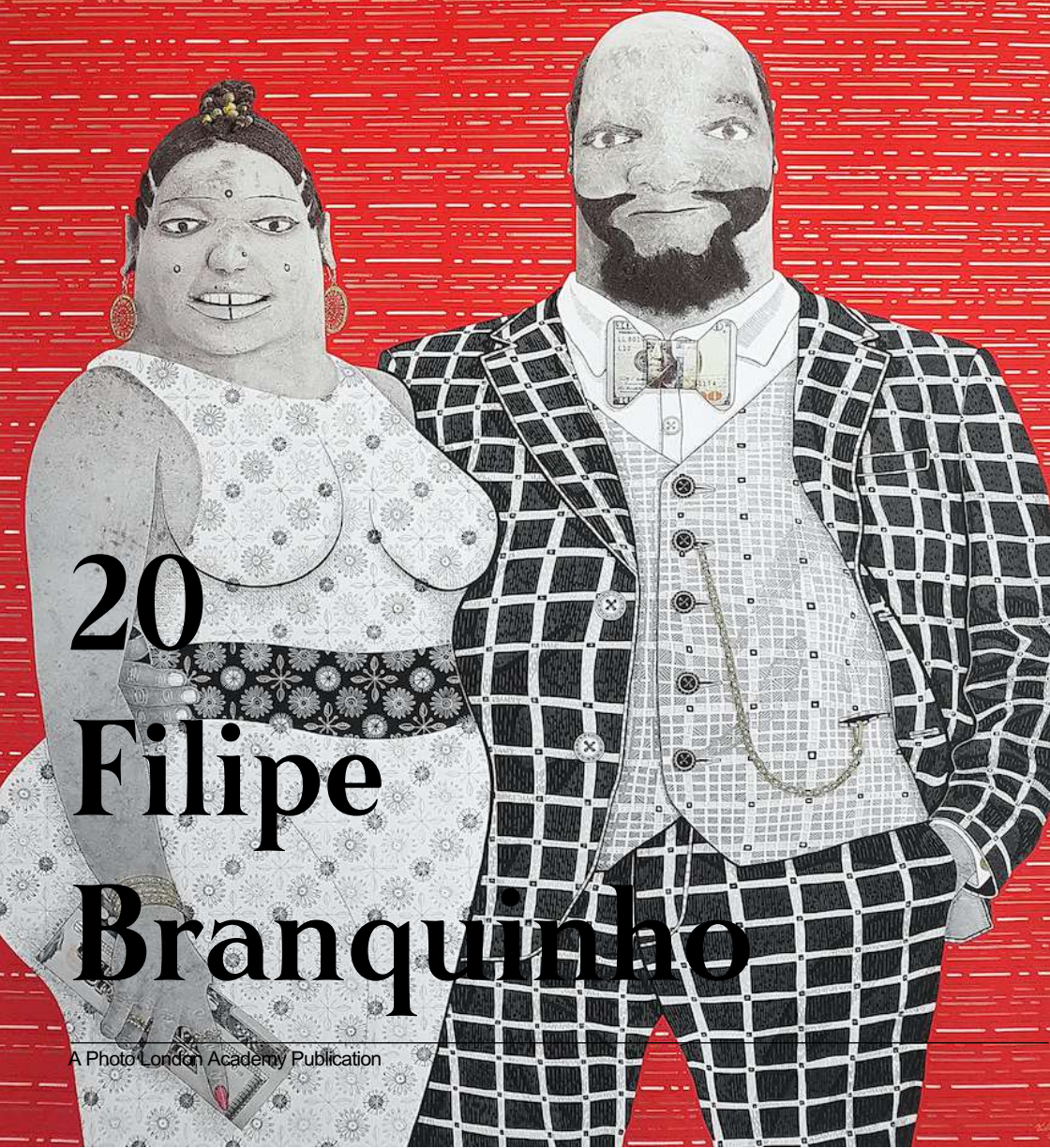


IN GOLD WE TRUST



20
Filipe
Branquinho

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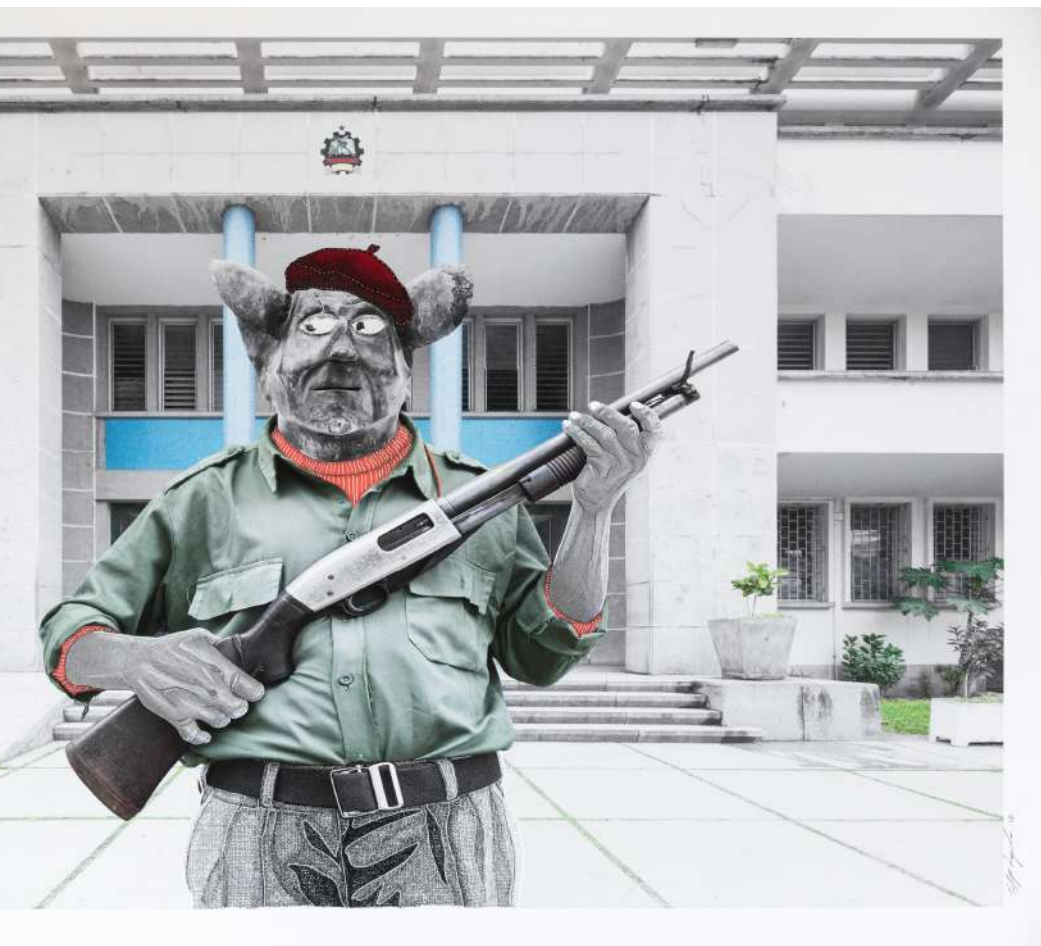
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Front cover: In Gold We Trust, Lipiko series, 2020
This page: *Vigilância* (Vigilance), Lipiko series 2018



INTRODUCTION

For the twentieth edition of our magazine, Photo London is delighted to present Filipe Branquinho, a Mozambican photographer whose works explore topics such as class differences, the role of politics, and collective memory.

A solo exhibition of Branquinho's works will be on view at Photo London Digital Fair 2020, presented by AKKA Project.

"Filipe's work is very deep, it digs into the heart of the Mozambique culture, politics, ways of living, the country's natural beauty, costumes, corruption and its monstrosities."

– Lidija Khachatourian AKKA Project's co-founder

This issue features an exclusive interview with the artist, a selection of works from previous series as well as a video from the Lipiko series, which debuted at the Venice Film Festival on 5th September 2020.





Interview with Filipe Branquinho

*What is it about photography that you find most special/exciting?
Who or what inspires your photography?*

I am fascinated by all the technical aspects of photography. It has always amazed me and it still does. I spend lot of time researching about old and new technology.

The excitement of technology is that it allows me to document the stories of the places I live in. Because of my background of architecture, the space and how is occupied is something that always inspires me.

Who are some of the artists who have influenced your work? Was there a particular piece that ignited your passion in the medium?

There is no particular piece, there might be hundreds of them.

My mother worked in the Photography Training Centre of Maputo. My father was a journalist and passionate about photography. My neighbour and close friend of my family was Ricardo Rangel, "the father of Mozambican Photography", as well as Kok Nam. My uncle is José Cabral, probably my biggest influence in photography. Photography appeared naturally in my life. There were exhibitions, workshops, photographs, labs and magazines of photography. Photography was alive and present everywhere in my childhood.

You grew up during the Mozambican civil war. How strongly has that influenced your work?

We were very conscious about the power of image. The idea that an image could change the world or at least make a difference. Photography is in the centre of politics, as one of the most powerful tools. The war never took place in the streets of Maputo City where I lived, but we all lived its consequences. Somehow, a huge feeling of solidarity emerged. We could all count on each other and that marks you forever.

Equality and diversity have been especially topical this year with escalating BLM protests in many Western countries. As an artist, how have you responded to cultural changes?

All of my photography works document some kind of injustice: political, social inequality, labour conditions, corruption.. Sometimes I like to paint and photograph flowers and landscapes to get away from all of this, like my photographic series about "Gurue" a portrait of a tea estate surrounded by luxurious landscape.



Bico de papagaio ((*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), Gurulé series, 2014

Could you tell us more about your current project?

Currently I am working in a series called "Lipiko". A project that mixes photography and painting and satirizes about a group of people that took the country into a huge illegal debt. It's a project that has its roots in the tradition using very old helmet masks representing contemporary issues.

Any upcoming projects you can share with us?

After a while in a mixed media project, I feel the need to go back to pure photography. I have started a new project called "Manufacture", a survey of objects found on the streets of Maputo designed by the people who work on them.

Because of its particular character, it is a collaborative project with designers and writers in a way that we can produce a kind of catalogue.



Untitled, Cadeira (chair), 2020, Manufacture series, Ongoing project

What are your thoughts on the use of technology in the art world?

Nothing against. Once again technology is something to use. It is always about what you are trying to say or transmit. It doesn't matter what media you are using as long as it suits the message.

We live in a world where everyone with a smartphone can be a "photographer". What is your personal opinion on the future of photography?

To be honest, I feel the world is saturated by images. I am not sure where we are going. I will leave that to the scientist and future creators.

I am pretty sure that everyone can do an amazing picture, since it's all about feeling and feelings belong to everyone. Becoming a photographer requires a little bit more. It is not a stroke of luck.



Untitled, Caixa de engraxate, 2020, (Shoeshine box), Manufacture series, Ongoing project

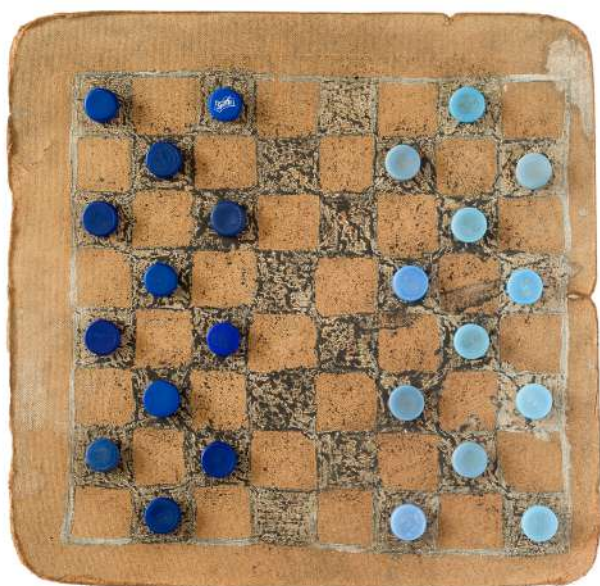
2020 will no doubt go down in history as the year of Covid-19. How has your work as a photographer been affected by the lockdown?

Literally everything was cancelled. During this time, there were a lot of online events like art fairs and exhibitions. I am glad I was part of that.

Meanwhile, I used the time I had to rethink about ongoing and new projects. I interacted a lot with my gallery, Akka Project, in current and future projects and collaborations.

What piece of advice would you give to someone hoping to start a career in photography?

See, see, see; feel, feel, feel; write, write, write; be aware, be there and photograph.



Untitled, Damas (Checkers), 2020, Manufacture series, Ongoing project

Showtime series 2012-2013

Showtime is inspired in the work of two Mozambican masters of photography. The idea came from the book "Our nightly bread" by Ricardo Rangel, photographed in Araújo street, the so-called «sin street» in Lourenço Marques, now Bagamoyo street in Maputo, and from some of José Cabral's nudes, a semi-spontaneous work.

Using these images, I started by drawing an illustration that led afterwards to the urge to take some photos, to photograph women the way José Cabral does but in a Ricardo Rangel scenario.

Unlike Rangel, who took a lot of photographs of the street and the bars, I wanted to delve a bit deeper, to get to the centre – the hotel rooms which already existed in Rangel's time, fifty years ago, and oddly are still there today.

I visited the hotels, talked to the owners and saw the rooms. I find out a Hotel where six of the fifteen or twenty rooms are paid by the hour, at two hundred meticais. These rooms, where the prostitutes take their customers during the day and night, are called «showtime». I decided to photograph the women from Bagamoyo street in the rooms they use.

Every customer has a fantasy and I, as a customer, paid for the rooms and the women to be there and my fantasy was to photograph them. They asked me: «How much you pay?» I paid the hourly rate just like any customer.

Based on a interview with José Pinto de Sá in 2013.





Occupations series 2011-2014

Occupations documents and reclaims urban identity and space in the city of Maputo. In this portrait of Maputo, Branquinho layers post-civil war, colonial and institutionalized bureaucracies and realities with the vibrancy of professionals, new and self-made economies and the animation of the streets. In the tradition of street photography, Branquinho discovers his subjects on the city streets through wandering.

Branquinho applies typology as a narrative framework to allow the idiosyncrasies of each of the portraits way to negotiate reference and relationship to each other.

At once the narrative asserts synthesis of the architectural context and the inevitable presence of the individuals that occupy it. However it also alludes to the presence and relationship of a photographer that is in conversation with individuals.

The photographer becomes one (and all) of multiple occupations: historian, anthropologist, journalist, sociologist, architect, art historian, fellow citizen. In this, what seems to be a mundane exchange, is a subtle confirmation of relationship, of citizenship that delivers and dignifies identity.

This notion of photographing people and their places is core to Branquinho's practice, like it is in the tradition in Mozambican (and South African) photography. Having grown up amongst photographers like Ricardo Rangel, Kok Nam and José Cabral, Branquinho's lingered inspiration has now settled.

John Fleetwood



Criança de trotinete (Kid on his scooter), Occupations series, 2011



Bombeiros (Firemen), Occupations series, 2011



Alfredo Simula, supervisor de condomínio (Building supervisor), Occupations series, 2011



Joana, pescadora (Fisherwoman), Occupations series, 2012



Doutor dos doutores (Doctor of doctors), Occupations series, 2014



Maria Manuela, *Boxista (Boxer)*, Occupations series, 2013

Gurué series

2014

Reknowned for his photographic underpinning of the dynamic contemporary urbanity of Maputo, Gurué 15°28 'S 36°59 'E is as far from urban Maputo in its content and commitment to a vision of the landscape and the town as is the geographical divide between this provincial town and the national capital city. Gurué was founded in the 19th Century and developed as a major tea producing area by the 1930s. The local tea companies grew to international prominence and made the names, Cha St Antonio, Cha Murrace, Chá Moçambique, Chá Licungo, Chá Gurùè, and Chá Montebanco Junqueiro, famous on the world's tea markets.

What is said of Gurué, in tea you are born, in tea you work and in tea you die, is the underlying ethos of Filipe Branquinho's imagery from a time he spent there. As he explains:

As an attempt to reinvent myself as a photographer moving away from my comfort zone and disconnecting from previous works, all done in Maputo and with a strong focus in architecture and urban spaces and its people, I was hoping that this series could work as a transition between my previous projects (Occupations, Showtime, Chapa 100, Interior Landscapes, Vila Algarve) and future projects. And last but not least it was a way to reconnecting with nature, far from all the noise, stress and anxiety in the city.

It's prosperity founded on the tea aristocracy, with the cinema established in the 1950s. In Filipe's contemporary image the cinema is startlingly empty. As a ghostly space still holding the pristine memory of Gurúé as it once was, an outpost of modernity. The pale green uniforms of the club workers in a group portrait speak of structure and pride, yet in this image the swimming pool is empty, there are no guests, just the workers. It is the structures and habits that have remained in place after the devastation of civil war and the decline of the fortunes of tea that echo through these images of Gurué in the 21st century. As with the interior spaces, image by image there are atmospheres of emptiness, a billiard table with no players, an empty bed, and obsolete machinery in a tea factory. Everything feels suspended between the past and a future yet to be told.

Extract from Foreword by Berry Bickle



Queimada (Burn), Gurué series, 2014





Terra batida (Dirt road), Gurué series, 2014





Nevoeiro (Fog), Gurué series, 2014



Cine Gurué, Gurué series, 2014

Lipiko series 2019-present

In the ongoing project entitled "Lipiko", Filipe uses mapiko masks of the Maconde tradition associating drawing and photography with a strong sense of satire to propose a reflection on aspects and values of contemporary national affairs.

From the colonial period to post-socialism, Mapiko's performance, a traditional initiation rite, allows the expression of an invisible magic world but also of social criticisms and staged identities. These Mapiko masks can be, traditionally, caricatures of characters of a magical (imaginary) world or real known characters from the community or region.



Procurador da república (Attorney general), Lipiko series, 2018



Patrão (Boss), Lipiko series, 2017





Boas festas (Happy holidays), Lipiko series, 2017



Líder comunitário (Community leader), Lipiko series, 2019



A short trailer about Lipiko
Art by Filipe Branquinho; directed by Martina Margaux Cozzi; produced by AKKA Project.

Biography

Filipe Branquinho (born 1977, Maputo) studied in architecture and follows a dual career as a photographer and illustrator.

Filipe Branquinho's aesthetic is inspired by his architectural training and by the mozambican school of photography where growing up among big names of mozambican photography such as Ricardo Rangel, Kok Nam and José Cabral proved paramount.

In a project now underway entitled "Lipiko", in which he uses mapiko masks of the Maconde tradition, he associates drawing and photography with a strong sense of satire to propose a reflection on aspects and values of contemporary national affairs.

From the colonial period to post-socialism, Mapiko's performance, a traditional initiation rite, allows the expression of an invisible magic world but also of social criticisms and staged identities. Traditionally, these Mapiko masks can be caricatures of characters of a magical (imaginary) world or real known characters from the community or region.

In the previous series there have been several photographic projects that propose a reading of the current reality of Mozambique, generally about urban identity, people and their space in the city, between memories and the present, current national affairs and tradition: "Occupations" (portraits of anonymous inhabitants in their places of work or life - PHOTOQUAI 2013 and Revue Camera, Paris, n° 2, 2013); «Showtime», 2013 (portraits of women on a return to Rua Araújo that evoked Rangel and Cabral); «Interior Landscapes» (Maputo architectures and the reuse of old spaces of colonial times - POPCAP 15 Prize for African Photography); «Gurué 15 ° 28 'S 36 ° 59' E" (the immense landscapes of tea in Zambézia).

It is a body of work with an evident thematic coherence and no use of shortcuts or exoticism.



Photo of Filipe Branquinho
All images and video are courtesy of the artist



AKKA Project (which stands for A Kostic Khachatourian Art Project) is a commercial gallery and project space conceived to promote and support predominantly artists from the African continent.

Our mission is to nurture diverse artistic practices and generate thoughtful dialogue through the arts. We value art as a catalyst for critical thinking and cultural dialogue. Through the work of our artists we aspire to link personal expression to broader social contexts.

Our gallery spaces in Dubai and Venice are intimate spaces capable of showcasing a rich variety of mediums, including painting, sculpture, installation and film.

We relish the freedom the gallery space offers for our artists as a place to reinvent what a “gallery” can mean artistically, conceptually and as a force for change within the wider community.

In order to deepen and foster the creative process of our artists, we also organize artists’ residencies in Venice, with a particular focus placed on self-taught artists and those working in film and video work.

AKKA Project works in direct contact with the artists and their creative process, whether it is for a traditional commercial art exhibition or for a non profit multidisciplinary cultural event.

AKKA Project presents exhibitions and immersive art experiences throughout the year. The aim is to go beyond the usual one-dimensional offering expected of an art gallery, and instead present dynamic exhibitions, which are accompanied by vibrant and heartfelt cultural occasions.

AKKA Project is a proud partner of ArtAndAboutAfrica.com and producer of the National Pavilion of Mozambique, La Biennale d’Arte 2019, Venezia.

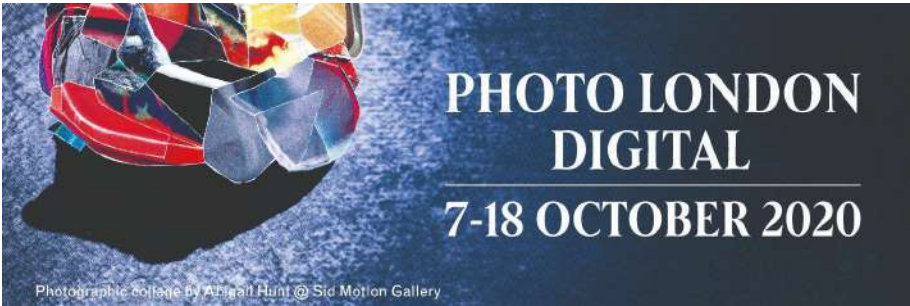


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