

# **BETWEEN BODY AND SOUL: SUBJECTIVITY AND EXPRESSION IN THE EXHIBITION PORTRETO DE LA ANIMO**



The exhibition “Portreto de la Animo”, presented at the Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis in Porto between July and November 2023, constituted a significant recent selection from the Treger Saint Silvestre Collection, featuring approximately 150 works associated with the field of Art Brut. Far from configuring itself as a merely thematic display, the curatorial project operated as an inquiry into the ways in which human interiority becomes visually manifest. The title — *Portrait of the Soul*, in Esperanto — not only introduces the conceptual premise but also evokes a utopian dimension of universal communication, consistent with the transnational character of the works assembled. Structured to articulate pictorial, sculptural, photographic, and installation-based practices, the exhibition foregrounded the expressive singularity of artists working outside institutional art circuits, reaffirming the notion of creation detached from academic conventions, central to Jean Dubuffet’s 1946 formulation. In this sense, the exhibition did not seek to fit Art Brut within stabilized categories, but rather to highlight its potency as a mode of production that strains the boundaries between rationality and delirium, consciousness and instinct, individuality and the social world. The recurrent presence of portraits and self-portraits served as the guiding thread of the exhibition, presenting the face and the body not as mere iconographic motifs, but as surfaces of emotional inscription. The scenography, devised to reinforce psychological and atmospheric layers, functioned as a mediator between artwork and viewer, intensifying the perception of the affective and symbolic expressions that compose the ensemble. The purpose of this text is to examine how the relationship between body, soul, and emotional processes is articulated within the exhibition, understanding it as a device capable of rendering visible forms of subjectivity often marginalized by the hegemonic artistic system. To this end, the analytical approach adopts three complementary methodological vectors: (1) direct and repeated observation of the exhibition; (2) critical examination of the institutional catalogue; and (3) dialogue with specialized literature on Art Brut, studies of subjectivity, and contemporary art criticism. This integrated approach makes it possible to situate “Portreto de la Animo” within the broader debate on the representation of interiority and on the modes of legitimizing non-normative artistic production.

KEYWORDS: Art Brut; subjectivity; Treger Saint Silvestre Collection; exhibition; body and affect.



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