



**maai**



# NUNO CERA. DISTANT LIGHTS



The energy and digital transitions that in recent years have marked the territory of Sines, its infrastructures, and consequently its population, have always influenced and inspired the work of photographer and video artist Nuno Cera.

Following the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's abominable invasion of Ukraine exposed complex truths, with unprecedented impacts on food markets, an increase in economic and political tensions, a reordering of the global energy landscape, and a huge threat to human security. The deep-water port of Sines – the closest European port to the USA, with an infrastructure capable of stockpiling natural gas and exporting it to the rest of Europe – soon appeared as an alternative solution for European energy requirements, in the scenario of a drastic reduction, if not cancellation, of imports of Russian oil and gas.

These events, along with the transitions mentioned above have influenced Nuno Cera's observations and reflections. They have accompanied the investigation for this new work, *Distant Lights* (2021–2022): an artistic research on the region of Sines looking towards the future. Cera shares his observations and reflections with a series of photographs and a synchronized two-channel video installation accompanied by a publication with original texts. In seven episodes, he takes us through places he has selected as protagonists: the Sines Port Authority, the EDP Power Plant, Terminal XXI, the Galp Energia and Repsol refineries, the Quarry, the lands of the future Data Center and EllaLink, in juxtaposition with natural landscapes.

With *Distant Lights*, Nuno Cera offers us an external observation with a gaze that extracts the symbolism, which is invisible to our visual routines; it reiterates the essence of a body in permanent transformation and the simultaneous disintegration of the old that gives way to the new, giving it no time to grow old.

José Mouro and Julia Albani  
Curators

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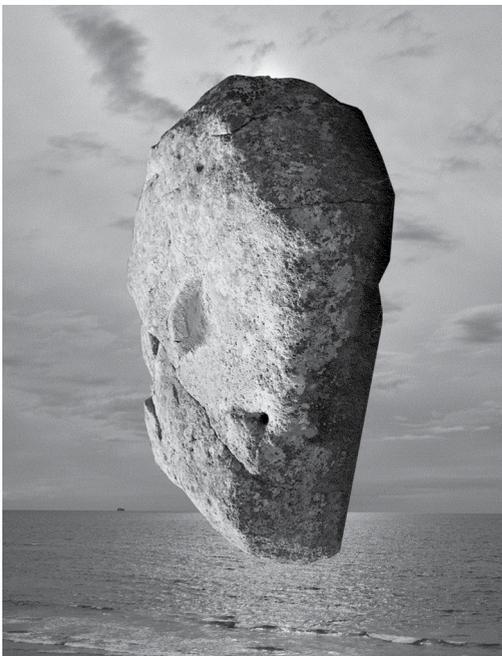
NUNO CERA (Beja, 1972) is a photographer and video artist living and working in Lisbon. His work has been exhibited, published and commissioned by multiple international cultural institutions. He is represented in various public and private collections. Cera was a resident artist at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, in 2001 (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Grant). In 2003, together with the architect Diogo Seixas Lopes, he published *Cimêncio*, a work about the suburban landscape. In 2006 he was invited to be artist in residence at the ISCP (International Studio and Curatorial Program), New York City. Between 2007 and 2010, Cera realised the project *Futureland*, an artistic investigation into the urban growth of nine mega cities. In 2012 he received a grant from the Fundación Marcelino Botín for *Symphony of the Unknown I*. He undertook artistic residences in Paris in 2013 (International Artist Residency Récollets), and Macau in 2018 (Babel – Cultural Organization and Fundação Oriente). In 2019 he received support from DGartés – Ministry of Culture / Portuguese Republic for *Symphony of the Unknown II*. Cera was included in the official Portuguese representations at the Venice Architecture Biennial (2004 and 2018).

#### **Selected solo exhibitions**

*As Quedas* (Convento de São Francisco, Coimbra, 2022), *Sinfonia do Desconhecido II* (Escola das Artes, Porto, 2021), *The Blur City* (Fundação Oriente, Macau, 2019), *Poesia Mineral* (Galeria Millennium, Lisboa, 2018), *Sinfonia do Desconhecido I* (Kunstraum Botschaft, Berlin; MNAC, Lisboa, 2016), *Alpha Béton* (CAPC, Coimbra, 2015), *Futureland* (Espaço Avenida, Fundação EDP, Trienal de Arquitectura de Lisboa, 2010), *Fantasmas* (CCB, Lisboa, 2006), *The Prora Complex* (Play Gallery, Berlin, 2005)

#### **Selected group exhibitions**

*Inquietação: Arquitectura e Energia em Portugal* (Galerias Municipais, Lisboa, 2022), *Miradas al Arte* (Centro Botín, Santander, 2020), *Álvaro Siza – IN/DISCIPLINA* (Museu de Serralves, Porto, 2019), *Haus Wittgenstein* (maat, Lisboa, 2018), *Demo: Polis* (Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2016), *ZOOM!* (Pinakothek der Moderne, Munique, 2015), *Daqui Parece uma Montanha* (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, 2014), *Atopia* (2010, CCCB, Barcelona), *The Searchers* (2006, EFA Gallery, NYC).



*Untitled (The Rock)*  
2022

Print on canvas

This large print on fabric with a photomontage of a huge flying stone, a cromlech near Sines, is a reference to the painting *The Castle of the Pyrenees* by René Magritte, from 1959. In this state of suspension it can represent past and future dynamics of the Sines territory.



*Untitled (Lamp #1)*  
2022

Bronze

*Untitled, (Lamp #2, #3, #4), 2018*

Plastic

The exhibition juxtaposes a series of ready-mades: public street lighting lamps that Cera encountered in Alcafache, in the Viseu district. For him, these objects carry a heavy symbolic value and represent a memory – almost photographic – of the disastrous fires of the summer of 2018, and reveal the violence and energy of the event.



*Distant Lights*  
2021–2022

Video, 4K transcribed to HD, two-channel, synchronised, mono sound; 38 min 53 s, loop

Text: Joana Rafael; voice-over: Jeff Wood; audio postproduction and original soundtrack: Eduardo Vinhas (Golden Pony Studio)

Throughout the seven episodes of the video work *Distant Lights*, we are taken through places that the artist has selected as protagonists: the Sines Port Authority, the EDP Power Plant, Terminal XXI, the Galp Energia and Repsol refineries, the Quarry, the lands of the future Data Center and EllaLink, in juxtaposition with natural landscapes. Cera started from a very simple concept, to place nature and industry in contrast through video. There are two parallel flows that, at certain points, become one, in a visual play of rhythms and sounds that create and deconstruct space and time. The voice-over introduces references to large-scale natural and political events, to climate change, and to a time scale that is more geological.



*Distant Lights*  
2021–2022

Inkjet prints mounted on PVC

Accompanying the video with the same title, this photo series of different formats is part of Cera's artistic investigation into the territory of Sines. It aims to portray that world-body through an artistic look at the Port of Sines and its movements; the energy and maritime transport industries, the machines and their flows; the decommissioning of the EDP Coal Power Plant; the Monte Chãos quarry and the cromlechs; the site/land of the future Data Centre and the transatlantic fibre-optic cable.



**Programming**

João Pinharanda (maat)

**Executive direction**

Maria João Marçal (CMS)

**Curated by**

José Mouro and Julia Albani

**Production coordination**

Fernando Ribeiro (maat)

**Exhibition design**

BUREAU - Daniel Zamarbide,  
Carine Pimenta, Galliane Zamarbide,  
Amir Halabi

**Graphic design**

Lisa Moura, Beatriz Severes (maat)

**Installation**

Versátil Partilha

**Audiovisual installation**

Nuno Fernandes Paula (maat)

**Video editing and colour correction**

Nuno Cera

**Drone**

Pedro Farto

**Photographic printing**

Blues Photography Studio,  
Superfície Pictórica

**English copy editing**

Justin Jaeckle

**Translation and proofreading**

Kennistranslations

**Graphic production**

Logotexto

**Printing**

Louresgráfica

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Co-production



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