

During the past summer months she presented her pieces at Versailles, following great artists as Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami, becoming the youngest artist ever and the first woman to show her work in this iconic French palace. It can be said that Joana Vasconcelos is the highest representative of contemporary Portuguese art of the last decade. She has been awarded with several international prizes, including *The Winner Takes It All*, assigned by the Berardo Foundation. In 2009 the auction house Christie's sold one of her pieces for 192 thousand euros. Her evocative installations, colorful and full of Portuguese touch, travel all around the world and are part of the most important private collections of Europe.

There are places where walls can talk... Versailles has a refined French accent. How do you feel in those lonely and calm moments while you're setting up the pieces in such a special and symbolic place as Versailles?

There are no moments of loneliness and restlessness during the setting up of an installation like this; there are moments of teamwork, in which I need very professional people with me. Similarly, everything has to be done with complete concentration and therefore there is no room for concerns. Responsibility cannot fail.

Sometimes, artistic creation looks like a '24-hour service', it is very difficult not to mix art and life. At the end, any space turns out to be a studio. You can say 'Eureka!'...

I work with ideas, so there is no separation between my life and my work. Moreover, it's in the day-to-day life I get inspiration; my work always comes from a critical observation of my surroundings, so the ideas come to me all the time.

Faced with the loss of current materiality of works in many of the proposals of digital artists, performers, sound artists and video artists, your work has a remarkable presence, considerable weight and dimensions. It seems to be difficult to transport... With which material do you identify most?

All the materials are important in my work, since they're all used for a specific purpose. However, there are some that are closer to me, particularly those that are associated with a certain collective memory, such as the ceramics of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, for example.

When we speak of works of this kind, so monumental, detailed and laborious, they require the collaboration of a team. What is the daily life of your creative process? When it goes from a more individual step to a collective creation, do you become an 'orchestra conductor'?

The final result of my work would not be possible without an entire team that works with me. My work always starts with an idea, and then I'll make it happen with the help of my team, who has a team of architects, production and sewing workshop, financial offices and a communication department. There is a circuit where this idea goes through and it's developed, always following my guidelines and then they are communicated and implemented. In all this, I must manage this process and motivate my team in order to share my vision and my goals.

In the art, some people identify colorful, pop and decorative works as superficial... It seems to reject the intellectual character of a project for being beautiful, feminine or more accessible and enjoyable for a non-specialist audience. What could you say this? There are too many taboos in the context of coeval art?

I'm not worried about that. People are free to think what they want.

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There are colleges and art schools that flood of pessimism promising youngsters for not living in New York, London or Berlin... Under your experience, are many limitations as an artist if you do not live in the main capitals of art?

The technology and the media have significantly shortened distances and facilitated radically the access to information, so, more than ever, today, the possibility of building an international career is much bigger, even if not being centrally located. What is really important is to think global, regardless of being in a central or peripheral location. I'm an example that you can work from Portugal to the world.

What place does the idea of identity and glocalization occupy in your work?

The issues of national identity and its affirmation in the globalized world are two of the thinks that inform my work. Starting from the observation of everyday life, it is impossible not to be sensitive to the influences of globalization on people, cities, behaviors.

And finally... What does it mean for you to have been chosen to represent Portugal at the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale?

It's always a very positive experience to participate in the Venice Biennale - I did it in 2005, in 2007 and in 2011, the first year I integrated the main exhibition and then I was a part of a parallel programming - but doing it on behalf of my country is really an honour, mainly because the Biennial exhibition is the most important event in the world dedicated to contemporary art. My project is based on the shared history between Portugal and Venice.