

Pedro Neves Marques

(Lisbon, 1984)

An avid reader of science-fiction stories ever since he was a child, Pedro Neves Marques transfers this passion to his film works and his no less prolific production of essays and literature. Forever midway between the reality of the present and the fiction of the future, these works reflect on the dichotomy between nature and culture, the human and the non-human, the biological and the transgenic, and show how impossible it is today to outline the borders of these categories with any certainty. Placing art in dialogue with other disciplines, such as genetics and botany, and coupling thorough scientific research with field studies typical of anthropology, Neves Marques creates works that address the burning themes of our times: the charm exerted by new technologies, colonialism, the militarisation of medical research and, last but not least, sexuality and non-binary identities.

The protagonists of his work may be human beings, androids, plants and animals indifferently, capable of interacting between them within a system that leaves no room for hierarchical distinctions. The video in the collection, *YWY, a androide* (2017) condenses the dialogue between an indigenous android and a GMO corn crop in a far-flung corner of rural Brazil into just seven minutes. However, we viewers, so banally human, are unable to hear the plant's answers, and so we end up interpreting this dense exchange of reflections as an absurd monologue, in line with a narrative expedient that the artist borrows from João Guimarães Rosa, considered one of the finest Brazilian writers. In another film from the same year, *Semente Exterminadora*, the character of YWY appears once more, interpreted by the same actress, a member of the Guajajara ethnic group. Also set in a near future, it tells of an oil spill along the Brazilian coasts. Before the news can spread, the android talks about it with a man called Capivara, who counters her preoccupations by expressing the desire to return as soon as possible to work on his oil platform. In both films, the dialogues between the characters afford the opportunity to deal with the theme of intensive monocrops and the infertility of genetically modified organisms, among which the android also classifies herself.

A recurring scenario in Neves Marques's work, Brazil is also a pretext to recall the past political and economic relationships between Portugal, the artist's country of origin, and its colonies. The explosion of the Zika virus in 2015 and the presidential election victory in 2018 of the ultra-conservative Jair Bolsonaro inspired a cycle of video and text works as well as new paths of even more controversial investigation, including gender issues in the history of medicine, polyamory, the control of reproductive processes, hormonal manipulation and LGBT parenting.

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