



Gabriel Chaile, *Migrantes são bem-vindos*, 2022. Exhibition view with Protótipo #2 and Protótipo #3, ( from the series Flota - Centro Cultural Ambulante), 2022. @ Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon © Bruno Lopes

#### ART & CULTURE , FEATURED

## Migrantes são bem-vindos, by Gabriel Chaile

👤 José Pardal Pina

Food is the most malleable and substantial material to build a community. A meal is a moment of sharing, an extension of time, a narrowing of space. Between food, there are sighs, secrets, jokes and shared concerns. It is an intimate moment that marks and breaks the banality of days and hours, the burden of work, the anguish of daily life. It is an escape from the present hardships – or a permanent conspiracy against the world’s problems. And because our times have normalised the atomisation of societies, entropy, the extinction of emotional, memorial and heritage ties, the meal with family and friends is a deeply political act. Not incidentally, contemporary art has already experimented with food and its tropes: Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party*; Rirkrit Tiravanija’s relational aesthetics; or the social and community project by the New York restaurant FOOD, in the 1970s, created by Carol Goodden, Tina Girouard and Gordon Matta-Clark.

In *Migrantes são bem-vindos*, Gabriel Chaile again takes food’s aggregative power and turns it into an important political and cultural tool in the construction and consolidation of communities, more or less lasting, improvised and transitory.

Several printed photographs show the survivals of pre-Columbian art, make an uncompromising historiography of some relevant and shocking moments in recent history, visit ancient and contemporary cultural productions, associating them with memories and personal periods that Chaile wanted to highlight; Nearby, on the table, we find several encyclopaedic books on ceramics; a roll of paper, ready to be unfolded, shows a prolonged activity during the project; and the terracotta ovens, sculpted and animated to bring audiences together, prepare South American delicacies and add sound to this performance that has no script or precepts. Its action is uncompromising, convivial, conversational, nomadic, among friends, migrants, acquaintances and strangers. All this provides a vaguely familiar, informal and appropriable environment: a kitchen, a home, a dwelling packed with smells, warmth and comfort.

The whole cultural heritage in Chaile’s work is commodified by the force of action, by the fire and flame that transforms food; these are not objects or sculptures whose purpose fits Adorno’s museum-mausoleums. The sculptures have form, an aesthetic and plastic side, but they also have utility – the same as the ancient craftsmen etched into their ovens, with stylised motifs, various engravings and geometric figures, where ‘making’ was a celebration of nature and life. The travelling ovens at *El Recolector* are mounted on wheels and a speaker, with cutlery and tablecloths ready for use. Along the way, Chaile collects stories, bringing people together and welcoming them according to the rules of hospitality. [So, we see on the wall an image of the animated film *Howl’s Moving Castle* (2004) by Hayao Miyazaki, specifically in *E. F. C. A. T. A. (estudio para el funcionamiento de las cosas a través del Arte)*].

In other words, *Migrantes são bem-vindos* settles a process whose beginning coincided with the exhibition’s opening. The artist invited his friend Aaron Jassiel Herrera Villarreal, a Mexican chef, to cook tacos during the party – it really was a party, an almost extinct happening that mixed art and life.

The heritage lingers in the satiated stomach, in the taste that sticks in the mouth all night and unites memories, recollections, which will eventually be revived in the future by similar food. This is the anthropological legacy that Gabriel Chaile presents.

*Migrantes são bem-vindos*, by [Gabriel Chaile](#), is at [Kunsthalle Lissabon](#), in Lisbon, until September 3.

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#### ART , LISBON



#### JOSÉ PARDAL PINA

José Rui Pardal Pina (n. 1988) has a master’s degree in architecture from I.S.T. in 2012. In 2016 he joined the Postgraduate Course in Art Curation at FCSH-UNL and began to collaborate in the Umbigo magazine.