

Passages and Destinations, Utopian Migrations

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por Nuno Silas*

The photograph used for the cover of *Práticas da História* n.º 20, *Untitled*, was taken in Cape Verde in 2015, during an artistic residency at Catchupa Factory – an international residency programme for emerging photographers and artists from PALOP (Portuguese-speaking African countries).

My approach to photography encourages closer examination of frontiers, destinations and passages through the investigation of individual and collective experiences. My artwork often uses juxtaposition, layering digital images upon themes of contemporaneity, destiny and the movement of people. On some occasions, I use colonial landscapes as backdrops to question the use of digital imagery to retell history in the postcolonial time. It was a way to question the current functioning of borders, and to inquire migrant histories linked to narratives of crises in postcolonial times.

This photograph uses imaginary migration perspectives to reconsider contemporary diasporic community collectivism, its traces and trajectories, as expressed through digital photography. Throughout the development of this photographic work, I was interested in people's everyday lives and how they engage in the construction of representations of their lived experiences, making their stories visible. The photographs explore the history of migration from a spatial perspective: specifically, from the points of movement and transport within arbitrarily defined territories. It examines the experience of reconstructing and re-establishing the concept

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of the human condition, which today stems from a distorted perception of capitalism. The movement of people reflects an unstable nature, while it also constitutes a mixture of experiences that translates into visual possibilities through lines, dots and symbols.

These elements manifest in a spiritual dimension, representing the convergence of culture and the reinvention of bodily memory. The way the picture is taken either portrays the face of everyday life or the forced and voluntary displacements involved, making the struggles and suffering experienced visible. The colour of the character's clothing in the photo reflects her daily survival activities, while the bucket kept on the right arm symbolises her ongoing search for survival. I also explore how urbanisation has transformed Cape Verde, its way of life and its forms of resistance. Cape Verde — specifically Mindelo — is not considered a megacity, with a population of around 62,970. I understood the city is a site of collective memory and a dynamic stage for global networks, relationships and histories. The legacy of colonialism, however, is still heavily present, leaving the city suspended between an uncertain present and a desired future. Through this photograph, I address this uncertainty by focusing on the environment and exploring alternative ways of being. In this sense, the photo also tells the story of our times, capturing dramatic and heroic moments in people's lives. People do indeed migrate, but we are, in a way, facing a different process: the exponential growth of global migrations revolt represents a major shift in postcolonial history. Through this visual image, I aim to encourage a broader understanding of migratory identities as lived experiences in present times. Yet photography is a tool of memory, as well as of resistance and imagination.

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