

Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

Diafragma

EN version

GALERIA VERA CORTÊS is delighted to announce Alexandre Farto's new solo exhibition at the gallery. Continuing to explore unique materials and languages, the artist presents unique works and new series at the Lisbon gallery, where the urban territory is the stage for reflecting on social inequalities and access, and on the questions posed by technological advances.

After inaugurating important public intervention projects last year, including the monumental tile panel at the Gare de Orly in Paris, and prominent institutional exhibitions in Brussels, Korea and South America, Alexandre Farto aka Vhils returns to sculptural thinking anchored in the use of techniques characteristic of his work to unveil the faces and symbols that inhabit these contemporary landscapes.

The domination over darkness: the discovery of electricity was both a literal and a metaphorical revolution that allowed humanity to control shadows. If the absence of light had always been associated with the unknown, danger, and ignorance, clarity came to symbolize knowledge and creation. It was in the 19th century that humans began to tame the night, and human activity expanded into a new dimension, no longer constrained by the limits of natural light.

In the exhibition "Diafragma", Alexandre Farto aka Vhils uses light and shadow as the central theme. Created with tubular lamps, an element embedded in the urban daily life which connects us to the fast-paced rhythm of modern cities, the new series exposes the layers of life in the metropolis. Speed, connectivity, and the movement of individuals within cities are all driven by energy. The lack of access to electricity is also what perpetuates inequality.

Artificial intelligence and digital development are potentially the greatest technological revolutions since then. The "Blinders" provokes reflection on contemporary blindness in the face of technological advancements. This is also the era of misinformation, digital neocolonialism, dependency, and surveillance.

Electric light has allowed us to control the physical world; today's technology challenges us to consider whether we are illuminating the right path or creating new fields of obliviousness. Vhils prompts us to question the relentless pursuit of control over Planet Earth (and beyond it): to what extent are we ready to remain in the shadow of this new light?



BIO

Portuguese artist **Alexandre Farto aka Vhils** (b. 1987) has developed a unique visual language based on the removal of the surface layers of walls and other media with non-conventional tools and techniques. He began interacting with the urban environment through the practice of graffiti in the early 2000s. Peeling back the layers of our material culture like a modern-day urban archaeologist, Vhils reflects on the impact of urbanity, development and global homogenisation on landscapes and people's identities. Destroying to create, he delivers powerful and poetic visual statements from materials the city rejects, humanising depressed areas with his poignant large-scale portraits. Since 2005 he has been presenting his work around the world in exhibitions, events and other contexts – from working with communities in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, to collaborations with well-reputed institutions such as MAAT – Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (Lisbon); MIMA Museum (Brussels); Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati); Le Centquatre-Paris (Paris); CAFA Art Museum (Beijing); Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation (Hong Kong); Palais de Tokyo (Paris); and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (San Diego), among others. An avid experimentalist, besides his groundbreaking bas-relief carving technique, Vhils has been developing his personal aesthetics in a plurality of media: from stencil painting to metal etching, from pyrotechnic explosions and video to sculptural installations. He has also directed several music videos, short films, and two stage productions.

He is represented in various public and private collections in several countries.

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