

Biographies

Ana Velez (1982), Lisbon

She lives and works between Lisbon and Madrid. Ana Velez holds a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from the Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti in Turin and the Faculty of Fine Arts in Lisbon. She also holds a Master's degree in Painting from the same university. The artist uses drawing as a guiding tool, exploring its multiple material possibilities, which has led her to develop her practice in public spaces. Through her work, she addresses themes rooted in identity, built upon three concepts: place, memory, and body, highlighting place as a vessel for memory and identity.

In 2024, she was awarded the Millennium bcp Foundation Acquisition Prize at Drawing Room Lisboa, a fair specialized in drawing, for the work "White Lines #01," 2023, exhibited at the booth of Galeria Belo-Galsterer. She has received grants from the Ministry of Culture's Cultural Promotion Fund [2020], the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Internationalization Support [2013], and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection Fellowship [Venice, Italy 2007], among others. Her work is included in numerous private collections in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Russia, and Mexico. It is also included in the following institutional collections, among others: CAC - Centro de Arte Contemporâneo, Málaga, ES; Millennium bcp Foundation Collection, Lisbon, PT; VDA - Vieira de Almeida Foundation Collection, Lisbon, PT; Fernando Figueiredo Ribeiro Contemporary Art Collection, Abrantes, PT; Associazione Piemontese Arte, Turin, IT; Ville de Montrouge, Paris, FR; Imago Mundi Coleção Luciano Benetton, Treviso, IT; Fundacion General Universidad Complutense de Madrid; Madrid, ES; CM MONTIJO, Montijo, PT; CM AMADORA, Amadora, PT; Fundação INATEL, Lisboa, PT; Coleção Museu da Carris, Lisboa, PT.

Pedro Leitão (1973), Porto

His work explores the relationship between the places he inhabits and nature, with collaborations and experiences in healing practices and mental health. Through painting, he develops multidisciplinary artistic practices involving music, sound art, and practices of healing and mental health. He holds a degree in Clinical Psychology and is the founder of the collective The Beekeepers. He promotes art and culture through residencies and curatorial projects in Castro Marim. Recent exhibitions include Udenim Tuvu (near the water), Latvia (2024); Seeds of Madness, New York (2023); Uma Não Exposição de um Não Pintor, Craft Corner, Lisbon (2023), among others. He was also part of the group show Le Jour il fait Nuit curated by André Cepeda for KUBIK Gallery in Porto. He also participated in the residency Nós os loucos, supported by the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon (2023 - 2024), among others.

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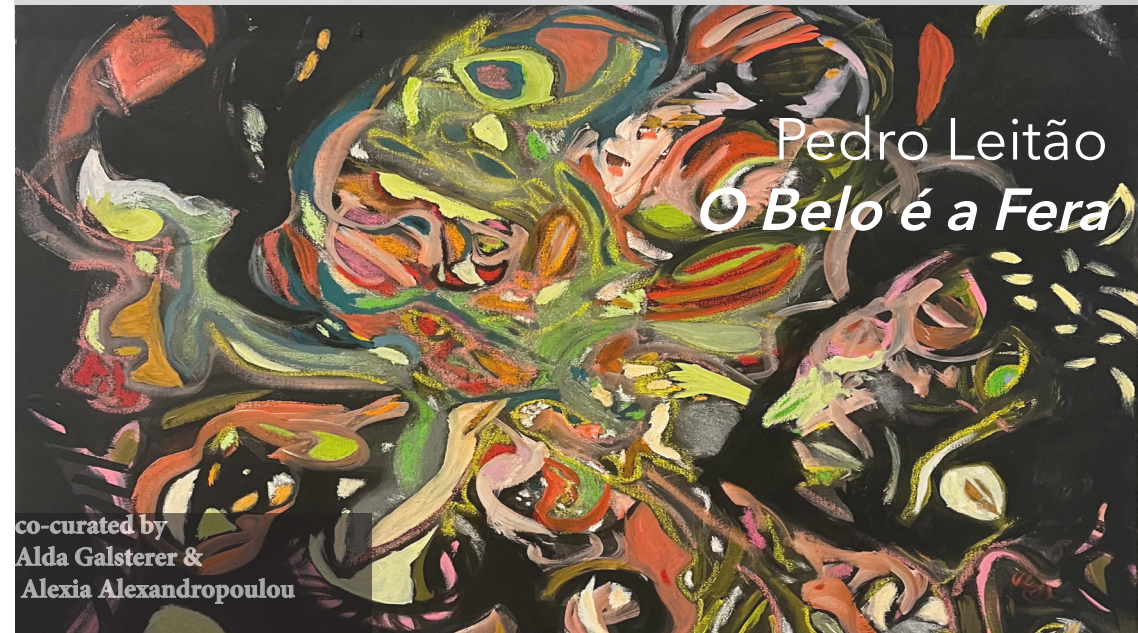
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Ana Velez

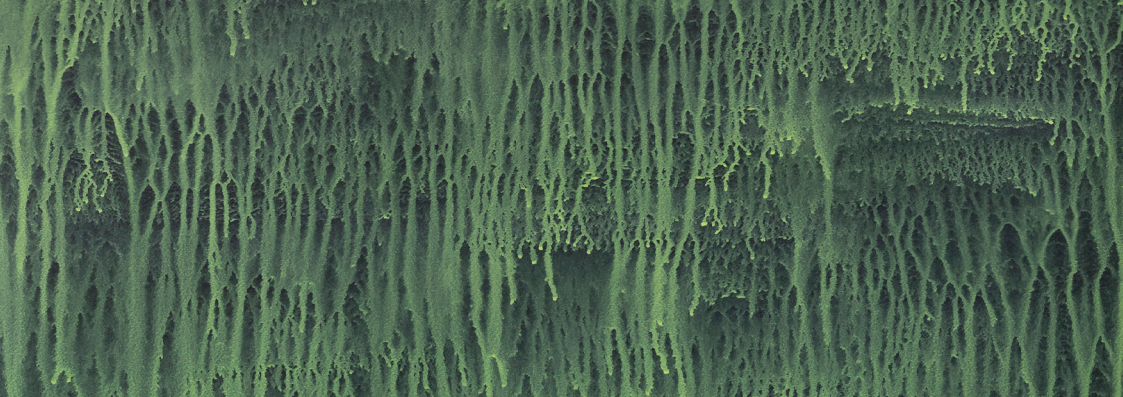
Escape from Freedom

ESCAPE
from
FREEDOM



Pedro Leitão
O Belo é a Fera

co-curated by
Alda Galsterer &
Alexia Alexandropoulou



Escape from freedom

by Ana Velez

“Why then is it, that freedom is for many
a cherished goal and for others a threat.”
(Erich Fromm, 1941)

The title of Ana Velez’s exhibition is inspired by one of psychoanalyst Erich Fromm’s best- known works,¹ which has been translated into numerous languages around the world. The artist’s exhibition begins with the cover image of the first edition of this book, published in the U.S. in 1941, in black and white. In the original, the cover background is gray and the text is black.

Upon entering, movable objects suspended from the ceiling shift within the space and invite us inside; they function as windows through which we are offered new perspectives on the space. We enter and are met with a surprising view of a panel of various drawings, in shades of black, anthracite, and white... and yellow. The movement created by the ink’s flow within the drawing’s space, multiplied by the set of 20 drawings, creates an almost hallucinatory place that captivates our gaze. When we turn to the other side, we find the counterpart to this installation in the 20 Polaroids developed on *Polaroid Reclaimed Green Film*. This is the second moment in which Erich Fromm becomes relevant: translated versions of his masterpiece *Escape from Freedom* in 20 languages, different ways of seeing the world, design, art, literature, and freedom. With this information in mind, Velez’s exhibition begins to make sense when we look at the variations in shades of gray and black, as well as the color that is now increasingly present in her work.

When working on a theme like this—why is freedom frightening? — many questions begin to arise, and the artist’s work unfolds into various nuclei: drawing upon drawing, mobiles, and Polaroid photograph, which have already become a common feature in her work... With Fromm’s profound observation (in 1941) that human beings prefer to be obedient rather than independent, serving as a foundational reflection; in this exhibition, Velez shows us what personal freedom means at all levels, using color as a means of liberation from a self-imposed chromatic canon. Thus, we come to the conclusion that art has more to offer, for it is an instrument of perception that constantly evolves, allowing for new forms of expression and understanding of the world.

Aida Galsterer

June 2026

(the English version of the text is in AE, once Fromm wrote “Escape from Freedom” already living in the United States of America)

¹ *Escape from Freedom* is a book by psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, first published under that title in the United States by Farrar & Rinehart in 1941 and, a year later, under the title *The Fear of Freedom* in the United Kingdom by Routledge & Kegan Paul.



O Belo é a Fera

by Pedro Leitão

O Belo é a Fera takes its title from anthropologist Lúcia van Velthem’s study of the Wayana people of the Amazon.¹ Central to the book is the myth of Tuluperê, the primordial serpent whose patterned skin becomes the origin of forms and ways of understanding the world. For the Wayana, objects are not inert things but living presences, inseparable from the forces and beings surrounding them. These ideas accompany Pedro Leitão’s recent work following a journey through the Amazon. Rather than documenting that experience, the exhibition reflects on what remains after it: sounds, memories and forms that continue to circulate between places, bodies and materials. At the entrance, the artist’s notebook introduces the exhibition. Sounds recorded in the Amazonian forest surround the gallery. More than a background element, the sound work acts as a continuous presence, carrying fragments of another place and establishing a sensory thread between the works.

At the centre lies the Cosmic Snake, a large textile work bringing together different visual traditions. The geometric patterns of southern Portuguese pastoral blankets enter into dialogue with forms encountered in the Amazon. These blankets, historically used by shepherds as clothing and bedding, carry within them stories of movement and survival. Like the serpent’s skin, they become surfaces where memory and experience are inscribed. The paintings and drawings are populated by faces, bodies, plants and animals that seem to emerge from and dissolve into one another. Figures appear only partially, as if suspended between revelation and disappearance. Rather than illustrating specific narratives, the works suggest states of continuous transformation, where identities remain fluid and where the boundaries between human, animal and vegetal life are not entirely fixed.

Throughout the space, forms migrate from one work to another, reappearing as patterns, sounds or memories. *O Belo é a Fera* brings together these fragments without seeking to resolve them, allowing different emotional and physical geographies to coexist within the same space. They do not tell a single story. Through different mediums, they trace the movement of forms, memories and gestures as they migrate across landscapes, bodies and materials.

Alexia Alexandropoulou

June 2026

¹ Van Velthem, Lúcia. *O Belo é a Fera: A Estética da Produção e da Predação entre os Wayana*. Belém: Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, 2003.