

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

**Alexandre da Cunha**

***Arena***

Curated in dialogue with Jenni Lomax

Private view: 26 September, 11am-6pm

Exhibition dates: 29 September 2020 – 27 March 2021

Thomas Dane Gallery  
Via Francesco Crispi, 69  
Naples

Alexandre da Cunha challenges the implicit value systems of objects. In his careful arrangement of material and things—whether domestic, utilitarian or disposable—da Cunha re-evaluates hierarchies of attention and perception by scrutinising the play of shape, form and colour.

For *Arena*, his first exhibition at Thomas Dane Gallery in Naples, da Cunha presents certain aspects of his observations of how objects sit in the world around us. Through conversation with Jenni Lomax, with whom he worked for his 2009 show *Laissez-faire* at Camden Art Centre, an emphasis is placed on the spatial relationship of progression between rooms in the gallery; shifting perspectives of wall, floor and ceiling.

Elements from the Camden Art Centre show, such as assembled mop heads and coconut casts, are newly articulated in *Arena*, where da Cunha's sensitivity to material is enhanced by Lomax's treatment of space and installation. Doorways are deliberately closed to organise movement through the gallery; uniformity reinforcing 'the arena' as the enclosed site of activity or conflict.

One of a series of floor works *Quilt (Sahara)*, (2011), weaves leather between paving slabs, while for *Kentucky (Napoli)*, (2020), dyed cotton mop heads are constructed to form a hanging textile that suspends diagonally from the ceiling. Elsewhere, discarded wheelbarrows and metal benches are recalibrated as lighting arrangements, activating both floor and wall. A sociological dimension is never far from view—concrete mixers, their surfaces rusted and worn, are displayed for their aesthetic qualities while reinstating the social economies of labour in which these objects circulate.

Through da Cunha's eyes banal objects are readdressed to overcome material contractions and to articulate a weightier sense of ambivalence. *Marble*, (2020), features an inflatable rubber ring draped with fabric which gathers over the floor in this subtle and intuitive positioning of material, challenging the perception of what may be hard or soft: da Cunha lures the subtext of sensation to the foreground in a humorous undoing of conventional meaning.

The works in *Arena* possess harmony in their hybridity, and are testament to da Cunha's continued desire to edit form without diminishing meaning. The exposure and endurance of his handling of material generates a more sympathetic reading of the readymade, one that warms to the lived reality of objects and the communities or individuals who used them.

Jenni Lomax was the Director of Camden Art Centre, London, from 1990 to 2017, where she established an influential and forward-thinking programme of international exhibitions, residencies and education projects. Previously, she established and ran the Whitechapel Gallery's pioneering Community Education Programme. She is currently working independently on a range of curatorial, writing and archival projects whilst also acting in an advisory capacity for a number of charitable arts organisations and grant giving foundations.

Alexandre da Cunha was born in Rio de Janeiro and lives and works in London and São Paulo. He has exhibited widely throughout the world and his work is included in major private and institutional collections including the Tate, England; ICA Boston, Boston MA; and Inhotim, Brazil. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Duologue* with Phillip King, Royal Society of Sculptors, London, England (2018); *Boom*, Pivô, São Paulo, Brazil (2017); the Museum of

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Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago IL (2015); and *Dublé*, Centro Cultural São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2011).  
Forthcoming commissions include *Alexandre da Cunha: Figurehead II*, The Box, Plymouth, England (2020); and a new permanent artwork at Battersea Power Station, commissioned by Transport for London, Art on the Underground (2021).

Major outdoor sculptures by da Cunha are on permanent view at the Laumeier Sculpture Park in St. Louis, MI; the Monsoon Building in London; the Rochaverá Tower in São Paulo; and at The Pierce Tower in Boston, MA.

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Gallery hours:

Tuesday to Friday 11am-1:30pm and 2:30pm-7pm, Saturday 12pm-7pm

Or by appointment