



Standard Deviation

Ana Jotta

Carla Dias

Conner O'Malley

Inês Raposo

Max & Dave Fleischer

Meriem Bennani & Orian Barki

Paula Rego

Walt Disney

STANDARD DEVIATION

with works by Meriem Bennani & Orian Barki,
Carla Dias, Walt Disney, Max & Dave Fleischer,
Ana Jotta, Conner O'Malley, Inês Raposo, Paula Rego
Curated by Gabriel Abrantes

In the upstairs galleries, titled *Standard Deviation*, Gabriel Abrantes has selected a group of artists — an all-time favorite list of inspirations, seminal reference points, aesthetics, techniques, and existential themes. The show spans fine art, animation, social media, and popular culture, with each medium acting as its own allegorical lens. Tracing these works is like having a live conversation with Abrantes. This is an artist's show, a tribute to ways of seeing and working rather than a symbolic, politicized, or moralized statement. Ambiguity is central and the works share threads of anthropomorphized allegory, wit, satire, and subtle sociopolitical commentary — traits all to be found in Abrantes' own work, *Rattrap* (2025), on show downstairs, titled *Standard Error*.

The titles of the two shows, *Standard Deviation* and *Standard Error*, play with statistical language, hinting at the logic of influence and creation. What in statistics soberly describes dispersion and precision respectively, here becomes a metaphor for art. *Standard Deviation* celebrates divergence, the breaking away, the court jester among the numbers — a wild archive of influences. *Standard Error*, by contrast, strictly divided by the square root of all voices, delivers the paradoxical punchline: the more deviations accumulate, the more precisely the individual work crystallizes. Two titles, two exhibitions — one

play with norm, error, and the productive beauty of misunderstanding.

This play between scatter and focus carries through the works on view. When in *Coreys* (2024), one of the videos on view by American comedian and YouTuber Conner O'Malley, he returns home to tell his wife "I love you" after an intense clash with his grotesque, social media bred alter ego, we are reminded of Betty Boop trembling beneath her bedsheets, scared by the ghosts of her desires. In *Minnie the Moocher*, an animation short from 1932, Betty runs away from her strict immigrant parents and their not "so sweet" traditional ways, only to encounter a parade of fantastical and spooky creatures in a haunted cave, set to Cab Calloway's song *Minnie the Moocher*, poignantly — and compared to the real Calloway's dance steps — quite accurately performed by a ghost-like walrus. Not only is the video an early example of the music video genre with innovative animation of the era, it's a mashup of jazz performance, narration, and pre-code cautionary tale. Through the years of America's Great Depression, Betty symbolized a positive tone and "can-do" spirit. A product of early mass media culture. In a twisted way, she is a pre-version of what the real O'Malley obsesses with on social media in *Coreys*: a packaged, affectious, consumable version of oneself. Both works expose how popular culture packages desire and fear into consumable bits for the histrionic mind of all ages. Betty was designed for the masses; O'Malley's online persona for himself — yet both crystallize into mass phenomena, affect packaged and circulated. Kitsch hovers in the background here — not simply as bad taste, but as mass-produced sentimentality, a language of clichés that both seduces and repels. As Hal Foster argues in his essay *Yellow Ribbons* (2005), "a new order of totalitarian kitsch" returned with vengeance in the United States after 9/11. In tracing this, Foster invokes authors

like Hermann Broch, Milan Kundera, Theodor Adorno, and Clement Greenberg, each of whom diagnosed kitsch as the aesthetic companion to mass politics and intensified technologies of culture — from the rise of fascism in interwar Europe to the short-lived decline of totalitarian regimes in the 1970s and 80s, coinciding with the ascent of neoliberalism. Betty embodies this double edge: comforting and charming while flattening complex desires into consumable signs. O'Malley's self-obsessive spirals echo the same logic in a hyper-individualized age. *Steamboat Willie*, the short by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks from 1928, that marked Mickey and Minnie Mouse's debut, makes this genealogy even clearer. After three successful rounds of lobbying and successive legal extensions, at least this version of Disney's mouse finally entered public domain in 2024. For all its wit and technical brilliance, Disney Inc. has operated as a cultural machine — industrializing narrative into entertainment that entertains while shaping collective imagination. Beneath surface variation lies a formula: existing folklore reshaped into modern myth, with strangeness and violence, often apparent in the original materials, softened into clean morality, romance, and consumer-friendly imagery.

In the first episode of Meriem Bennani's and Orian Barki's animation series *2 Lizards* (2020), the lizards lean over the balustrade of a balcony listening to Miles Davis's *It never entered my mind*, performed by animals, scattered in the deserted, wintery snow-white cityscape of New York City. Alone and yet together, they convey a fragile collectivity. In awe, the lizards begin to dance. Early in the pandemic — when death counts were rising, uncertainty ruled, symptoms were discussed, and fear was rampant to the irrational (“someone just spit on me,” one lizard exclaims in response to a first drop of rain) — Bennani and Barki released the eight-part series on

Instagram. “The virus is the clock”. What first appears as yet another quarantine diary, intentionally inspiring yet draining and ever-repeating, is in fact something more. What distinguishes *2 Lizards* from other pandemic-era works is the way it transforms deadpan, everyday exchanges into vessels for collective emotion: loneliness, absurd humor, frustration, resilience. From the banality of Zoom birthdays to the piercing reality of systemic racism and the outcry for social justice in the summer of 2020, the series interweaves the intimacy of quarantine life with the urgency of political action, while simultaneously hinting at the by now overly common manner of virtue signaling. The lizards’ banter captures both the absurdity and gravity of those months — when isolation coincided with a mass awakening, when private vulnerability met public protest. The dialogues, which the artists had among themselves and conducted with friends and others, also carry the contradictions of a generation navigating life under lockdown and solidarity across distance. *2 Lizards* is therefore also a portrait of the emotional and cultural essence of its time. Later, when the series had moved from Instagram phenomenon to having its first institutional show, the artists recall: “It was just very spontaneous. It wasn’t symbolic. If we tried to make something similar now, we already have too much perspective.”

In Carla Dias’s drawings, animals appear as pets, stuffed toys, taxidermy, ornaments, folklore, advertising, or art — ever-present in human stories as omens, domestic companions, or lucky charms. Refusing any narrative structure, Dias stages uncanny tableaux vivants by grouping animals with saints, religious emblems, folk objects, and a wide array of consumer goods. Her juxtapositions implicitly probe belief and guilty pleasure, asking what humans choose to value, fear, or revere. As in Bennani’s and Barki’s *2 Lizards*, protest and social critique are folded

in: a Palestinian flag or a can of pepper spray point to political struggle, while elsewhere the morning-after pill, a bra, or measuring tape gestures toward body surveillance, beauty norms, and gendered power, opening a more broad discussion around norms, expectations, and power relations around gender and identity. Inês Raposo draws on surrealist strategies to manipulate subjects, space, and time so that her large-scale paintings resist any fixed reading. A chicken stares back from a dark blue tiled room; a second canvas shows a closed wooden gate. Within the Christian visual tradition evoked in Dias's drawings, the pair might even recall a winged altarpiece — though their cynicism resists transcendence. The chicken's eyes linger between drowsy and defiant. With its cardboard arms akimbo, it seems almost ready to start ranting. What at first looks like a commentary on domestication and livestock conditions might just be its opposite: a chicken ready to take to the streets.

Artists, writers, storyteller, humans — they all have long turned to animals, gods, and, more recently, machines as mirrors of the human condition. For Ana Jotta, a dog can be an alter ego or self-portrait; for Paula Rego, animals become people — tools for staging cruelty or desire without melodrama. Both artists developed languages steeped in irony, wit, and humor, where animals serve not as fables with moral lessons but as unstable figures hovering between image and meaning. The animal becomes a way for them to tell their own story, apart from the lingering male gaze, apart from conventional styles. *Eu seja cão*, the title of a series of paintings by Jotta that she showed in the late 80s, is an idiom meaning both “I’ll be damned” and literally “I’ll be dog.” It’s the intentional lack of drama in the sense of being without sentimentality or mannerism as an art historical exaggerated pose, that speaks from the works of both Portuguese artists.

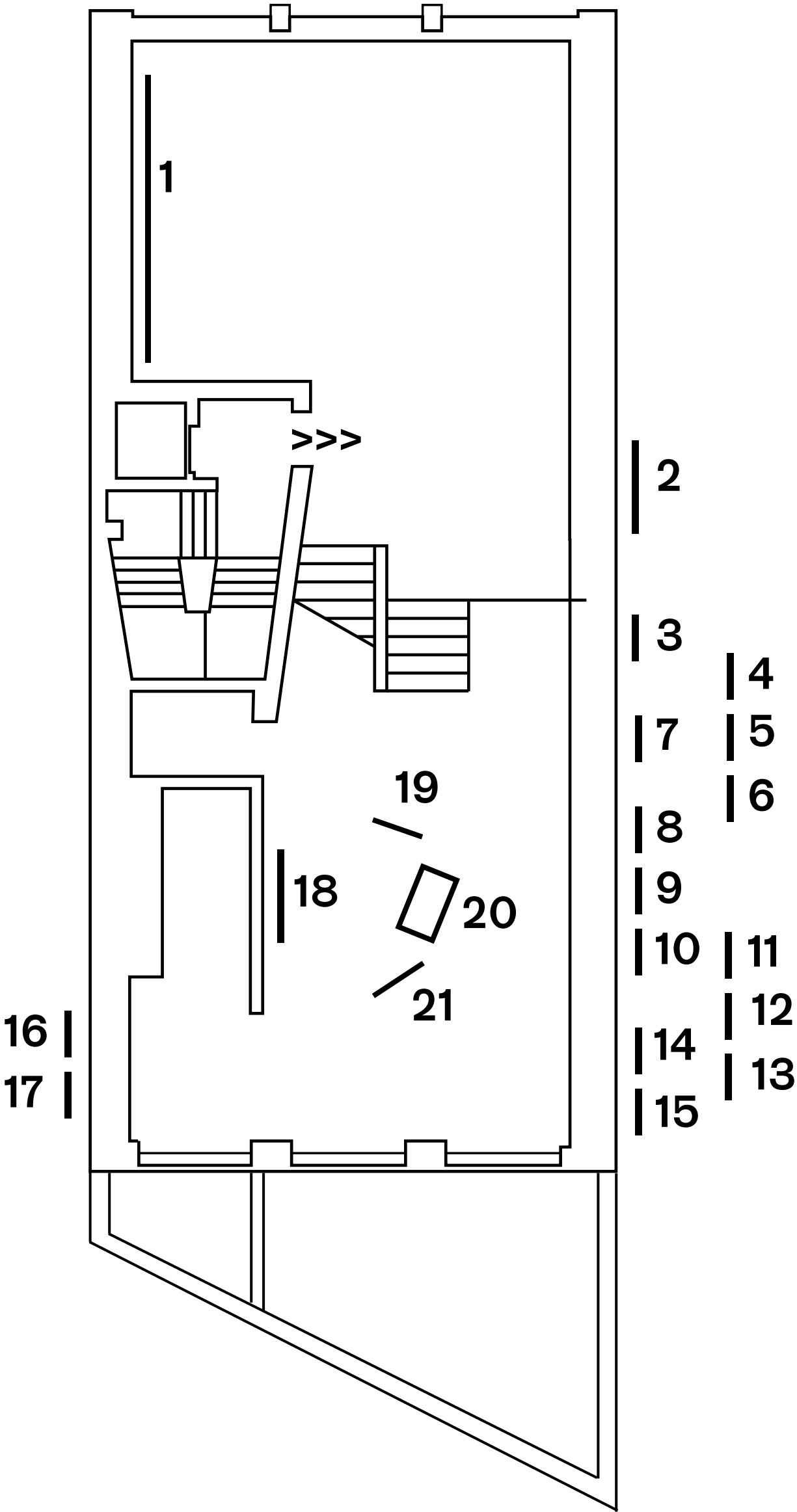
For the show, Jotta created a wall frieze of mice. Mischievously and prankish they parade from left to right — tugging, fumbling, molesting, torturing — well staged on their strip of white paint in the otherwise dark green room. While also anticipating Gabriel Abrantes' digitally materialized Ratto rat that inhabits the basement galleries, Jotta's mice carry a genealogy of cultural meaning. From Aesop's fables to the German folktale *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, rodents have historically signaled both cunning survival and the presence of hidden social dynamics. In Günter Grass's novel *Die Rättin* (1986), rats embody a prophetic consciousness and a critique of human folly — recalling Jotta's subtle and humorous engagement with societal norms and human-animal hierarchies. Throughout her life, Paula Rego has conjured a cast of humans, animals, and fantastical hybrids that empowered her to tell stories, fairytales, folklore in her own way and reimagine power dynamics from the domestic and private to the political. *Beam Chameleon, Dog* (1984) belongs to Rego's works about the Vivian Girls, the contradictory heroines, stuck between adventure and malignity, she had encountered in Henry Darger's illustrated epic of the same name. In an almost carnivalesque scene, depicting a hybrid devilish goat-woman, dressed in a skirt and veil, interacting with an ear-pieced figure — maybe receiving a hand reading? — while ridden by a chameleon, bitten by a dog, and teased into exposure, hinting at mischief or hidden identities. The devil in disguise after all? An uncanny marionette puppet hovers over the bizarre scene. Many years later, Rego would revisit this imagery through *A Dama Pé de Cabra*, a 19th century story by novelist Alexandre Herculano. In Herculano's tale, a goat-footed woman is the Devil in disguise truly, determined to seduce and destroy the man who will become her husband. Rego transformed the uncanny story, seen through the male gaze, into a means

of exploring female agency, subverting patriarchal narratives, and giving visual form to the hidden tensions and desires that circulate between the personal, domestic, and political.

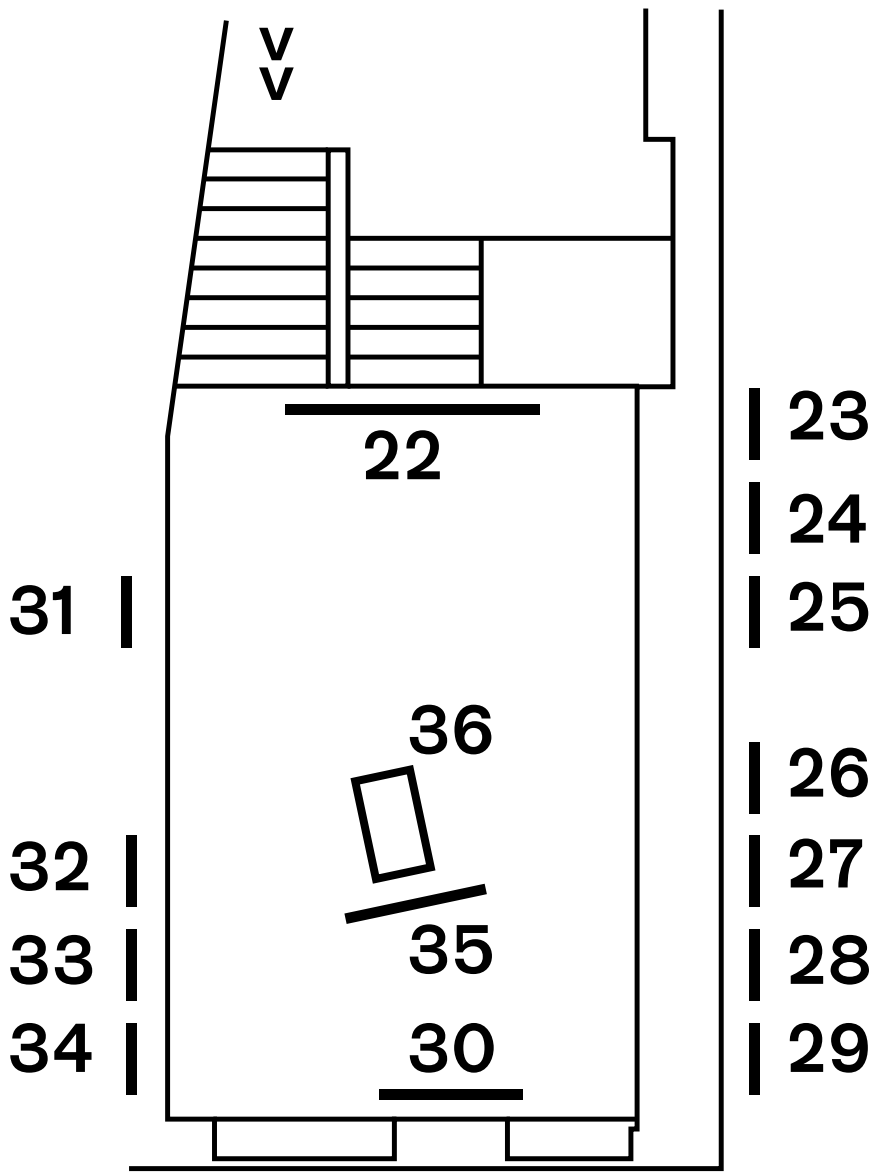
Standard Deviation gathers stories, symbols, and creatures that resist order — Betty's ghosts, pandemic lizards, stray chickens, devilish goats — while *Standard Error* compresses this unruly swarm into the singular figure of Ratz below. Together the two exhibitions sketch a method out of contradiction: art as a practice of scattering and crystallizing, mocking and mourning, borrowing and re-inventing. In this movement between upstairs and downstairs, influence and error, the shows propose not resolution but a rhythm — where deviation becomes the very engine of artistic imagination.

Marie Therese Bruglacher

1 level



Mezzanine



1.

Orian Barki
and Meriem Bennani

2 Lizards

2020

Video, color with sound,
22'43"



3.

Carla Dias

Untitled

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



2.

Inês Raposo

Cardboard hands

2025

Oil on canvas
200 x 180 cm



4.

Carla Dias

Animal Farm

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



5.
Carla Dias
The house of flies 1
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



7.
Carla Dias
Mexico
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



6.
Carla Dias
The picnic
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



8.
Carla Dias
The end of time
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



9.

Carla Dias

Candid

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper

20 x 29 cm



11.

Carla Dias

Maze

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper

20 x 29 cm



10.

Carla Dias

Candy crush

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper

20 x 29 cm



12.

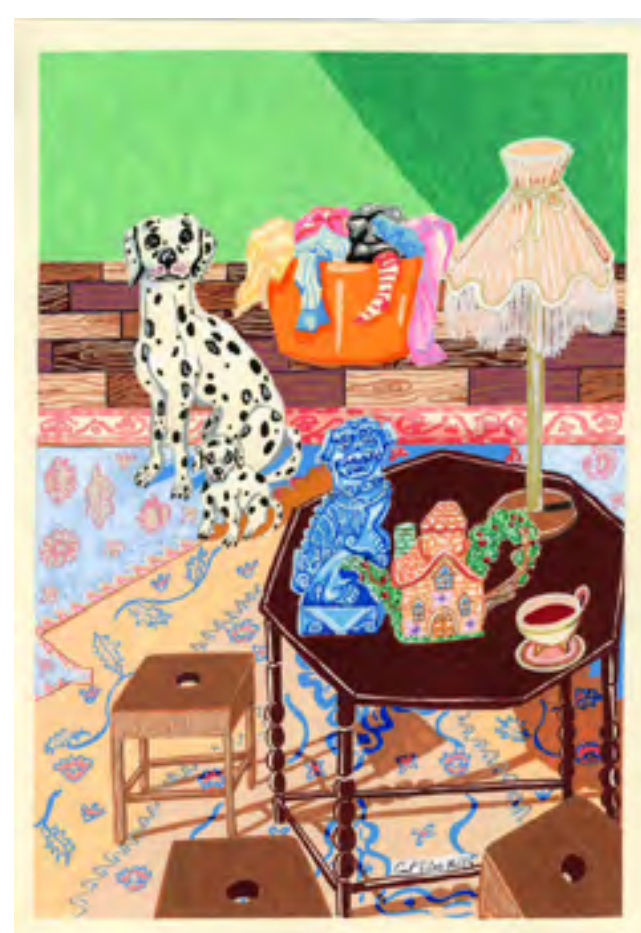
Carla Dias

Clay dogs

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper

20 x 29 cm



13.
Carla Dias
Untitled
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



15.
Carla Dias
Untitled
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



14.
Carla Dias
Saint Antony
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



16.
Carla Dias
The Last Supper - part 2
2025
Water-base markers on
drawing paper 150g
42 x 59,4 cm



17.
Carla Dias
The Last Supper - part 1
2025
Water-base markers on
drawing paper 150g
42 x 59,4 cm



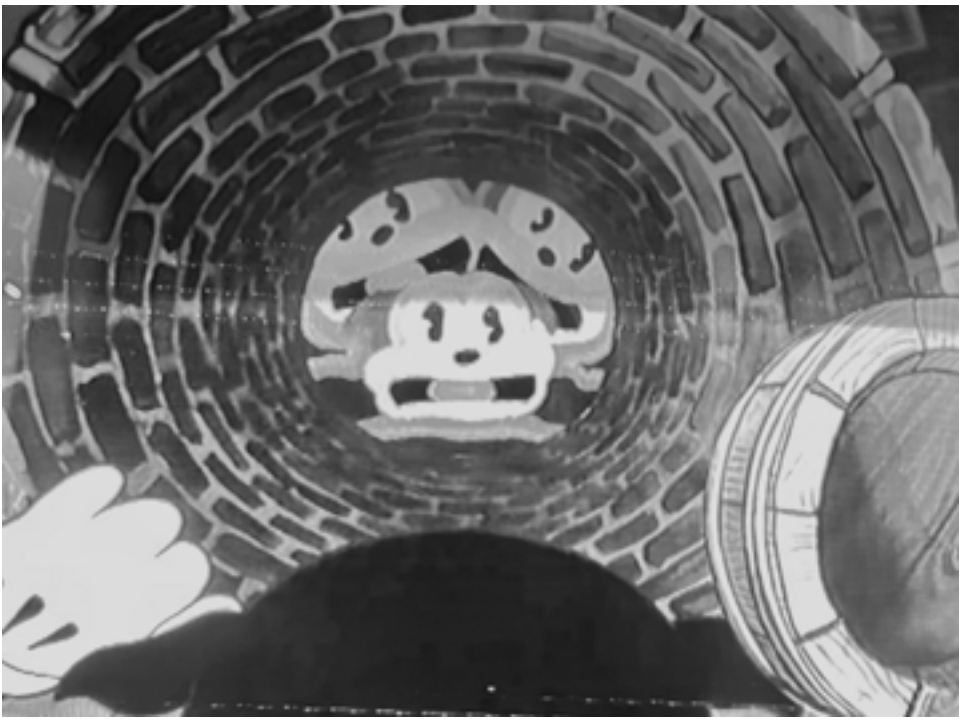
18.
Inês Raposo
Portão de madeira
2025
Oil on canvas
200 x 160 cm



19.
Conner O'Malley
Pipe Rock Theory
2025
Video, color, 5'40"



20.
Max & Dave Fleischer,
Fleischer Studios
Minnie the Moocher
1932
Cel animation with rotos-
coping, B/W with synchro-
nized sound, 7'12"



21.
Conner O'Malley, directed
by Dan Streit
Coreys
2024
Video, color, duration TBD



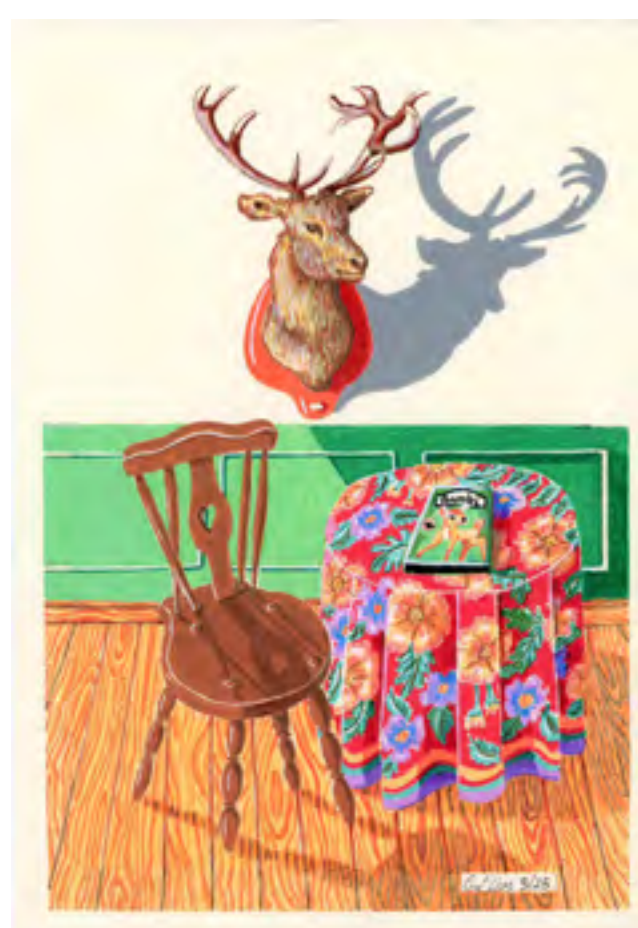
22.
Ana Jotta
Comic Opera
2025
Felt pen, oil lipstick, charcoal, watercolor, 485 cm



23.
Carla Dias
The altar of memories
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



24.
Carla Dias
Bambi
2025
Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



25.
Carla Dias
1984
2025
Water-base markers on
Canson paper 300g
29,7 x 42 cm



26.

Carla Dias

Fairy is dead

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



28.

Carla Dias

The house of flies 2

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



27.

Carla Dias

Untitled

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



29.

Carla Dias

The crow

2025

Water-base markers on
Moleskine paper
20 x 29 cm



30.

Paula Rego

Beam Chameleon, Dog

Vivian Girls Series

1984

Acrylic on canvas

91 x 91,5cm



32.

Carla Dias

3l Atlas

2025

Water-base markers on

Canson paper 300g

29,7 x 42 cm



31.

Carla Dias

The anarchist dog

2025

Water-base markers on

Moleskine paper

20 x 29 cm



33.

Carla Dias

Untitled

2025

Water-base markers on

Canson paper 300g

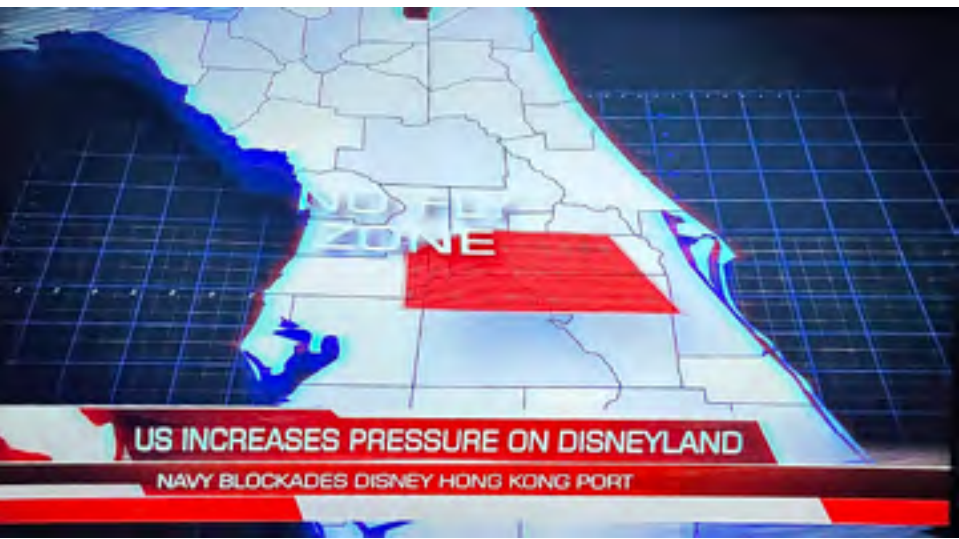
29,7 x 42 cm



34.
Carla Dias
Untitled
2025
Water-base markers on
Canson paper 300g
29,7 x 42 cm



35.
Conner O'Malley
Rebranded Mickey Mouse
2023
Cel animation, B/W, 10'12"



36.
Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks,
Walt Disney Productions
Steamboat Willie
1928
Cel animation, B/W with
synchronized sound, 7'32"

