The 21st century had already begun when I first heard about Ângela Ferreira (b. 1958) and had access to one of her works, the video installation *Amnésia* (1997). This came about when I read the catalogue and journal for the exhibition *Um Oceano Inteiro Para Nadar [An Entire Ocean to Swim]*, which was presented in 2000 at Culturgest in Lisbon. At that time, I was embarking on the research that would lead to my PhD in History of Art, and had set myself a daunting task: to provide an extensive overview of visual art in Mozambique during the 20th century. Reading everything available, reflecting on the most suitable theories and approaches for the task, and coming into contact with artists previously unknown to me, was a fascinating exercise, which I undertook under the guidance of José António Fernandes Dias. One question soon arose: where did Ferreira fit into this story? In Mozambique, Bertina Lopes (1924-2012) was the most recognised figure in diaspora art. Her story had certain similarities with that of Ferreira, though her artistic practices and creative processes embodied different times. The limited space dedicated to diaspora artists in the thesis I submitted in 2005 included just a brief mention of Ferreira, since it was impossible to take a more comprehensive approach within that context. Yet I retained an interest in artists living in diaspora, in the experience of various worlds, in multiple identities, and in artistic expressions of these experiences and identities, a fascination that deepened when I met Ferreira personally in 2007, and gained a better understanding of her relationship with Mozambique. Almost always from a distance, I have followed her work, her misgivings, the various places in which her work circulates. My personal story, lived in Mozambique, and my own misgivings and reflections, prohibited indifference. I spoke to Rafael Mouzinho, artist and assistant curator of an art collection, whose interests include writing about art and curatorial projects, and someone who, like me, is moved by the artist’s work.

*Alda Costa, Maputo, April 2017*
**Alda Costa:** Born in Mozambique, as an adult Ângela Ferreira has been greatly influenced by South Africa, dividing her time between there and Portugal since the 1990s. Her work was a precursor to a colonial reflection within the field of contemporary art in Portugal, and her personal story, among other things, has proven a point of departure for her investigations. Let’s begin with her relationship with Mozambique, which the artist defines as being marked by both presence and absence. Do you think Ângela Ferreira needs more exposure in Mozambique?

**Rafael Mouzinho:** To begin, I’d like to recall my initial contact with her work. This was in 2003, through the catalogue *Um Oceano Inteiro Para Nadar*. At that time I was continuing my artistic studies at the National School of Visual Arts (ENA V) in Maputo. A movement began around then, which became the Mozambique Contemporary Art Movement (MUVART) and, much like what was taking place across the continent and the world from the 1990s onwards, reflected on issues relating to the perspective the history of art had constructed about Africa and its diaspora. I had further contact with her work in 2005, through a travelling exhibition organised by the Pro-Justitiae Foundation, first in Évora and then at the Centro Cultural Franco-Moçambicano in Maputo. It brought together artists from Portuguese-speaking countries, including Portugal, Mozambique, Brazil, Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde, East Timor, and Guinea-Bissau. Among the various works was ‘part’ of *Hotel da Praia Grande (O Estado das Coisas)* [*Hotel da Praia Grande (The State of Things)*], from 2003, which passed unnoticed by the general public. Years later, I came across the artist again at the travelling exhibition *Maputo: A Tale of One City*, in which I was also involved and which opened in 2009 in Oslo, Norway, before heading to Harare in 2011, followed by Maputo. However, for a variety of reasons, the work presented by Ferreira did not make the journey and exhibited in its place was a photograph of Vila Algarve, the former headquarters of the Portuguese political police and a building, now abandoned, that has been indelibly marked by history. For me, Ângela Ferreira needs exposure in Mozambique.
AC: You’re forgetting that the exhibition *Trocada de Olhares / Exchanging Visions*, an initiative by the Camões Institute in 2007, was presented in Maputo under much more favourable conditions: there was an appropriate room, a catalogue, a curator was present, as well as one of the artists, and there were meetings and discussions that ran parallel to the exhibition. The discussions benefited from a context of real openness, the result of actions by the recently created MUVART, as well as its exhibitions and the debates promoted at that time. There was, as you say, a great interest in questioning the predominant concept of art in Mozambique, in broadening artistic practice, and in discussing concepts such as identity and memory; however, the issue of post-colonialism was (and remains) almost taboo and lacking in treatment. The same can be said of the end of post-colonialism and the period after post-colonialism. Returning to your answer, it’s interesting that you remember the same work *Amnésia* (about Mozambique, the colonial past, and the memory the artist wants to keep alive) and the same exhibition catalogue as I do. We belong to different generations but we came into contact with the artist at almost the same time, myself in Lisbon and you in Maputo. Returning to the topic at hand, do you remember what contact with Ferreira’s work was like for the students and artists who started MUVART? Mozambique is a part of the artist’s personal story, Africa is present in what she does, and she continues to exhibit and create works about Mozambique in South Africa, Portugal, and other places, particularly with respect to the post-independence period. Although you feel the artist needs exposure, do you think the art scene in Maputo is now more prepared for an encounter with Ferreira, her work, the various references in her creative processes and, in particular, her work on Mozambique?

RM: The ENA V students didn’t have their first encounter with Ferreira until 2011, when she came to Maputo for a talk organised by the Culture Department at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM), in which the artist exhibited and discussed her investigative and experimental work, in particular the work related to Mozambique. At the time, discussion within MUVART was far from consistent, since its members all had different backgrounds (Brazil, Cuba, Ukraine, France, and South Africa). As a way of furthering and implementing our projects, we formed an informal group that we called Sociedade Paralela [Parallel Society], led by myself, Jorge Dias, David Mbonzo, Sónia Sultuane, Luis Muiêngua, Anésia Manjate, and Gemuce. We were accompanied by Francisco Manjate, a journalist for the newspaper Notícias. Ferreira featured in these talks, as did the Zimbabwean artist Berry Bickle, who had elected to live and work in Maputo. Ferreira is now a mature artist with an extensive artistic production that raises questions about Mozambique, but also about South Africa and Portugal, and issues that directly or indirectly involve Mozambique. I understand that the Maputo art scene is demonstrating a readiness for an encounter with Ângela Ferreira and also with events on the international art scene, provided that Mozambique forms part of these discussions.

AC: I’m not so sure. The encounter I’m referring to relates to experimentation conducted through the work of art and how it is seen and experienced by those who have access to it. Ferreira isn’t merely a diaspora artist. The contradictory, and even preconceived, way in which these artists were (are) generally perceived by us means that their work is not ensured a good reception from the outset. Ferreira’s work is based on her personal story, mixed with moments of fundamental change for Mozambique as a country. The artist talks about colonisation, decolonisation, racism, memory, amnesia, silence, the traces of history, cultures in terms of relationships of domination and subordination, utopias associated with construction projects in the nascent nations, the complex relationship between Africa and Europe, and the consequences of a colonial history. Her work raises questions and casts doubts; it is not perceived without conflict. I don’t think that the social, political, and artistic situation in Mozambique is very conducive to an encounter with this artist’s concepts. I’m reminded of the recent work by the journalist Joana Gorjão Henriques, Racismo em Português [Racism in Portuguese]. The interviews conducted in Mozambique revealed deep wounds and difficulties in broaching this topic. There’s always a danger of hasty and simplistic assumptions. I don’t mean that there’s no interest in Ferreira’s work among artists from her generation and visual arts students studying at existing schools. I’m thinking about the (high school) students who were enchanted by her, never displaying any disinterest or boredom, and the small core of art lovers and commentators who follow the Maputo art scene. I think that was the aspect you were referring to and I agree with you there. The artist’s presence in Mozambique has always been associated with the search for a new project or has coincided with her presence at an exhibition in South Africa. Until now, it has not been accompanied by an exhibition presence capable of making her known domestically. There have, however, been references to her work. I remember Maria de Lourdes Torcato writing in 2011 about the exhibition Carlos Cardoso – Directo ao Assunto [Carlos Cardoso – Straight to the Point], inspired by the journalist’s work and Ferreira’s Mediafax, in which she underlines the importance of writing as a form of struggle. Also, more recently, Notícias reported that the artist, referred to as Mozambican, was a finalist of Novo Banco Photo 2015. Her recent exhibition Underground Cinemas & Towering Radios, which integrated a
A series of works about Mozambique and the initial post-independence years, was presented to us by her curator. Despite the artist’s interest in showcasing herself in Mozambique, the country’s fragile artistic system has remained unable to offer space or prime opportunities. I’d now like you to talk about your favourite Ferreira works.


RM: Ferreira’s work is quite complex in referential terms, encompassing various areas of knowledge: sculpture, architecture, video, sound, archives, photography, silk screening, etc. I’m interested in the work Political Cameras (For Mozambique series), from 2011, which departs from the silo we used for the introductory talks on the UEM collection/art gallery, situated on the university campus. It’s a reference to the TBARN (Basic Techniques for Using Natural Resources) project, developed at the UEM’s former Scientific Research Institute/Communication Studies Centre. This work also converges with the experience of the National Cinema Institute’s foundation and the cinema workshops held at UEM, which involved Jean-Luc Godard, Jean Rouch, Jacques D’Arthuys, and Nadine Wanono, among others. I understand the uncertainty; Maputo’s artistic mainstream has still not broken away from the ‘mono aesthetic’ idea that the recent past has attempted to cement, giving the impression that it’s sleepwalking. The issues of post-colonialism, diaspora, and the modern day still don’t receive our attention, moving on rapidly and often shackled and trivialised by a complex network of theories that the media try to legitimise merely as fashion. If, on the one hand, Ferreira’s work is not territorialised, often branching out into opposite and unsettling directions, on the other hand it raises the question: who is Ângela Ferreira? Is she South African? Mozambican? Portuguese? Or is she a citizen of the world? And for this reason it’s critical that the artist has more exposure in our country and that we open up a space that fosters knowledge about the other side of history relating to Mozambique and elsewhere.
AC: It’s true, the silo that remains from the experimental field of the TBARN project, and is only remembered by those who came into contact with it, was (is) a starting point for various actions and projects of remembrance: the history of UEM and the country, the history of cinema in Mozambique… we could say that the artist’s works based on these themes associated with the early years of Mozambique’s independence have contributed towards the research that continues to be conducted. One of her recent works, Tendency to Forget (2015), still little-known by us, also opens up this possibility. But some of her works from the 1990s, Amnésia, which we spoke about already, Casa Maputo: um Retrato Íntimo [Maputo: an Intimate Portrait] and Crossing the Line, both from 1999, need to be made known and discussed in Mozambique. We need space to question and reflect on identities, nationalisms, locations, and modernities, and we can begin with the work of Ângela Ferreira. Shall we do it?