

PRESS RELEASE

BoHemia, a retrospective exhibiton of Rita Barros' work, curated by Jorge Calado will open September 15, 2014 at Biblioteca da FCT UNL, Campus de Caparica, Portugal.

If the twentieth century was the American century, then for much of that time the Hotel Chelsea was home to the American arts, both high and low, and a profane Mecca for artists from all over the world. In its early days, Mark Twain and Sarah Bernhardt stayed there. Later the Chelsea housed writers, painters and composers like O. Henry, John Sloan, Virgil Thomson, Arthur Miller, Jasper Johns, Allen Ginsberg and countless others.

The Portuguese photographer Rita Barros has lived in the Chelsea for over three decades, occupying Apartment 1008 where in the 1960s Arthur C. Clarke wrote "2001: A Space Odyssey". The life of the place, her exotic neighbours, and her own persona as a latter-day 'Chelsea Girl' – to borrow the title of Warhol's celebratory film - are the subject of her work, and she is currently documenting the Chelsea's downfall.

Designated an architectural and cultural landmark building in 1966, the Chelsea Hotel was sold in 2011 and is currently being ripped apart by developers. The future remains unclear, but some eighty full-time residents maintain a precarious hold on their apartments, like survivors of a shipwreck. Rita Barros is one of them. Surrounding herself with artefacts from home – trinkets, ceramics, fabrics, and multiple statues of St Antony, the patron saint of Lisbon – she has turned her apartment into a "casa portuguesa", and it is from within this frame that she observes the eccentricities of the Chelsea and its global assortment of artistic waifs and strays.

"BOHEMIA" will cover 27 years of her photographic career since 1987, and will feature about eighty works – mainly photographs, but also videos, artist's books, and extracts from her series of images that record her exploration of her rooms and the rest of the building, as well as the performances she has staged within them, in particular on the roof. Portraits of former residents (Henry Geldzahler, Gregory Corso, Shizo, Arthur Miller, Deedee Ramone, Woody Allen, Richard Bernstein, Johnny Halliday, Shirley Clarke, Larry Vickers), mostly in their own inventively customized apartments, contrast with her continuing work on the hotel's desecrated, gutted spaces – a nostalgic and ironic vision of a Bohemian space of freedom and uninhibited creativity that once flourished in the middle of the modern city.

Jorge Calado, *curator*

Biblioteca da FCT UNL, Campus de Caparica, Portugal

September 15 – November 15, 2014

Reception: Monday, Oct 13

Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-8pm

Saturdays, Oct 18 and 25th and November 15, 3-6PM

For further information

Divisão de Documentação e Biblioteca Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia / UNL

Campus de Caparica, 2829-516 Caparica

Tel: 212 947 829 Fax: 21 2948347

E-Mail: div.db.helpdesk@fct.unl.pt