

## “White Lab” by Pedro Almeida

Pedro Almeida developed “White Lab” as a site specific project for the chemistry laboratory of the Museum of Natural History and Science, moved by his interest on the interconnection between the Theory of the Four Humors, the space of Pharmacy, the medicament along with its effects and the laboratorial material.

The starting point for this work, closely linked to the artist's double formation – artistic (FBAUL) and pharmaceutical (FFUL) - lies in the deep connection between aesthetics and health that can be found in ideas as ancient in history as the theory of the humors or the concept of drug and medicament. The four humors of Hippocrates and Galen explained health and illness through a balance of four fluids (blood, lymph, black bile and cholera) which were associated to so many qualities, colors and even states of mind. The term *pharmakon* contained in itself the meanings of drug, remedy or poison and also pigment and color. Still in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the great difficulty of the erudite medicine in integrating the Peruvian bark – undeniably efficient in the treatment of malaria – lied in the warm color (red or yellow) of its skin. How to explain that a warm remedy would be effective in treating a fever, when drugs were supposed to have qualities opposite to those from the illness?

In this exhibition, Pedro Almeida leads us through a path that goes through the (re)materialization, (re)construction and (re)imagination of the white lab coat, the eye of Horus, the color and objects, laboratorial instruments, symbols and concepts.

The exhibition “White Lab” from Pedro Almeida presents us more than the view of an artist looking at a laboratory. It is simultaneously a gaze from inside out.

The Museum of Natural History and Science seeks to encompass within its activity all the richness of the distinct ways to see/understand/regard Nature and Science. To embrace, like the eye of Horus, both the Sun and the Moon, to include the view of sciences, humanities and arts. To view the Universe as a whole, simultaneously one, diverse and multifaceted. We are certain that the exhibition from Pedro Almeida openly fits this goal.

José Pedro Sousa Dias, Director

## A chemical view on art

When we think of a chemistry lab we associate it to the image of a Science laboratory. At the museum, in this space, the Laboratory of Analytical Chemistry, an Art laboratory is proposed. This project thinks chemistry on an artistic perspective where the work of Pedro Almeida, with good knowledge about the interstices of Pharmaceutical Sciences, seeks to establish new outlines, through the creation of indirect or even specific ties with science.

It was in this laboratory, a room for research and classes in the past, that the artist, currently based in Madrid, found motivation to present the proposal for an exhibition initially called *White Laboratory*. After some visits to the space, Pedro Almeida was able to locate the areas to intervene on by drawing a *site specific* project that fully integrates approached concepts without forgetting the ties between Science and Art.

At the museum, when we imagine the Laboratory of Analytical Chemistry, we think of experiments, explosions, chemical products and burns, but also protection gloves, masks and coats, and thus we breathe a laboratorial exhibition space of artistic research and experimentation.

Deliberately exploiting the chemical properties of the elements, Pedro Almeida, resorted to synthetic materials (pigments), from chemical industry, and to natural materials (clay and wood), presenting a set of works capable of transforming its physical qualities (wax), during its handling or during its processes of production and exhibition. To explore the aesthetic difference and materiality of the objects, scientific or not, was indeed one of the proposed challenges for this exhibition.

Stemming from a conscious appropriation, the aspiring pop objects now installed on the laboratory table, inside the drawers, and on the shelves of its closets, acquire new contexts, thus recreating their meaning under another analysis. They also alert the more unaware, or those lacking a scientific understanding, to the existence of many contaminants that permeate our lives.

Pedro Almeida, who works with the objectivization of painting through pop, sates << I resort to the iconography of chemical industry to address the consumption in our societies, questioning the careless exaltation of *pop art* for mass consumption. I address chemistry to address pollution and the way it is used in maintaining an utopia, jeopardizing the sustainability of the planet.>>.

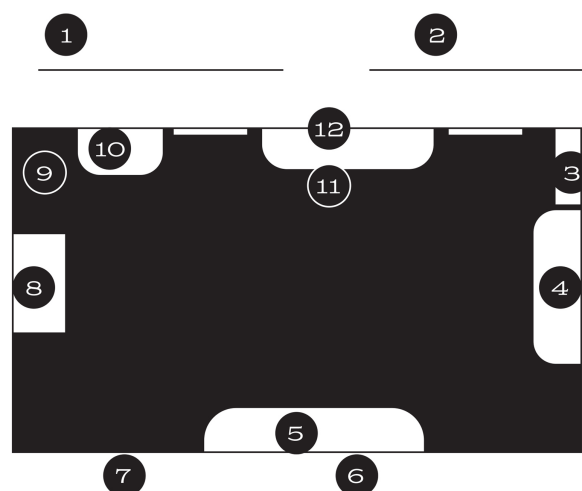
*White Lab* also invites the viewer to decipher the exhibition through the imagery of comics, a visual language equally present in the exhibition. The matter of division between reality and fiction, very well developed in this work, accentuates the artist's most genuine side, who opts for the issuing of a fanzine instead of a formal and common catalog.

The exhibition is displayed in three areas of the museum: in the hall, where the piece *Hulk Box* can be found; in the corridor we can watch the projection of *Big Brother* and *Spectrum Sculptures #1 and #2*; and finally in the Laboratory of Analytical Chemistry we find, among others, the pieces *Green Blue and Red*, *White Coat*, *Box of Memories*.

Chemistry is the science of elements and material transmutations, and so is art too. Thus the drawn analogies self-contaminate and blend, giving origin to iArt, iScience, iLab.

It is well known that science influences art. And does art not influence Science as well?

Sofia Marçal (Commissioner)



- 1- **Hulk box**: 3mm translucent opal green and red polycarbonate, SMB Led inserts, electric cable, 80 x 86 cm, 2016 2
- 2- **Big Brother** : Big Brother: Gobo Zoom´75, 25W CW LED Projector
- 3- **Escultura espectro #1 e #2** : Spectrum sculpture # 1 and # 2: # 1- Acrylic without MDF, 180 X 100 cm, 2016 and # 2- Acrylic without MDF, 170 X 100 cm, 2016 variable size
- 4- **Azul, Verde e Vermelho** : Blue, Green and Red: Harper scale, pigments, papers of various sizes, 2016
- 5- **Reacção em cadeia** : Chain reaction: Photographic print on paper, wood, 30 x 38 cm, laboratory material of variable size, 2016
- 6- **Minerais** : Minerals: Four paintings. Acrylic on wood, 20 x 30 cm, 2016
- 7- **S/título (Balão de erlenmeyer)** : Without title (Erlenmeyer flask): Acrylic without canvas, 180 x 120 cm, 2015
- 8- **White**: White enamel, methacrylate water, 47 x 32 x 32 cm, 2016
- 9- **s/ título (bata branca)** : Acrylic, graffiti paints, plaster without fabric, 2016
- 10- **Scalp** : Two pieces of clay, 14 x 16 cm; 23 x 34 cm, 2016
- 11- **Caixa de memórias** : 5 clay boxes, 24 x 36 cm (variable sizes), 2016
- 12- **Horizonte contaminado #1 e #2** : Contaminated horizon # 1 and # 2: 2 Wooden pieces measuring 0.06 x 16 x 99 cm, 2016