

NO LONGER, BUT STILL

- It would be easier to have lost an external part of me.

Loves live within us. Loss, not by dissension, but rather by a decision of nature, is overwhelming, as if an internal organ has been removed. The body no longer functions as it did before. It's altered. The pain, like a nail piercing the wrist; that is the most similar experience to this unbearable feeling that strikes us when we perceive finitude. He, my loved one, is no longer here, and one day I won't be either. Absence becomes the most present element. So he is still here, but in this form of absence. He didn't simply decease. He is deceased.

Ana Teixeira's exhibition "No longer, but still" develops the theme of bereavement in drawings, photographs, installations and a performance. If in this day and age we lack sufficiently comforting rituals or if our society is not a receptive group, it's up to each one to invent their own rites of passage. And Ana Teixeira does so by drawing hands that feel in the flesh the pain of no longer reaching what they want. Pierced, burned, crushed, these hands sketched in white lines on black paper repeat the word tattooed on the wrist: *ainda* (still). They are hard, and bear the pain. In two large drawings, also in white on black paper, tree branches, from an imaginary realm that belongs to the fantastical and the ghostly, open out as if wanting to inhabit the rooms. They sprout from the wardrobe, emerge from the bed, they are still there. The shoe is a sign of this absence, the flute only plays that same tune, the one about melancholic branches. In another drawing, a languid hand allows itself to be taken by these shoots of sadness. It doesn't even look like the same strong hand that was pierced at the start of the process.

Finally, hands and branches merge in the 35-piece wall installation that one minute look like small branches, the next resemble hands grasping out. Strength to bear the pain and melancholic urge integrated in the same piece.

The photographs of this exhibition resemble a film whose images have been lost, leaving only the subtitles behind: - And What's The Moon Good For Now?

Cultivating absence, feeding it with tears, subtitling it with words, are strategies to procrastinate the resumption, to keep the company, at least, of the absence, to postpone the reinvention of life in this new body, which has lost an appendix. Or two, in fact: both the loved one and the illusion of infinitude.

Interestingly, in Portuguese we say that when someone knows they are going to die, they are undeceived. We deceive ourselves the rest of the time, with the soft illusion that we are perpetual. Those who have lost a loved one are also undeceived, as they start living without the appendix of self-deceit, conscious that life

does indeed end. It is far from easy to carry on in this new body. Bereavement rises, like a black, helium-filled balloon, but it does not fly easily out the window, it hovers against the ceiling of everyday life.

Filling one hundred black balloons with air, blowing inside them, breathing back in all the melancholy stored in the lungs of those black membranes and hyperoxygenating the body: the performance could easily be a beautiful closing ritual for bereavement. And for the ritual to be collective, the visitor takes a white, empty balloon stamped with the word *ainda*. The balloon will provide the breath.

- I am missing something made of wind.