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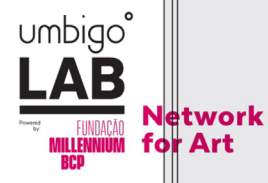
Abbas Akhavan, Study for a Garden, 2021. Photography: Mariana Lopes. Courtesy: Walk&Talk.

ART & CULTURE

## Walk&Talk 10 — To a «commonplace» somewhere on this island

▲ Carolina Machado

They considered it a «pilot event» — and it has been that from the very first moment: after the ninth-and-a-half edition, where it had already reaffirmed its inventive capacity and transformative force, *Walk&Talk* marked its tenth anniversary with a return to the in-person model and an epicentre in Ponta Delgada. For Jesse James, artistic director along with Sofia Carolina Botelho, there was one more chapter to close. It was necessary to show what could only be seen beyond the screen: walking and talking, just «wandering» once again in the territory of São Miguel. We found ourselves near the end, on the last day of the festival — hence the concluding tone: «It was an edition to close, to honour our commitment to all these artists [who worked between 2018 and 2021]. It was something important to us.»



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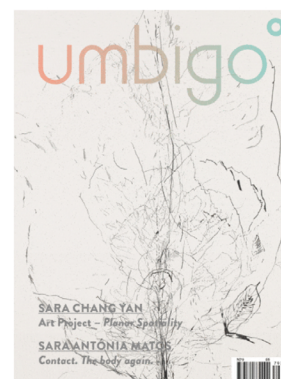
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### Learning by doing: two or three notes on the festival's essayistic side

In July 2011, when this journey began, Jesse James was accompanied by Diana Sousa. With support worth 20.000 euros from Direção Regional da Juventude, the two were able to materialise the idea of displaying art in the public space as an «experimental space». When remembering that first stage, Walk&Talk's artistic director highlights the team's inexperience: «10 years ago, in the middle of a crisis, we were 22 years old, we didn't know it, we were so naïve [...] and we were learning as we were doing — this was really important in [defining the] festival's structure, since it turned it into a reactive space: it's always reacting to a context, a situation.» A «reactive programme» emerges, addressing the urgencies of the moment.

We have seen that quite recently. Faced with the challenges at the beginning of last year, that ability to adapt was tested. Walk&Talk was able to adapt to the new «context», this other «situation». If the 2020 programme was based on a «compromise» between *online* and *onsite*, the 2021 programme wanted to address that gigantic desire to return to the world and the other: «In the tenth edition, the festival had changed yet again — not completely, but significantly — because we were experiencing a pandemic and we needed to continue the project, we wanted to be present. The only way was to change. As we are not attached to a formula or format, we managed to align ourselves with the artists' projects [...]».



Flávio Rodrigues, *Hodiernidade | e na antfologia do agora (Alegoria do Choro)*, 2021. Photography: Sara Pinheiro. Courtesy: Walk&Talk.

Let's consider it a «pilot event». It has never ceased to be one, seeking to try out a new model at each new onslaught. In this tenth edition, Walk&Talk presented the premise of «spontaneity» from a curatorial perspective and with a titular formulation — something unprecedented in the festival's history, as the thematic approach had not emerged until that point as an alternative to the usual model. It's important to underline that the title is not restrictive: it creates room, it leaves things open. *Where we go it shall be* shows the certainty beyond the much-needed «doubt». It will *be* — that's for sure. We have been finding out *where we go* as it happens: little by little, step by step.

### Let's look at the current «communality processes» in the archipelago

Ana Cristina Cachola joined the curatorial team for the tenth edition, alongside Jesse James and Sofia Carolina Botelho, to develop a proposal that sought to build a «commonplace» on the island of São Miguel. Together, and opening the «path», they defined this «encounter» — or re-encounter? — with the world and the other, rejecting the limitation of a static program, closed in on itself: «*Where we go it shall be* suggests a path taken by the collective.» If it didn't, it wouldn't be Walk&Talk.

Based on the projects developed between 2018 and 2021, which refer to the art residencies then held in the Azores, the curatorial team created a varied «path», inviting the audience to wander through these «encounter» points. Each project presented in the tenth edition — not only under the exhibition umbrella — became a place of sharing with others and a departure spot towards other locations.





Abbas Akhavan, *Study for a Garden*, 2021. Photography: Abbas Akhavan. Courtesy: Walk&Talk.

Some art residencies gave rise to the exhibitions now on view at [Arquipélago – Centro de Artes Contemporâneas](#), [Galeria Fonseca Macedo](#), [Instituto Cultural de Ponta Delgada](#), [Museu Carlos Machado](#), [Solmar Avenida Center](#), as well as at [vaga – espaço de arte e conhecimento](#) – an old warehouse on Travessa das Laranjeiras, which Giacomo Mezzadri and Joana Garcia de Oliveira, from [Mezzo Atelier](#), transformed into [Anda&Fala](#)'s headquarters. This was the festival's first edition since the space opened to the public, in December 2020, with *We never say never*.

We underline the project's essayistic nature. If the island is as «experimental space», [o título vem depois da instalação da exposição](#). Alex Farrar thinks of embroidery beyond technique, delving into the complexity of underlying processes – relational, social, cultural. That's where Walk&Talk is found: in a reflection on the «communality processes» in the archipelago – considered by many to be a [pedacinho do céu](#) and thus displayed in visitors' *selfies*. Danny Bracken takes the «desire to encapsulate nature» in several forms, considering the unique case of this *sweet white Ponta Delgada 2.0* – which point to another, a not so distant one, remembered by Nadia Belerique to the north of the city. We find it in Ribeira Grande, in each of the elements – [holdings](#), as they are called – that the artist arranges inside the barrels. They are «portals» to other affective realms, materialising the «desire to possess and preserve», which we have within us with greater or lesser passion, perhaps on the wavelength of nostalgia.



Nadia Belerique, *Holdings*, 2021. Photography: Sara Pinheiro. Courtesy: Walk&Talk.

We know it's touristified, but not ecologically compromised — yet! Mané Pacheco takes us to the archipelago's *pelágica* region, whose «geographic and demographic conditions» have allowed it to be considered one of the Atlantic's *hope spots*, to investigate the less likely — or so far undiscovered — «matrix relationships» in the surrounding landscapes. Let's look at Margarida Fragueiro's *flutuações pendentes*: in her project, she also points out the Atlantic's symbiotic dynamics — in this case, between barnacles and buoys collected near the Portuguese coast (from west to east: Faial, Terceira, São Miguel and Porto). Sofia Caetano devises a «synesthetic plastic field» to guide reflection in that direction, inviting us to debate present-day ecological issues from a multi-species perspective.



Margarida Fragueiro, *Flutuações Pendentes*, 2021. Photography: Sara Pinheiro. Courtesy: Walk&Talk.

Through a post-anthropocentric worldview, this generation attempts to rethink the place of the individual — especially the relationship with the animal, vegetable, mineral, artificial environments, etc. We pass from a *karaoke existencial* to the interior of a «nest» nearby — which Joana Franco will have torn out [*de dentro de*] out of herself to share with the Walk&Talk audience. On the walls of this cubic structure, we are challenged by our scale. There is something disproportionate, as Alice dos Reis suggests through a «speculative fiction» — *see you later, space island!* — about the space base they are considering building on the island of Santa Maria: the ambition for transcendence, even if this means compromising the survival of their own and other species.



Alice dos Reis, *See You Later Space Island*, 2021. Photography: Alice dos Reis. Courtesy: Walk&Talk.



Let's remember one of the most basic premises of Walk&Talk: «It's a festival in the Azores, which emerges from the Azorean context and is held in constant relationship with the island and the archipelago. The festival doesn't exist without the Azores.» Over the years, site-specific projects have created a «public art circuit» on the island of São Miguel — and most are still visitable. For example, Walk&Talk's tenth anniversary installations: the mural painting that adds this edition's motto to one of the city's main arteries — by Bráulio Amado; a *study for a arden* at *Jardim Botânico José do Canto* — designed by Abbas Akhavan; that endless *vai e vem* at Complexo Desportivo da Relva — an intervention by André Abel and Joana da Conceição (Tropa Macaca); *água de pau* that runs under the Água de Pau viaduct — thanks to João Pedro Vale and Nuno Alexandre Ferreira; and *semelhança por contacto* that confuses us among the volcanic rocks of Mosteiros — thought up by Luísa Salvador.



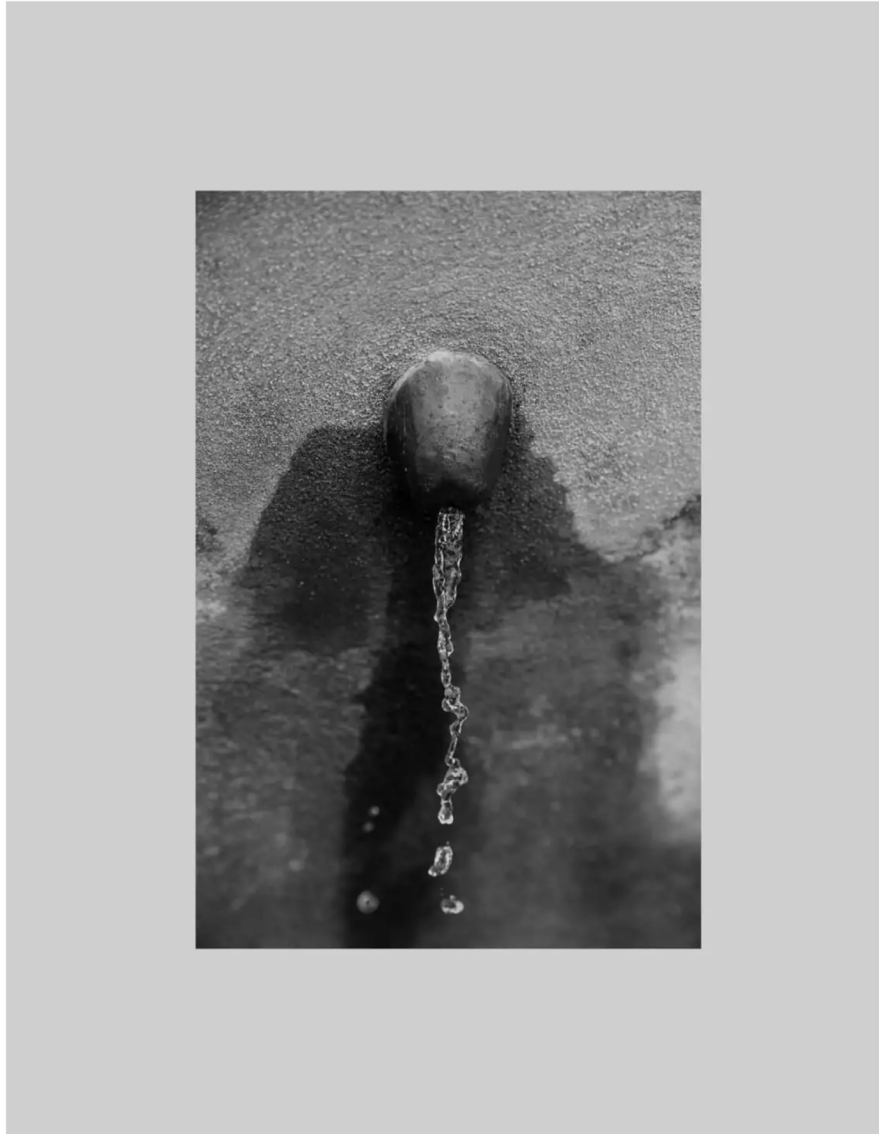
Luísa Salvador, *Semelhança por Contacto*, 2021. Fotografia: Sara Pinheiro. Cortesia: Walk&Talk.

But not all site-specific projects remain visible after the festival. This is the case of the performative interventions at *Pedreira Marques* and *Pico do Refúgio*: Flávio Rodrigues limited *hodiernidade* with the collected stones, seeking to amplify their — our? — «cry»; in collaboration with Javiera Peón-Veiga and Gonçalo Lopes, Gustavo Ciriaco cleared a path in that rural property, inviting us to tread it — *cobertos pelo céu* — in a walk lasting about 45 minutes. Walk&Talk is also a place for unrepeatable encounters: at *janela do inferno* with Lucy Railton and Pedro Maia; dreaming to the rhythm of Catarina Miranda, to discover — or remember — that the *dream is the dreamer*; in that *fascínio suave*, brought by Luís Senra and Beatriz Brum; to find out *os últimos dias de Emanuel Raposo* through the lens of Diogo Lima.

#### **Like never before, an island in upheaval**

We recall the introductory text — *Where we go it shall be*, by Ana Cristina Cachola, Jesse James and Sofia Carolina Botelho: a festival cannot ignore its festive side. A festival always ends up being a party. One needs to understand it beyond the finished product, limited in its scope, admitting it as an evolving and always open process. It's a collective, shared exercise — which requires a certain degree of involvement from the audience and a creative gesture according to a dehierarchizing logic.

For Jesse James, the designation of the art practices on the many trails of Walk&Talk is irrelevant. There is no need to consider them «participatory art», even if this is a possibility — so far, as a possible derivation: «We're not interested in those [participatory] projects. We want to establish relationships — and so the participatory projects, other things, may arise.» This festival's main purpose is to connect the dots, to build bridges. It will be whatever comes from that, *wherever* we want to flow.

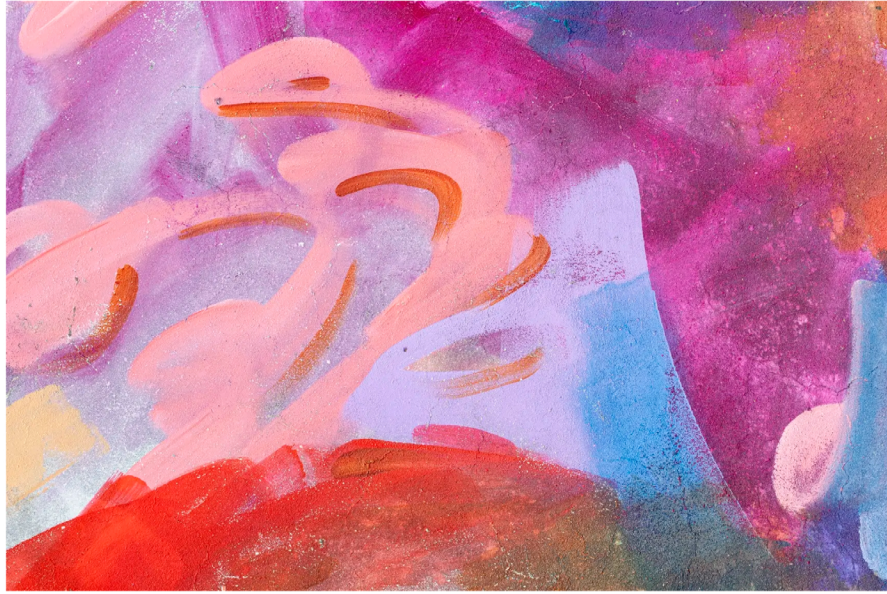


João Pedro Vale e Nuno Alexandre Ferreira, *Água de Pau*, 2021. Photography: Mariana Lopes. Courtesy: Walk&Talk.

It unfolded like never before: «That's how we came up with the excursions: as a way of adding another layer to the programme, trying to create an experience that could take and lead you [the audience] from the festival's art projects. But an experience with the space, with the place, with the island [...] As Sofia [Carolina Botelho] is always saying, it's a holistic experience. It's important to deconstruct the preconceptions about the experience of art. It can be different. It can exist in relation to the others [walking, talking, swimming, resting, etc.]». There were ten excursions around Ponta Delgada, starting with the projects presented in this edition. There was much more: guided tours, endless talks, *open studios* — and even a *marathon*. More than ever, Walk&Talk wanted to assert itself as a generative construction. «More than programmatic», it wanted to be convulsive.

Jesse James told us about the festival's «chaos». There was something particularly chaotic about this tenth edition — which took them back to where they started, when desire outweighed inexperience. It's been ten years of learning, but the learning doesn't end: «Year after year, we keep experimenting. When we experiment, we come to conclusions — and those conclusions lead us to new strategies. It's a cycle.» Much has changed — firstly, our perspective of the archipelago. Some people noticed the extent of this change, highlighting the importance of self-reflection in an institutional context: «They're realising that you need to talk about the Azores beyond *The New York Times* [...] They're realising that you need to talk through other media — this already proves that they're beginning to understand the potential of culture in a place like the Azores.» This will go through the Walk&Talk trails. It's always been *where they go*.





Tropa Macaca, Vai e Vem, 2021. Photography: Mariana Lopes. Courtesy: Walk&Talk.

Umbigo travelled to Ponta Delgada — invited by [Anda&Fala](#) and supported by [VisitAzores](#) — to celebrate the tenth anniversary of [Walk&Talk](#) between July 22 and 24.

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**CAROLINA MACHADO**

Carolina Machado (Lisbon, 1993). Currently working as a researcher at Instituto de História da Arte with a fellowship granted by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia to attend the PhD in Art Studies - Art and Mediations at Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Already holding a MA in Aesthetics and Art Studies - Art and Political Cultures and a PgD in Art Curatorship from the same institution, as well as a BA in Painting from Faculdade de Belas-Artes da Universidade de Lisboa. She is moving forward with her research project: «Genealogy of derivative practise: Study on the production, mediation and reception system of derivative work within the emerging art scene in the Portuguese context (2015-2025)» comes from «On the transgressive gesture under the aestheticising logic of the post-contemporary scene: An approach to emerging art practise in the Portuguese context (2016-2019)» and aims to scrutinise the ascendancy of a derivative force over the creative gesture, progressively nurtured by the youngest generation operating within this spatiotemporal framework.