

Portuguese Pavillon at 57th Venice Biennale, Villa Hériot (IT), 2017

José Pedro Croft is the artist invited by the Portuguese state to represent the country at the 2017 Venice Biennale.

José Pedro Croft is a unique artist on the international scene; a man of an unrivalled elegance and discernment; notable for his intense focus on detail and formal precision in his work. He has consolidated his career over the last thirty-six years and has exhibited his work regularly since the early 1980s. His pieces can be found in the foremost public and private collections, including that of the Portuguese Republic. Having shown his work in countless solo and group exhibitions, José Pedro Croft is one of the artists who wrote the history of contemporary art in Portugal, following the Carnation Revolution, thus helping our country to make its mark on the international scene.

Having trained as a painter, his work has an intimate connection with the line, drawing and engraving, from which the conceptualization of three-dimensional, large-scale objects arises. José Pedro Croft uses sculpture, the examination of its limits and the exploration of its possibilities, or indeed its impossibilities, as a springboard into the field of action. Thus he goes beyond the threshold



Exhibition view of *Medida Incerta* at Villa Hériot in Venice, 2017

of the museum or gallery and extends into public space, where his installations interact and integrate the landscape, as though they had always been a natural part of them. His imposing, yet delicate, sculptures are suspended and simultaneously inserted into its context, and over time end up taking root and a life of their own.

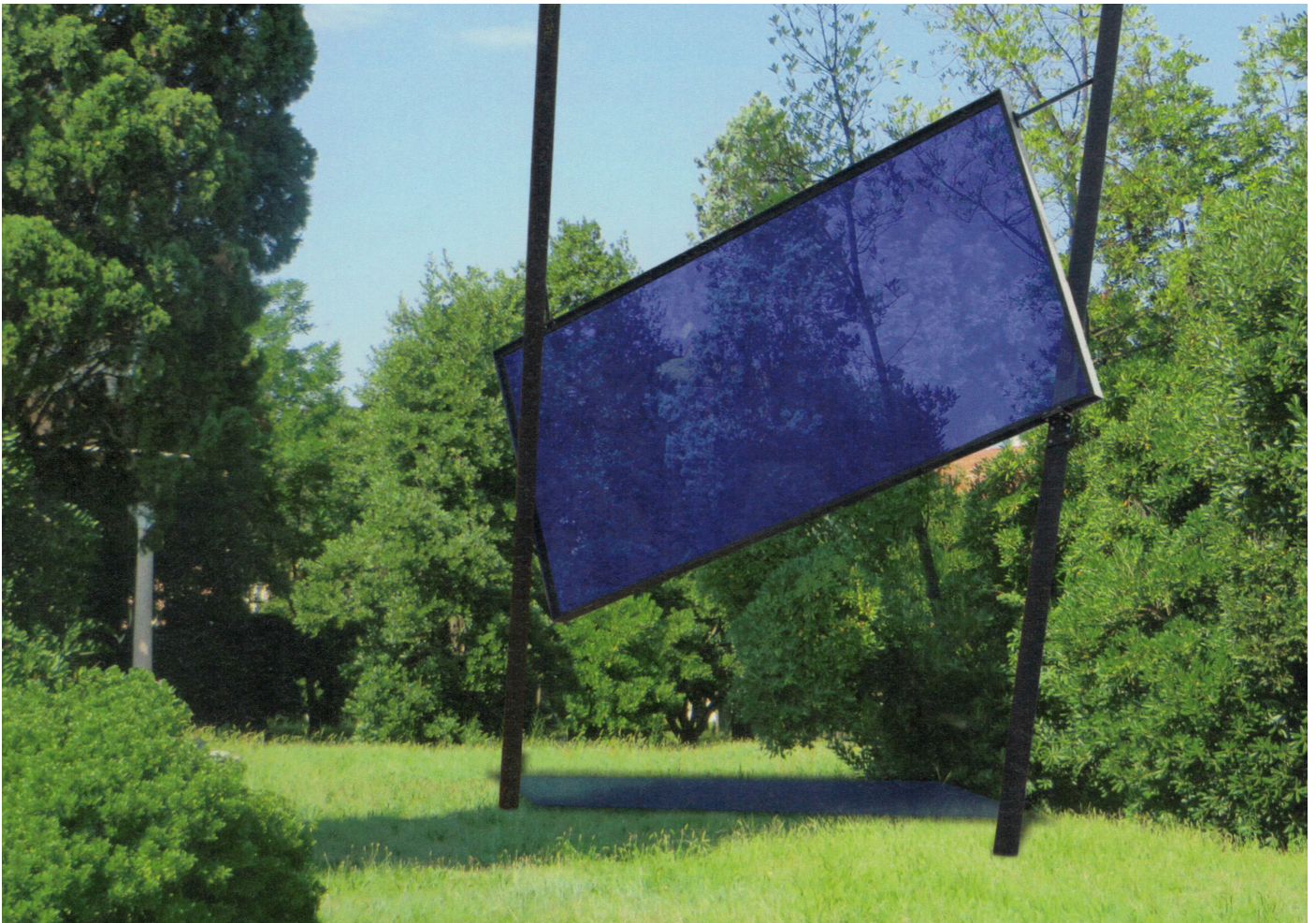
The unstable volumetry of Crofts works coexists in a kind of harmonious tension with nature and with the elements and states particular to the surrounding area: space, time, light, content and matter comprise the work itself. For the Venice Biennale, José Pedro Croft conceived a number of imposing frameworks made of aged iron to be installed within the green spaces of the gardens of the Villa Hériot, suspended in the air and with a view over the waters that lap the island of Giudecca. These windows, which sometimes enhance the viewers gaze and perspective, and sometimes contain it, open the way for countless different readings: spaces that multiply in a kaleidoscope like fashion through the use of mirrors, landscapes that are reconfigured and fixed in place with the frames, perceptions that are altered by chromatic schemes, densities and textures, which undergoes an ongoing play of formal construction and deconstruction. Within one of the villa's buildings we can access the artist's studies themselves, the fragmented memory of his artistic process.

In *Medida Incerta* (Uncertain Measure.) visitors are invited to look at the history of the arts, to travel through the exhibition and experience it; throughout, we are always accompanied by the power of José Pedro Croft's creative act. From sculpture to installation, drawing to photography, from communication to the organizational arrangements and the transportation of the works, nothing has been left to chance. The whole process, including this very catalogue, bears the artist's imprint. As such, we can, to some degree, define the work of José Pedro Croft as a total artwork.

This creative journey has been impacted by various people who have proven themselves to be absolutely indispensable. José Pedro Croft's greatest ally has, of course, been Joao Pinharanda, the curator who enabled the artist and us, at the Ministry of Culture and General Directorate for the Arts, to bring forth and present *Medida Incerta* at the Venice Art Biennale this year.

International cultural events serve as unique stages for charting the course of a country and positioning it within an international context. The field of possibilities that arises with the creation of a project that both represents an artist's work and holds up a mirror to the cultural identity of a particular territory is in itself both a tremendous experience and a massive opportunity. For Portugal, these moments of showcasing work, fostering dialogue and enabling our artists to cross paths with key international scenes are a priority when it comes to consolidating external cultural policy. They are also the culmination of many months of intense work in bringing together countless facilitators, sponsors, supporters and collaborators, who we would like to acknowledge here for having helped us in putting together *Medida Incerta*, which this year will mark Portugal's presence in the world.

- Lui's Filipe de Castro Mendes
Minister of Culture



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