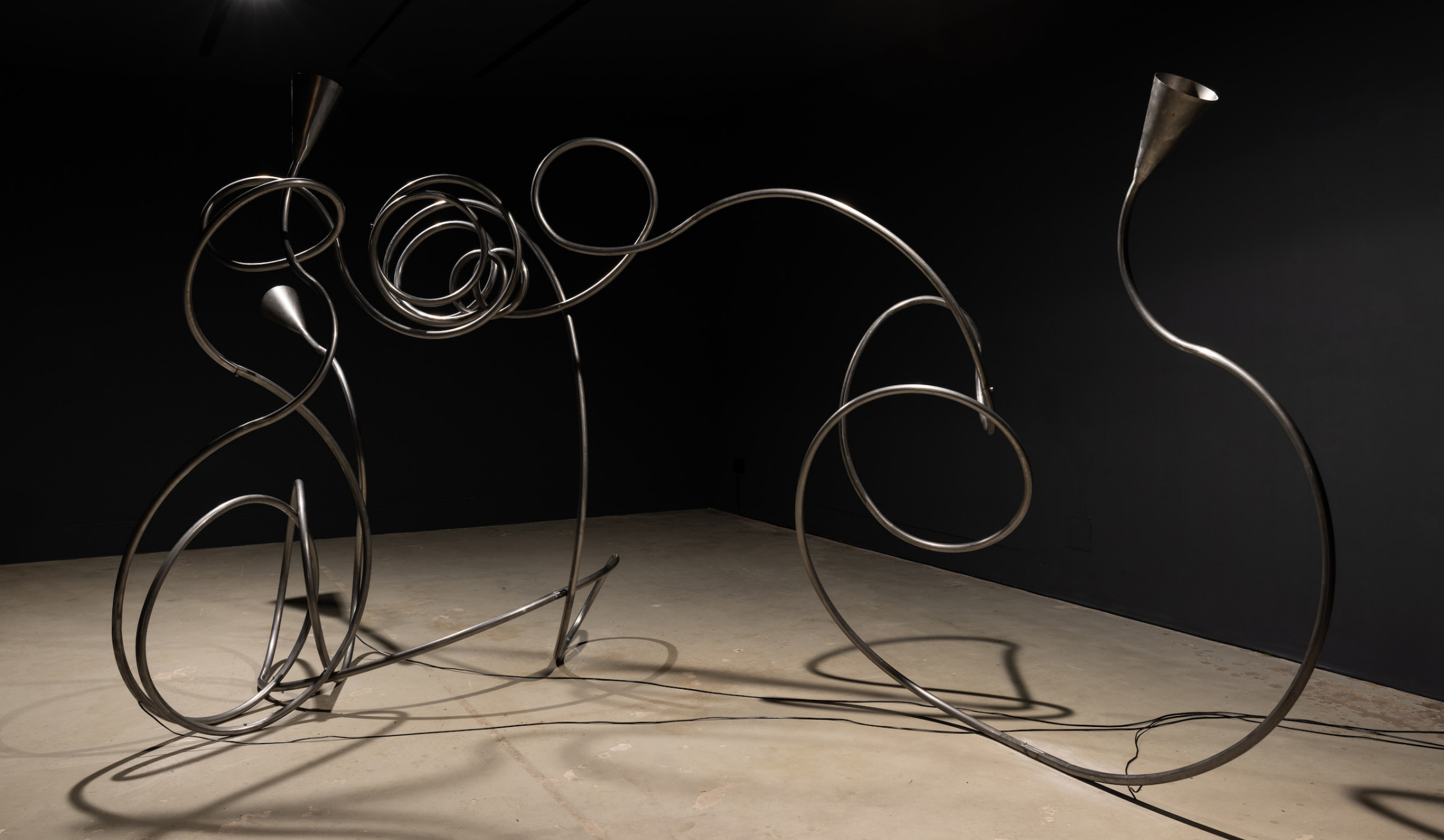
This journey begins on the ground floor of the gallery with a triptych of stained-glass windows which share the title of the exhibition. Working with light in a chromatic way, as matter, and without denying the place stained-glass windows have always occupied in history, Motta Guedes represents a group of vaguely human figures in an apparent state of flux or transformation. This state of potency, permanently fixed in the colours of the painted glass, recovers and reinterprets a larger narrative of psychedelics and altered states of consciousness as a form of self-knowledge and discovery, of liberation and potential emancipation. On the top floor we find *May I read you a poem?*, a sculpture that does not reveal itself easily, but which on closer inspection reveals a metallic tangle from which three megaphone-like shapes emerge and contain a poem written and read by the artist himself. Varyingly hesitant and confident, the texts bear witness to the artist's inner life, feelings, and desires. A ball of emotions that has taken on a physical form, albeit uncertain and difficult to define, and which is expressed not in one but in several



voices, intensities, and affects. We might say this is the multiplicity and transience of emotional states turned into a physical body.

This perpetual inward but also outward movement, of going but also of returning, characterised by uncertainty, by the mystery of discovering what exists within us, but also of what exists beyond ourselves in the world, is what defines No feeling is final – a sincere attempt to understand who we are and the place we occupy in the world.

April 2024



*May I read you a poem*, 2024  
Steel, recorded poems in loop



## Poem XXII

Dear stranger,  
I hope one day we can get back to dreaming together  
sometimes waking up  
is the most dangerous thing to do

to survive the essence is to be light  
travelling with the road renewed and with the stars  
glimmering in the distance

everyday  
wherever you are  
flying is a matter of letting go  
all the unnecessary weight,  
and to go with those who propel us higher  
is a thing of beauty  
that may last forever

like a rocket firing into space  
like a child singing a freedom song  
like a dance naked at the first sunlight

This is so much fun!  
This is so much fun!!

*I feel so full of love and of will to live*  
I could embrace the whole world

My dear, come, u can leave when u wanna,  
the road goes as the road goes



and absolute freedom  
is only true when shared

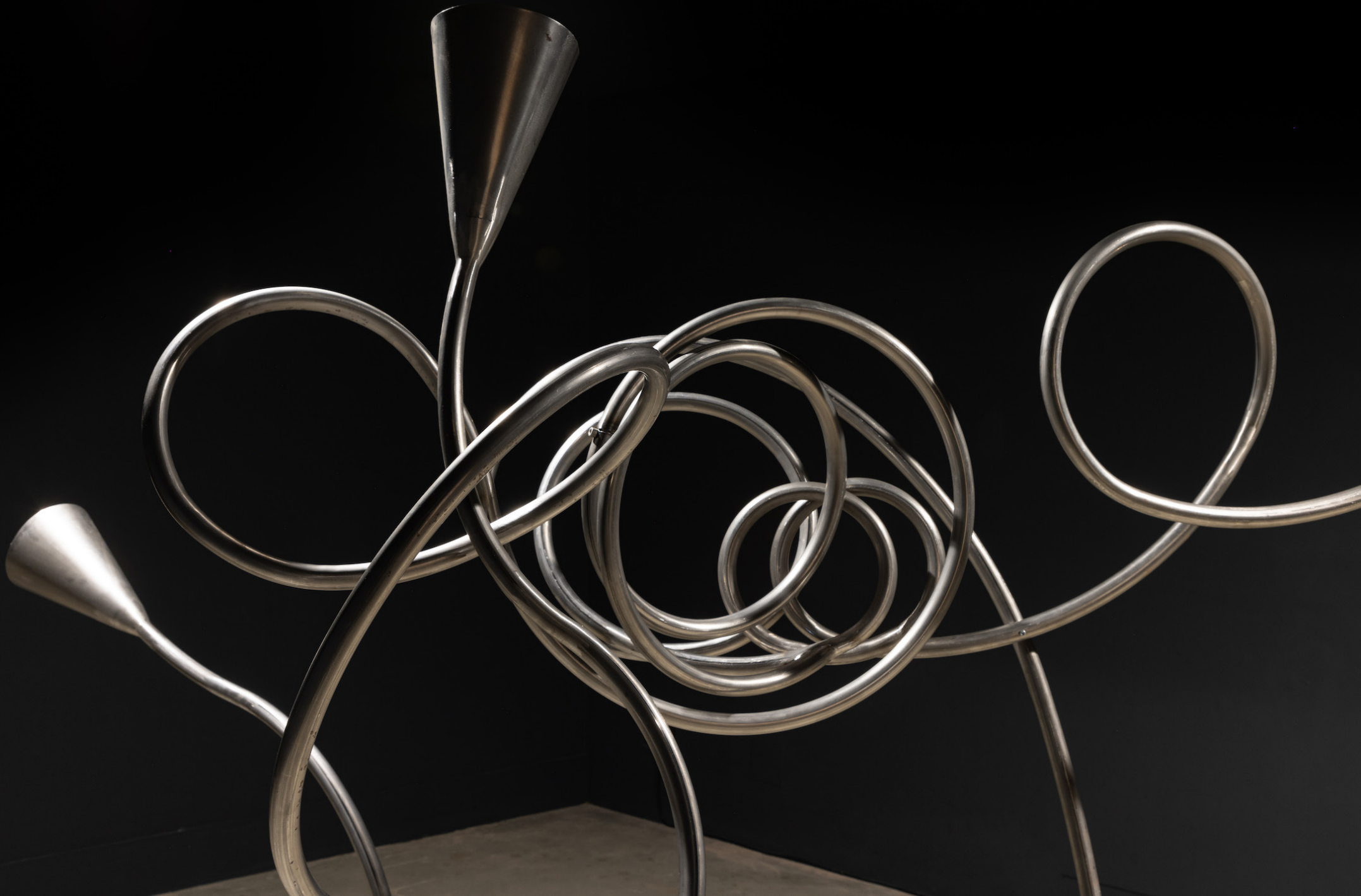
Summer of life, here we go  
with joy and balance, discovering new skies  
(even if for some moments...)

I AM GOING TO LIVE ANYHOW

ALERT !!! ALERT !!!  
DANGER !!! DANGER !!!  
VOOOOOM !! VOOOOOM !! PI PI PI  
THIS MESSAGE IS A SIGN OF LOVE  
AN ACT OF FRIENDSHIP FOR ALL TIME



Installation view of *No feeling is final*, Galeria da Boavista, 2024





*How to live?*, 2023  
Iron, railways, stones, leds

## Carolina Quintela

Introduced to the world by Novalis in his literary work *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802), the Blue Flower became one of the symbols of romanticism. Although unfinished, the short novel tells the story of the protagonist's journey of self-knowledge in search of this flower, which ends up taking on a much greater importance to reality as a concrete and tangible end. Through symbolic images, this journey is centred on an intuitive vision of the world in search of the ineffable and the immaterial absolute, nostalgic and poetic. In this way, the flower symbolises perfection and rarity, as well as the constant search for the infinite, in which the path is assumed as an intention and the crossing as an opening to transformative experiences.

With a strong influence from poetry and literature, João Motta Guedes has been developing his artistic work in various mediums and mostly around the concepts of freedom, vulnerability and love, as well as what

truly moves an artist: desire. The poetic vision of the world and the unfolding of unknown paths that it makes possible are characteristic of his practice and have a magical propelling value that allows the transfiguration of the real world from the power of language and the search for the immaterial. With a nature anchored in what can perhaps be called romantic conceptualism, I believe it is possible to see in his work a parallel with the ideas underlying Novalis' *Blue Flower*. The movement against the finitude of the world through art, which is an object of study that allows for evasion through aesthetic experience, pointing to a sensitive apprehension of what surrounds us. *How to live?*, Motta Guedes' first solo exhibition at Galeria NAVE, presents a body of work that aims to problematise and reflect on the idea of travel as a metaphor for life, based simultaneously on the affective memory of a journey in which the artist was opened up to various paths of discovery and questioning. By formally staging and invoking a real place where he was in the past, the artist explores the imaginary from this lived space, which contains his subjective perception. In this sense, the gallery space is transformed and throws us into another place, the now undulating floor is covered in stones and a railway appears in the distance, as well as, until we reach it, a new horizon presents itself in the form of a set of luminous sculptures lined up, which challenge the viewer.

The sculpture "*Untitled poem (Horizon)*", a line of questions that emerge slowly and that are a kind of luminous harbinger of relief and warning, reminds us that life happens in cycles of questions that are updated over time. As for "*How to live?*", formally a rail with a marked rhythmic structure, its ends have the outline of two doors or portals, which challenge us to cross and embark on a metaphorical journey of discovery in which various questions cross our minds. We can therefore see that this exhibition/installation, by evoking affective memory through symbols and codes, and by simultaneously allowing the viewer to penetrate and interact with



the works in the space, also invites them to take part in this journey and think about their own life, the space to be reached, to be undertaken, the contemplation and, finally, the return and its symbolic allegory. The poetic invocation is taken by the imagination and the original place is transposed.

This simulacrum and the proposed transience, as well as the elements that populate the exhibition space, reveal the work of art as a dreamlike and sensitive encounter that opens up a space for transcendence. An intuitive and immersive landscape, symbolic of a place of recognition and evasion. Just as in Heinrich von Opferdingen, in which Novalis describes the imagery of a place and its journey, Motta Guedes materialises the imagery of another place and, in this way, the questions that the artist asks us correspond to a cosmic map of how and what it is to live. However, unlike Novalis, who sees infinity as a painful perception of life because it is limited, Motta Guedes views infinity as a matter of hope and the power of the countless possibilities of the future. Everything is a path, everything is learning, and the beauty of life lies in the journey and the constant future.

September 2023

tance from dream: what is friendship? how to live? How do you fill me your name? if? How is life on it? I want to take for you live in a dream

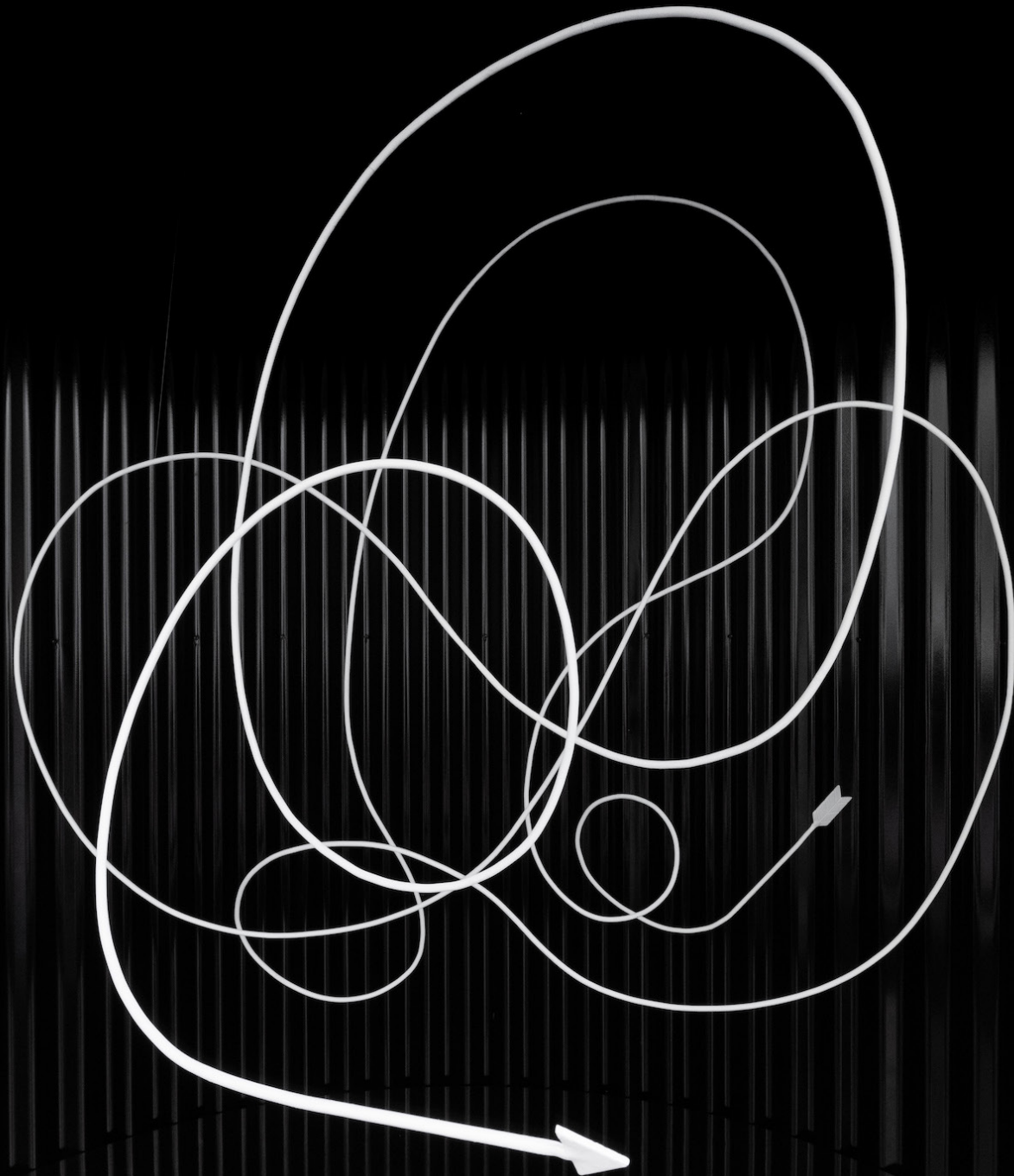
*How to live?*, 2023  
Poem in loop



*Every poem searches for a way*, 2023

Iron, paint, poem-paper-planes

140 x 110 x 120 cm







*We follow the road*, 2023  
Photograph on light box  
60 x 70 cm



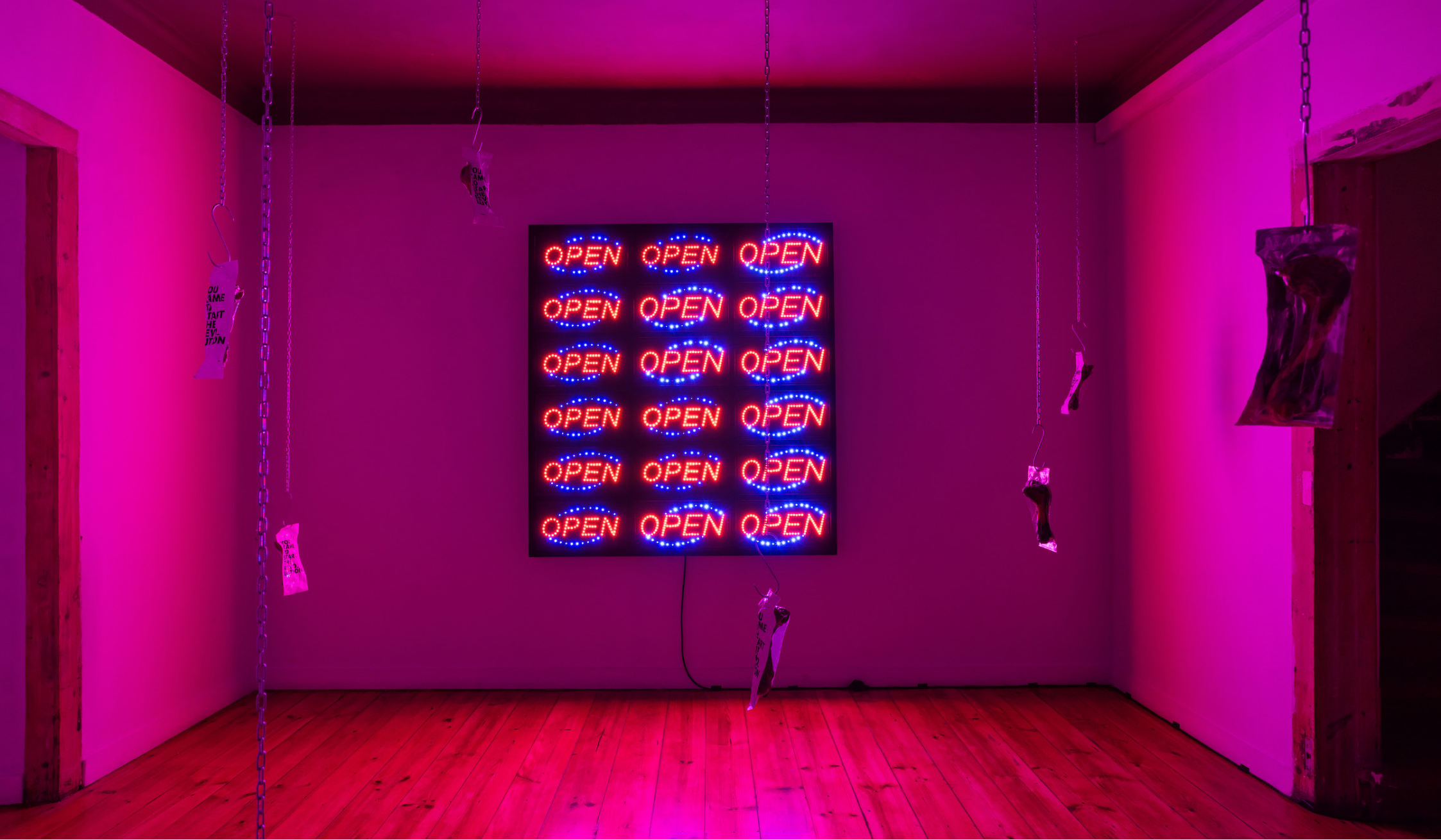
*Untitled (The sun that bleeds), 2023*

Rusted iron

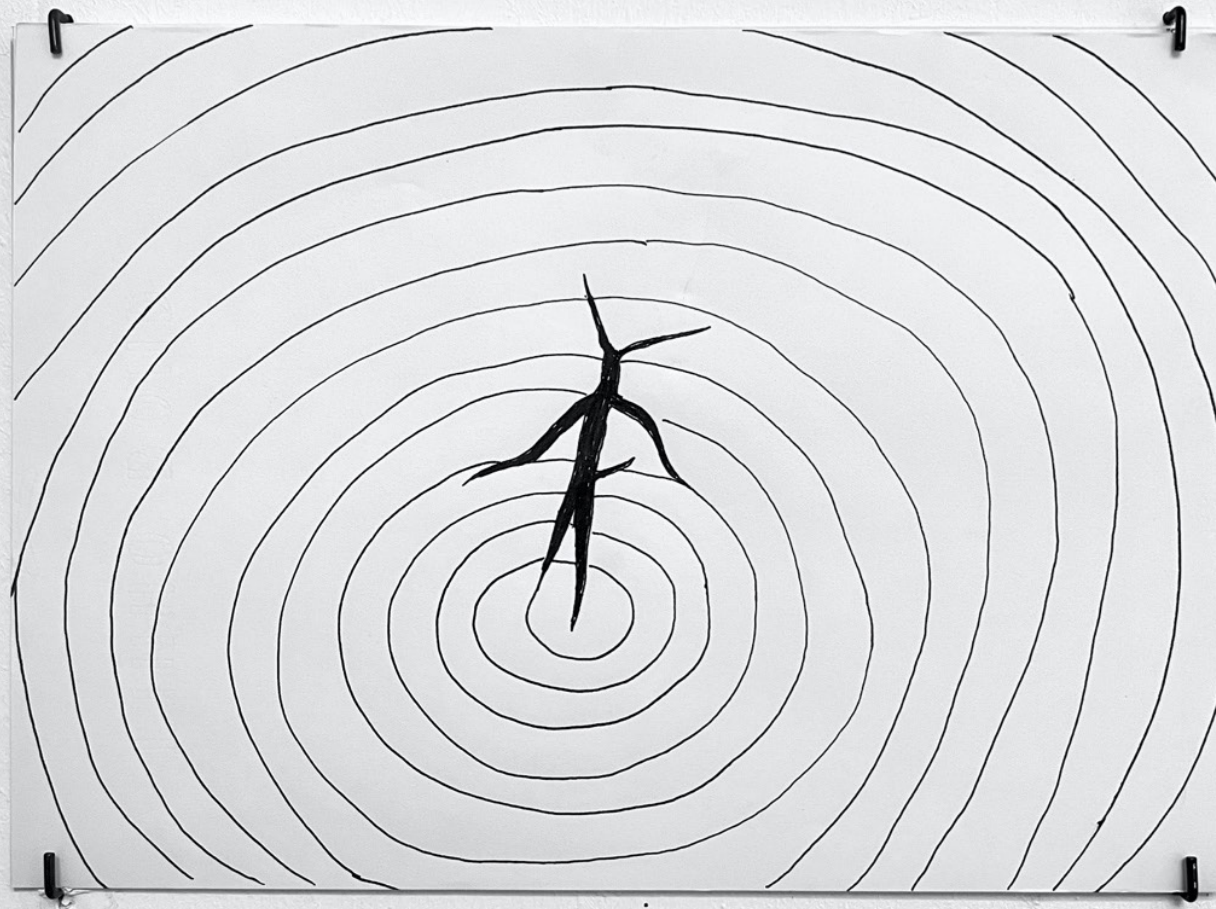
35 x 4 x 2 cm



Detail of *Untitled (The sun that bleeds)*, 2023



*You came to start the revolution, 2023*  
Pig bones, chains, hooks, open led signs, iron



*Untitled (Labyrinth)*, 2023

Paper, pen ink

21x 29,7 cm



*Just keep walking (if you can)*, 2022  
Granite blocks, flip-flops



*This Sign is an Act of Love, 2022*

Light, argon, iron, contract, knife

185 x 50 cm



#### Article 1

Here it is declared that the artwork “This Sign is an Act of Love” is original and authentic.

#### Article 2

This work cannot be sold or bought. The transition of ownership can only take place by virtue of a full donation, without pecuniary or other counterparts.

#### Article 3

Ownership of this work only because it is held by a person or entity for a maximum period of 1 year.

#### Article 4

The owner undertakes to deliver the work to another person of his choice within the respective deadline, however, the new person to whom the work is delivered cannot have received it previously.

#### Article 5

Whoever offers this work, and whoever receives it, undertakes to notify the author, João Motta Guedes, at the time of its transition, and also undertakes to send a version of this document dated and signed by both parties.

#### Article 6

In addition to this edition that goes into circulation, there are two artist’s proofs.

#### Article 7

Any damage caused to the work may result in its repair or payment for new work.

#### Article 8

This document has legal force and its failure to comply may imply due process of law.



*Untitled (How small a thought it takes - after Wittgenstein and Steve Reich), 2022*


Engraving on marble, flowers

Variable dimensions

The phrase used in the engraving is a double quotation: firstly written by Wittgenstein in a collection of texts entitled “Culture and Value” (1946); later, Steve Reich used this same phrase for a musical composition “Proverb” (1995). This work recovers the paradox proposed by Wittgenstein’s phrase and presents it in a visual and plastic formulation. It is through its appearance on a tombstone with flowers that we are confronted with the power of what the quote hides, the (im)possibility of such a small thought being able to last a lifetime, referring to the ephemerality of life, ideas, moments, and the way we look at them.



Detail of *Untitled (How small a thought it takes - after Wittgenstein and Steve Reich)*, 2023



HOW SMALL A THOUGHT IT TAKES  
TO FILL A WHOLE LIFE?

*Freedom Song*, 2022  
Pigmented print on 260gr photo paper  
60 x 80cm  
Unique + 2 AP



***Monument to Kafka, 2022***

10,000 pages of legal proceedings from the European Court of Human Rights implying human rights violations. Iron, anvil, and paper

This work is financed by Portuguese funds provided by FCT – the Foundation for Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P.), under the project PTDC/FER-FIL/30686/2017, “Cosmopolitanism: Justice, Democracy and Citizenship without Borders” (Centre of Philosophy of the University of Lisbon and CEDIS, NOVA School of Law, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa)



*A Pill A Day Keeps The Doctor Away*, 2022  
Collage of medicine, corn  
40 x 15 cm



**Untitled (Human Condition)?, 2022**

*Mein Kampf* burned, drowned, hanged, bitten, covered in acid, stabbed, stomped on, shot, kicked and punched

Variable dimensions

This piece bears witness to the destruction of an object that represents evil. It is proof of violence upon violence, and provokes multiple paradoxical questions: How do you destroy an idea? Is it legitimate to destroy someone who personifies destruction? At the same time, it confronts them with the inviolability of the human condition and human rights.





*Who owns whom?*, 2021  
Rock, collar, chain  
Variable dimensions

The object in question is not only a critical symbol of the present time, but also a metaphor for individual powerlessness in the face of limited freedom.

*Flight into the blue*, 2019  
Enamel on folded paper  
Pigmented print on paper  
Variable dimensions  
60 cm x 70 cm





***Writing the infinite poem, 2019***

Etching ink, glue, crayons and oil paint on burnt paper (...)

11 m x 30 cm

Writing the infinite poem seeks to be a visual reflection on the insertion in space of the gesture of writing as a form of painting and drawing. Referring to the reading of an indecipherable code that can only be understood visually, the dimensions of the work are allegorical of an act of making (poiesis) and writing without end, which is representative of the artist's work and of a search for endless freedom.





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