



View of “Joana Bastos,”
2009.

LISBON

Joana Bastos

KUNSTHALLE

LISSABON

Rua José Sobral Cid 9E November 11, 2009–
January 3, 2010

Since 2007, the emerging Lisbon-based artist Joana Bastos has challenged the Portuguese art scene with a series of provocative performances that explore the conventions of late-capitalist labor relations. Bastos assumes the ordinary occupations of female workers—from blue-collar professionals to those in the service sector—and executes the routine duties of a given job description in situ. *Kalmas Residential*, *Joana Speaking*, 2007, alludes to her six-month position as “lettings consultant,” which she held at a real estate agency in London when she needed to support herself as a graduate student at the Chelsea College of Art and Design. Another project from the same year, *Next Money Income*, further develops her examination of survival strategies within the corporate field. A sequence of life-size photographic self-portraits depicts Bastos as a *Kalmas* employee, as a member of the National Gallery’s front-of-house team, and as a nanny, with an extra blank image

that suggests future positions. Last year, she was included in a group show at Lisbon's Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and though she left the room empty, six monitors installed in an adjacent security office offered documentation of her occupational efforts as a janitor for the company that operates the organization.

A similar approach characterizes Bastos's latest project, *Ask Me*, 2009, which is on view at Kunsthalle Lissabon. At this alternative space in downtown Lisbon, the visitor encounters only the artist sitting at a desk as she intermittently reads, checks e-mails, or surfs the Internet. Playing the role of gallery assistant, Bastos draws attention to the disparity of responsibilities that women usually fulfill in a male-oriented art world. However, as the exhibition's title suggests, she elicits the viewer's participation and thus expands the project into the realm of ethics by establishing a conversation around this topic. Merging the radical legacy of feminist art and the political practices of institutional critique, Bastos smartly blurs boundaries between the public and the private, fiction and reality, and aesthetics and ethnography.

— Miguel Amado