



The Jorge Vieira Museum is a contemporary art facility that plays a leading role in the cultural life of the city of Beja.

By housing part of the collection of an artist who is considered one of the most important sculptures of the 20th century, Beja pays a deserving homage to the man who, from a young age, established a strong relationship of affection with the Alentejo.

With an unparalleled career path, Jorge Vieira was an impact-causing, iconic and convention-breaking artist, who distanced himself from the traditional and merged his work with primitivist, abstractionist and surrealist influences.

At the base of his work is a duality of references in which more archaic creative process that take us to the magic of ancestry coexist with a more modern and enigmatic creation, which is allied to the free imagination.

Among the artist's creations, the numerous works on paper stand out, transcending several periods.

In his sculpture he uses a variety of different techniques in a carefully thought-out intertwining of the material, the message he intends to transmit and the specific restriction that each work requires. In making his works the sculptor has used materials such as bronze and stone. However, he especially focused on working with terracotta, which was his favourite material, through which



Fotografia: José Sanches Ramos

by going back to handmade sculpting he explores the relationship between the hand and the material. His works contain cyclical figures and characters, in which erotic nudes, lovers, animals such as the bull and horse, and figures related to pagan mythology predominate. An essential theme is pieces based on tripods and the absurdity of some anatomical associations, where fantasy underpins the creation and the diversity which opens a window on the artist's imagination.

Upon the temporary reopening of the museum in this new physical space, the intention is that the location houses the city's most emblematic monument, simultaneously transforming it into a meeting point between the fusion of modern art and medieval architecture, where it will be possible to renew content through temporary exhibitions, but also to understand, delve into and disseminate the life and work of the sculptor that fills us with pride, bringing him into contact with a wide-ranging audience through a transversal sharing of all generations, forms of understanding and experiencing art.

Marisa Saturnino

Councillor for the Tourism and Heritage Department
of the Municipal Council of Beja.



Fotografia: José Maria Barnabé



Castle - Governor's House
Largo Dr. Lima Faleiro - 7800-266 Beja
Tel.: 284 311 920 - Email: museujorgevieira@cm-beja.pt

Open daily: 09h30 - 12h 30 | 14h 00 - 18h 00
Closed: Monday, 01/01, 25/04, 05/01, 25/12



Jorge Vieira – “Alentejo native with all his heart”

The Museu Jorge Vieira – Casa das Artes (Jorge Vieira Museum and Art House), opened on 25 May 1995, at Rua do Touro in Beja, has been closed since January 2018, and reopens on 1 September 2019, at the Casa do Governador.

Jorge Vieira, a great name of 20th-century Portuguese modern art, a sculptor unafraid of breaking conventions, chose Beja to house a significant proportion of his work, meticulously selected in order to allow the onlookers to grasp an overall reading of his entire artistic production: the primitivism, neoclassicism, abstraction, surrealism, present in all epochs, are easily perceptible. He was born in Lisbon, but it was in the Alentejo that he felt at home. He retired in 1992, as a professor of sculpture at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon, and since then lived on the outskirts of Estremoz, where he would pass away on 23 December 1998.

In 1993 he was invited by Beja Municipal Council to create a monument in the city, based on an award-winning work at the International Sculpture Competition called The Unknown Political Prisoner, organised by the Institute of Contemporary Art of London, in 1952. He was the only Portuguese sculptor admitted, among 3,500 contestants from 57 countries. This sculpture was part on an exhibition of the award-winning pieces, at the Tate Gallery in 1953. Jorge Vieira's participation in this competition was crucial in his decision to apply, in 1954, to the Slade School of Fine

Arts, also in London, one of the most prestigious art schools in Europe. There, he had the privilege of rubbing shoulders with celebrated artists of 20th-century modern art, especially Henry Moore. With this sculpture he participated in the II Biennial of São Paulo Modern Art Museum, in 1953, and in the 50 Years of Modern Art Exhibition, as part of the Brussels International Fair in 1958, as the only Portuguese sculptor selected. At this fair he had two large-scale pieces, integrated into the Portugal Pavilion, both of which disappeared. In three other participations in international fairs in Lausanne, Rio de Janeiro and Osaka, only two sets of sculptures on display returned to Portugal. The sculpture on show at the Osaka Fair, the model of which is part of this Museum's collection, was offered as a gift by the Portuguese government to the city of Sakai, at the end of the fair. Jorge Vieira died without knowing this. Nothing is known about the whereabouts of the sculptures made for the Rio de Janeiro International Fair.

In 1992 he also took part in the Portuguese Art of the 1950s Exhibition, in which The Unknown Political Prisoner was on display in Beja Municipal Library, later renamed the José Saramago Beja Municipal Library. This library also has a portrait on public display of José Saramago, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for Literature, painted by Jorge Vieira. The highlight of the 25 April commemorations in 1994, in Beja, was the inauguration of The Monument to Unknown Political Prisoner. The dream became reality for Jorge Vieira and for everybody who looks upon this work of art as a symbol of freedom.

Since 1999 the Jorge Vieira Museum has housed another important set of drawings, donated by the sculptor's widow. In this same year the Jorge

Vieira Memorial was inaugurated in Beja. It was designed from a part of this Museum's collection, the model of one of the sculptural components of the Project for Recycling the Plastic of the North Bracing of the Bridge over the River Tagus, which would be named the Salazar Bridge, and later renamed the 25 de Abril Bridge. The Project, presented in a contest in 1964 by the studio of the architect Conceição Silva, won first prize and was paid, but never came to fruition: Salazar did not like it. It is noteworthy that the press at the time gave a lot of emphasis to Jorge Vieira's participation, showering him with praise: Lisbon would have its first great modern monument. It would be Beja that was bestowed with this privilege, 35 years later. The collection of the Jorge Vieira Museum also includes some works donated by his artist friends when they displayed their work here, and a sculpture by Jorge Vieira, donated by a collector and friend.

Jorge Vieira has put his work on display regularly since 1947 and is the creator of a vast public body of work, concentrated mainly in Lisbon and the Alentejo. In Lisbon we highlight the imposing Homem Sol (Sun Man), one of his most emblematic works. In the Alentejo, as well as the two pieces in Beja, he left us: Monument to Freedom, in Grândola, Monument to Marble, in Estremoz, Aljustrel Anti-Fascist Monument and Sculpture, in Redondo.

May the city of Beja, and all of us, be deserving of this legacy.

Noémia Cruz
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