



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

In Place: Visual Narratives of Immobility and Isolation

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Abstract

In Place: Visual Narratives of Immobility and Isolation gathers four student projects that revisit private and archival photographs to reflect on memory, identity, and spatial belonging. Developed during the pandemic, Francisco Oliveira's Casa das Águas traces the Cáster River's springs, blending personal exploration with local history. Guided by oral testimony, his photographic sequence culminates at the Casa das Águas, a site once central to Santa Maria da Feira's water distribution. Jessica Teixeira's Retratos da Memória confronts family history through portraits of her mother, reinterpreted in light of dementia. By symbolically destroying and reworking these photographs, she translates the fragility of memory and the erosion of self-recognition into visual form. Jorge Marques' Camuflagem begins with a found rural photograph and evolves into digitally manipulated landscapes that resist geographical or temporal fixing, questioning the stability of territory and belonging. Finally, Mariana Vilanova's project turns her lens toward Porto's ilhas, modest workers' housing now threatened by gentrification. Her distant, anonymous images of daily life in these spaces highlight both continuity and loss, exposing the pressures of tourism and real estate on the city's social fabric. Together, these works explore photography's role in reactivating memory, transforming place, and narrating conditions of isolation and displacement.

Keywords: In Place, Visual Narratives, Immobility, Isolation, Photography

Biography

José Carneiro is professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto (FBAUP) since 1999. Member of FBAUP's Executive Board. Director of the MA in Image Design (MDI). Director of the Centre for Studies in Design and Art (CEDA) from 2015 to 2024. PhD in Art & Design from the FBAUP, 2014. Researcher at ID+ Research Institute for Design, Media and Culture and collaborates with i2ADS – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society. He develops artistic and communication design work. He is the author of the www.recordsansphotographs.com project.

Essay

In 2021/2022, selecting a photograph from a private collection served as a starting point for creating a photographic series. Students worked with personal and family photographs and were challenged to reflect on how memory is evoked, preserved, and reactivated through these images, transforming them into new visual interpretations.

The project "Casa das Águas", by Francisco Oliveira, was developed during the pandemic when leaving the house was a challenge. The work began with a search on Google Maps, during which the student could not precisely locate the source of the Cáster River, finding only known information about its origin in Sanfins. Without exact coordinates, Francisco relied on the help of Alberto Tavares, known as "Mr. Alberto," who accompanied him in exploring the forests of Sanfins. Together, they found the springs of Vergado and Santo Aleixo, which is the point where they converge to form the Cáster River. Francisco's photographic sequence documents this journey, culminating at the Casa das Águas, the former distribution centre of the Cáster River, which supplied Santa Maria da Feira.

"Retratos da Memória" (Portraits of Memory), by Jessica Teixeira, explores the intersection between photography and family memory. Motivated by memories of her father as a young man—my father loved photographing, and my mother would pose for every photo—the student began the project by meticulously curating portraits of her mother, selecting those that evoked a sense of melancholy. The project progressed with a significant emotional challenge: the symbolic destruction of these photographs, accentuating the feeling of loss and deterioration associated with her mother's dementia. Various materials were used to represent the loss of self-recognition, a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease.

Jorge Marques' project, "Camuflagem" (Camouflage), began with a photograph of a rural landscape acquired from a second-hand bookshop. The resulting photographic series follows a retrospective discourse, exploring the possibility of adapting and transforming this document into a new visual composition, one difficult to situate geographically and chronologically. The photographs retain traces of the original image, but the student created a nomadic landscape through digital manipulation. This work is interested in dissolving the idea of a demarcated territory into its broader possibilities.

Mariana Vilanova's project, also developed during the pandemic, documents the daily life of an ilha in Porto, capturing anonymous scenes of everyday life through a telephoto lens. The photographs depict families' routine and reflect a type of housing typical of the city, which is gradually disappearing. The ilhas consist of tiny houses without basic amenities, located behind bourgeois residences, and were expected from the 18th century onwards. This project highlights the impact of tourism growth and real estate pressure in Porto, phenomena that have transformed many of these homes into high-cost apartments, forcing the displacement of their former residents.

Francisco Oliveira



Casa das Águas

