

apexart

2016-17 Franchise Proposal

A Glimmer of Freedom

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Franchise location: Tarrafal, Cape Verde

Tarrafal is a small city pleasantly situated in the north of the island of Santiago, Cape Verde, and is a place marked by history. In its prison, two continents—Europe and Africa—met. Between 1936 and 1954 it harboured Portuguese political prisoners. Tarrafal's Penal Colony became known as "The Camp of Slow Death", justified by the terrible weather conditions, health, food and prison regime marked by extreme violence. Later, from 1962 to 1974, under the new name, "Labour Camp of Chão Bom", it was used to hold leaders of the wars for Independence in Cape Verde, Angola and Guinea-Bissau. In total, were imprisoned more than 340 Portuguese antifascists and about 230 African nationalists there.

Nowadays, the facilities preserve the architectural structure of the cells where the prisoners were confined and the torture cells have the original railings. The country's scarce resources and projects that have been put on indefinite hold left the space in the present state of partial abandonment. An ill-conceived exhibition left a display of posters on the walls of some cells with personal narration of experiences and thoughts of former prisoners. These stories of survival, secret codes of communication, friendship and camaraderie, involved cultural aspects such as COMUSA (Conjunto Musical do Sentimento Africano, African Feeling Musical Ensemble).

The reports of people's personal stories and the physical space is a legacy of colonialism and aims to be a vehicle for reflection of this curatorial project. The name Tarrafal, by itself, refers to Fight and Freedom, and the exhibition will explore the vision of the artists on these issues, articulating the physical space with today's contemporary issues. Reconnecting with the memory of the space, the four artists will be challenged to create earthworks (Land Art) in the surrounding landscape, within the prison boundaries.

The exhibition provides various site-specific installations to be held in the interior of the cells, seen as laboratory and breeding areas, while the outer walls will host projection mappings. As each cell will have interventions based on various themes, the artists will inspire in the genesis of the cell, such as the cafeteria, the infirmary or the infamous "skillet cell", the most atrocious form of punishment perpetrated there.

Ultimately, these site-specific installations, made with local materials, the sound effects and the projection mappings will provide the desired manipulation of space. Also, initiatives such as traditional music, dance, storytelling and a space to stimulate interesting conversations with former prisoners will be carried out.

Previous projects open the way to the support of a member of the UNESCO National Commission and the Slave Route Project National Committee, and a pre-agreement with a company which works with spatial augmented reality.

Notably, and regrettably, Cape Verde doesn't have a formal contemporary art space. Thus, this exhibition aims to be a unique experience that encourages ongoing evolution and innovation in that direction. Furthermore, is designed as a strategy to question new creations, look into the past, integrate and enhance current issues and challenges, and a glimmer of new expressions of freedom.

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