cao guimarães

retroatos

galeria   nara roesler

exhibition view, galeria nara roesler | rio de janeiro, 2016 / from left to right: **retroatos #13**, 2010/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 110 x 73 cm / **retroatos #06**, 1989/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 110 x 82,5 cm / **retroatos #04**, 1989/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- 1/5 + 2 AP -- 110 x 110 cm / **retroatos #19 - o lago**, 2016 -- video super 8 -- ed. 1/5 -- 1'22''

from left to right: **retroatos #01**, 1998/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 20 photos of 50 x 33,3 cm each / **retroatos #15**, 2010/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 110 x 73 cm / **retroatos # 18**, 1997/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 30 x 40 cm

from left to right: **retroatos #15**, 2010/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 110 x 73 cm / **retroatos #18**, 1997/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 30 x 40 cm

from left to right: **retroatos #09**, 1991/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 73 x 110 cm / **retroatos #08**, 1992/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 40 x 60 cm

from left to right: **retroatos #11**, 2004/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 45 x 60 cm / **retroatos #16**, 1990/2016 -- inkjet print on cotton paper -- ed. 1/5 + 2 AP -- 40 x 60 cm

retroatos #06, 1989/2016
inkjet print on cotton paper
ed. 1/5 + 2 AP
110 x 82,5 cm

cover image:
retroatos #05, 1997/2016
inkjet print on cotton paper
ed. 1/5 + 2 AP
140 x 140 cm

retroatos #07, 1993/2016
inkjet print on cotton paper
ed. 1/5 + 2 AP
110 x 110 cm

retroatos #10, 1998/2016
inkjet print on cotton paper
ed. 1/5 + 2 AP
60 x 60 cm

retroatos #03, 1992/2016
inkjet print on cotton paper
ed. 1/5 + 2 AP
60 x 90 cm

retroatos #14, 2007/2016
inkjet print on cotton paper
ed. 1/5 + 2 AP
60 x 40 cm

retroatos # 19 - o lago, 2016
vídeo - super 8
ed. 1/5
1'22"

cao guimarães: retroatos
ricardo sardenberg

"In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." This Andy Warhol quote is perhaps more famous than the prophecy it carries. Today, watching the election of the new USA president-elect Donald Trump, he appears to approach his political strategy with the next 15 minutes of fame in mind; and the millions of people around the world praise or criticize the continuing news cycles in a ceaseless, instantaneous Babel, the manipulated masses that are the candidate's actual political articulation. I see a paradox on the horizon.

Fame, in the vast majority of cases, is marked by the famous person's face, by their portrayal. The imprint of Trump's smile, his artificial hair, his orange-toned skin is his very own branding. At the same time, on social media, in the world of digital memes with hundreds, thousands of followers, the debate is almost always faceless, even on Facebook. The paradox of the "right" to 15 minutes of fame manifests itself through the many faces, countenances, heads, smiles that are amplified, photoshopped, distributed in a network and consumed, and at the same time their opposite, the absence of faces, is also true. Perhaps the best name for Facebook would be 'faceless.'

Portrait, in its current sense, is an ambiguous word. Its first definition is the image of one or more people, interpreted through painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, etc. But when it comes to photography specifically, any image is a portrait. One can make a portrait of a landscape, of a flower pot, or even of a sculpture. The photographic understanding of the portrait is something that encompasses and transcends the psychological interpretation of the image. The photographic portrait, even when the subject is a person, is also a landscape, an object, a likely anonymity. It enlarges faces and reproduces them endlessly. It makes us so close to someone that, if we run into them in the street, we get the feeling we already know them, as closely as a long-time friend. In its inherent contradiction, the photographic portrait will turn that face into a landscape or an object to be manipulated, loved, or hated.

I recall the early 90's, when the debate on digital manipulation of photographs became widespread in photojournalism. The debate was fierce, because some connection was presumed to exist between information and the reality inherent to photography. Now, almost thirty years later, no one believes the images that circulate in the press or on social media anymore. Portraits have ceased to be psychologically penetrating to become information that's manipulated to convey something immediate, often with an acute sense of urgency. More and more, portraits lose their sentimental value and gain consumption value, as though they were still lifes.
The exhibition *Retroatos* (*Retroacts*) operates in the lexical gap of the word portrait. It omits exactly what we expect to immediately find, i.e., the representation of the faces of one or more people. Either because it's been erased, because the subject has their back to the camera, or because the portrait, since it is a photograph, is just that: a portrait. Faced with this ambiguous situation, the viewer can intuit that which is at once absent and present.

In that zone of instability of the word portrait, the exhibition's title, *Retroatos* (*Retroacts*), gives rise to a second lexical gap. The conflation of the words *retro*, which implies the past, time that has passed and will not come back, and *act*. *Act* suggests multiple meanings: it can indicate an action, but it can also mean a political or a social event; it's also part of an opera or a theater play, or a legally valid document, and finally, it's an active or passive potency for change, be it of the caterpillar in relation to the butterfly, or of the relationship between the mechanical pencil and the lead.

Cao Guimarães' *Retroatos* (*Retroacts)* is an exhibition on the potency of the anonymity that we are condemned to. The contradiction of living deaf in a hyper-communicative world. Unable to hear the other. The *retro* might not be in time, but in space, for it might indicate the turning of one's back on others, the backside of that we wish to see. The *act* might be the potency of constant changes in that backside.

about **cao guimarães**

Cao Guimarães (b. 1965, Belo Horizonte, Brazil) lives and works in Belo Horizonte. Considered to be one of Brazil's most prolific contemporary artist, Cao Guimarães works in the intersection of cinema and the visual arts. Producing films since the late 80s, the artist has been collected by prestigious names such as Tate Modern (United Kingdom), MoMA and the Guggenheim Museum (USA), Fondation Cartier (France), Colección Jumex (Mexico), Inhotim (Brazil), Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (Spain) and others. He has participated of important exhibitions such as XXV and XXVII São Paulo Biennial, Brazil; Insite Biennial 2005, Mexico; Cruzamentos: Contemporary Art in Brazil, USA; Tropicália: The 60s in Brazil, Austria; Sharjah Biennial 11 Film Programme, United Arab Emirates and Ver é Uma Fábula, Brazil, a large mid-career survey with most of the artist's works exhibited in Itaú Cultural, Brazil. He is the author of 9 feature films: The Man of the Crowd (2013), Otto (2012), Elvira Lorelay Alma de Dragón (2012), Ex It (2010), Drifter (2007), Accident (2006), The Soul of the Bone (2004), Two Way Street (2002) and The End of the Endless (2001). Cao Guimarães has been invited to display his films at renowned international film festivals such as Cannes, Locarno, Sundance, Venice, Rotterdam and Berlin. In 2011, MoMA held a retrospective of his films and in 2014, BAFICI (Buenos Aires) and Mexico's Cinematheque also held retrospectives of his work.

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retroatos

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cao guimarães: **retroatos**
galeria nara roesler | rio de janeiro

curated by
ricardo sardenberg

exhibition
november 18th, 2016 - january 21st, 2017
mon - fri > 10am - 7pm
sat > 11am - 3pm

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cao guimarães is represented by galeria nara roesler