

## **BORDER CROSSINGS: PEDRO CABRITA REIS IN LONDON AND LISBON**

### **SARAH KENT**

London

Haunch of Venison 2005

Conversation Piece # 1 (London) is so understated that you could easily miss it. These tender self-portraits show Pedro Cabrita Reis turning away from himself Janus-style, but each face is partially obliterated by a wash of white acrylic. Hiding everything except the ears, eyes and mouth, the veil of interference distances the images physically and psychologically; it pushes the heads back in space and also prevents emotional contact. The artist appears withdrawn, preoccupied – unaware of our presence or unwilling to meet our gaze. Peering at the drawings, though, makes one acutely aware of the senses; the artist seems to be looking and listening attentively – deep in concentration. When I asked him why the nose is hidden, he explained that, since childhood, he has suffered from sinusitis and blocked nasal passages reduce his sense of smell.

The self-portrait may appear casual, but it is extremely informative; it elucidates the artist's relationship with himself and the world around him, but it also identifies him with Janus, the Roman god of doors, patron of all comings and goings – the guardian of border crossings. Given that Cabrita Reis frequently incorporates doors and windows in his work, but deliberately subverts their normal functions (doors remain shut or lead nowhere and, painted over or replaced by cloth, windows block the view and become mirrors), the association is deeply ironic.

The very function of a work of art seems to be thrown into question. Can a painting or sculpture fulfill traditional expectations by opening the doors of perception onto the wider world or, in these days of scepticism, can it only mirror our confusion? Rather than providing clarification or assurance, Cabrita Reis's work is like a paradoxical celebration of ambivalence. Not surprisingly, a recurring theme in the work is the relationship between the abstract and figurative – between the desire to function as a window onto external reality versus the wish to be autonomous and self-reflexive. Revelling in duality, the artist doesn't simply oscillate between the two, but endlessly explores the overlaps and interplay. Introducing Cabrita Reis to Haunch of Venison for the first time, Conversation

Piece # 1 (London) turns out not to be a self-effacing aside after all; it is more like a talisman – a statement of intent.

Two sculptures function like brackets for the rest of the work on show; standing sentinel in the ground floor gallery, Compound # 3 is a stack of square-section steel tubing about seven feet tall. The unpolished metal is dull and shows signs of rusting; and, crudely cut with an inadequate saw, the ends of the tubes are jagged and raw. Neither a neat grid of uniform elements nor an expressive assemblage, the sculpture obdurately denies poetic associations and, drawing attention to its own physical presence, appears indifferent to its surroundings.

Positioned on the top floor beneath a skylight, Compound # 4 is a stack of aluminium tubes. Bathed in light, the surface glimmers with a soft sheen while, captured within the polished interiors of the tubes, refracted light bounces back and forth to create an impression of weightlessness. Seen through the cellular structure, anything on the other side shatters into myriad fractal reflections that create trippy, kaleidoscopic patterns. If you ignore these mesmerising hallucinations and concentrate on the stack itself, curious optical effects again come into play. Rectangular in cross section, the tubes have been neatly cut to produce uniform facades resembling a skyscraper; the sculpture could almost be mistaken for a large, architectural model. As you walk round it, though, the sides appear to bend and warp, as if the block were undulating, or shimmering in the haze.

The two sculptures represent opposite ends of the spectrum, then. Compound # 3 denies reference to anything besides its blunt physicality, yet is too idiosyncratic (too wilfully imperfect) to be seen as a minimalist sculpture. Compound # 4 on the other hand, poses as a minimalist grid, but indulges in optical tricks and identity shifts that compromise its abstract credentials. The refusal of the two stacks to fit into neat categories implies that in art (as in life) ambiguity and complexity are inevitable, and rather than struggling for purity, it is wiser to embrace duality. 'I'm interested in that blurred territory that functions between opposite poles', says Cabrita Reis, 'the need to balance awareness of reality with a perfect idea of the world; it's a struggle between two extremes – the ideal and the actual, austerity and the baroque.'(1)

True Gardens # 4 (London) is more typical in that it embraces, within the one work, the coexistence of opposites such as the abstract/figurative,

simple/complex and old/new. The London piece extends an idea first explored in an installation for the Centre d'Art, Le Crestet, France in 2000; placed in the courtyard there, mirrors created an artificial pool that reflected the surrounding trees and architecture. At Haunch of Venison the piece is on the first floor, beside a column and near a window. Four glass panels painted grey, black and brown lie on the floor; above them, on blocks of wood, rest large laminated glass panels and aluminium frames. The piece is illuminated with fluorescent lights that are either attached to the frames or lie on the floor.

Recognisable as the double-glazing units used in modern office blocks, the glass panels embody the sterile anonymity of corporate architecture – which I associate with stiflingly overheated environments. Taken apart and assembled with ad hoc disregard for function, though, they look more like the cool-frames used by gardeners to protect vulnerable plants. 'A garden', remarks Cabrita Reis, 'is a geometry for nature.'

Like the piece in Le Crestet, the work mirrors its surroundings; in this case the view through the window, of the buildings overlooking the courtyard, is superimposed on to the glass. The outside is brought in, as it were, and the sculpture becomes a repository not for plants, but for an image of the past; the temporary structure is impregnated with references to history and to traditional building styles and techniques. Trailing across the floor, an electric cable disappears behind a screen built to conceal the old wood panelling cladding the walls, a reminder that the interior is also layered with history; the gallery's present incarnation as a white cube hides older realities; the building was once the town house, for instance, of Admiral Lord Nelson.

'In the past, I've made installations', says Cabrita Reis, 'now I'm more focused in sculpture *per se*.

There's a change in how I see things. Although everything carries information of many kinds – personal, political, social (there's no Hegelian sense of alienation, isolation or separation in my work) – I want sculptures that are not dependent on where they are shown, autonomous works of art rather than arrangements in space. I'm reluctant about shows in so called places, because they are already loaded; working in them is a trap. A white cube gallery is much better than an eighteenth century palazzo. The ability to attract and to enlarge our perceptions of the world, to extend our knowledge, must come from the work as a unique thing.'

Nearby hangs 'Building # 07'. Vigorous pencil lines enliven a block of loosely-ruled horizontals; from a distance, it could be an Agnes Martin abstraction except that, painted across the top, a wedge of brown acrylic suggests a roof and encourages one to see the drawing as a building in perspective. Stand back, and the abstract reading reaffirms itself, though.

This is one of a series of large, wonderfully ambiguous drawings which I saw when I visited Cabrita Reis in his Lisbon studio. Horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines create structures that operate both as gestural abstractions and as drawings of buildings, but are always done in the studio. 'I never work on site', he explains. 'I love drawing; it is so elemental. It's a meditation on the experience of reality through the memory of it, a power struggle to present a pure form of the existence of things.' While depicting generic buildings devoid of detail, the drawings also revel in the idiosyncrasies of the human touch. It's a game, of course, to see how little you need to modify the grid, so loved by Minimalists, in order to open the floodgates of association and allow the viewer to read the marks as an image. Compound # 3 and Compound # 4 are like extensions of these marvellous drawings into three dimensions; for Cabrita Reis, the relationship between two and three dimensions and between painting and sculpture is the subject of an ongoing debate and is yet another example of the duality within the work. Having studied painting, he describes himself as 'a painter who does sculpture... Picasso claimed that the best sculptures are made by painters'.

The tussle continues in a series of large paintings hung together as an installation. 'They are individual works that together establish a resonance', says Cabrita Reis. 'The identity of each is enhanced by connection with the group; just as the concept of the individual makes sense only in reference to the social and cultural context, artworks must refer to larger social and cultural networks in order to have broader meaning. With these paintings, I would like to make a chapel, an uplifting space in which you listen to yourself.' Initially he envisaged seven paintings titled *The Days*, but the panels are so large that the gallery could only accommodate five.

In his studio I saw a prototype, a standard aluminium-framed window painted on the reverse with a uniform film of deep crimson. Its highly reflective surface reminded me of Gerhard Richter's *Mirror Paintings*, but Cabrita Reis had Rothko's

more emotive canvases in mind. Comparing the deep crimson used in the prototype with a darker blood-red sample, he complained that the first was 'just a colour', while the second 'registered as an intention'.

Dissatisfaction led him to abandon the original plan in favour of a more interesting solution. Bought off the shelf, lengths of cotton fabric respectively coloured blue, oxblood, black, green and brown, are stretched over aluminium frames, then encased within double-glazing units. The results are both very handsome and extremely paradoxical. Having the authority and cool anonymity of corporate architecture, the large panels encourage you to keep your distance; dyed in colours that are especially subtle when seen through glass, the cloth, on the other hand, invites greater intimacy. But like a bullet-proof shield protecting an old master, the laminated glass prevents close inspection; acting as a mirror to the other panels and anyone in the room, the highly reflective surface creates so much interference that focusing on a single work is virtually impossible. Inevitably you become part of the installation, a figurative element in an abstract field. 'When I stand in front of the paintings, I create a self-portrait', says Cabrita Reis. 'And if I stand with my back to them, even though I can't see myself, I am still represented.' Is representation inescapable, then?

A further paradox is also in operation. Unlike Cabrita Reis's other work, the paintings seem completely bound up in the present moment – it dictates their very appearance, after all. The ability to mirror their surroundings transforms the blank panels into visually complex experiences and, conceptually, the relationship between the paintings, and their frames, is witty and provocative; philosophically, though, they remain void – a tautology. Indifferent to anything beyond their immediate circumstances, they are completely self-reflexive – impervious to information about other times or places. 'The concept of total emptiness (where pure intelligence can exist with no external references) is desirable', says Cabrita Reis, 'but the question is how far these things are from zero, from the purity of pure intelligence'.

The remark could have been made by a Minimalist such as Donald Judd and, in the recent work, consciously or otherwise Cabrita Reis has moved a step closer to abstraction – to 'the purity of pure intelligence', which may be an inspiring dream but, like all utopian visions, is an impossible and probably undesirable goal, because its attainment would mean sterile perfection. To achieve the refinement and economy of means displayed in the present work, for instance, the artist had

no choice but to eliminate some of the wealth of associations that enriches earlier pieces.

The duality embodied in the self-portrait comes into play once more. From recent work one might assume Cabrita Reis to be an idealist seeking perfection; earlier work, on the other hand, reveals him to be a pragmatist embracing contingency – with ironic good humour. There's something innately ridiculous, for instance, about elevating discarded items and industrial materials into artworks that exemplify the restraint and good manners of Minimalism.

The success of all the work relies on the same principles, though. Each piece appears so simple that it risks being banal, yet each detail is so precise and each juxtaposition so considered that it makes one acutely conscious of the decision-making process; seeing the way one element relates to another is like following a score of the artist's thought processes. 'I would say it's all a matter of putting one thing together with another thing in an accurate manner where intelligence is embodied in the very act itself', the artist told Adrian Searle. 'Beginning with the simplest smallest gesture, beginning with the things that are at hand, but carrying a vision.'<sup>(2)</sup>

Camden Arts Centre 2004

Take, for instance, the paintings and sculptures shown at the Camden Arts Centre in 2004. A precursor to the paintings at Haunch of Venison, Amsterdam Window is similarly paradoxical. Attached to the wall like a painting but made of glass like a window, it fulfills neither function. A film of pink paint covers two thirds of the glass like a blind which prevents you looking through and, blocking vision, turns the surface into a barrier. Frustration directs your attention to the object – to the strips of black rubber edging the glass, which indicate that it comes from a double-glazing unit. Framing the top and part of one side, a section of battered wooden architrave refers to the precursors of plastic and metal frames – windows made by carpenters.

The piece is a pun, of course. Paintings have traditionally been referred to as windows since they invite you to look through them to the scene portrayed. If Amsterdam Window were a painting, though, it would be a minimalist abstraction; the perfectly balanced composition of horizontals and verticals declares affinity with Mondrian and his descendents. It is by no means an ideal object, though; the main element is a mass-produced item retrieved from salvage

and geometric purity is further tainted by the addition of scruffy remnants of reality. 'New materials have a sense of the future, old materials have a sense of the past', says Cabrita Reis. 'I see myself as a builder, putting together things that existed in a different life with standardised industrial materials which I interfere with, for instance, by adding colour to change their meaning, form and function.'

Referring to the subjects and formats of painting, Portrait # 5 and Landscape # 4 give themselves airs and graces. Double-glazing panels are painted on the reverse with a film of colour; no traces of brush or roller are visible, but drips along the bottom spoil the perfection of the surfaces, and the clumsy addition of aluminium battens along the top and bottom or sides, adds a further note of tackiness. Painted dark green, Portrait # 5 has the beauty and austerity of a Donald Judd and could almost pass for a minimalist object. The make-do-and-mend origins of Landscape # 4 are more readily apparent, though. There's no hiding the fact that this is an assemblage of discarded building materials thinly disguised by a glossy veneer of colour.

'I'm not interested in architecture so much as in methods of construction', says Cabrita Reis, 'in building as a way of defining territory, a metaphor for our perception of the world around us. I use building materials because I'm comfortable with them. I love the primordial impact that a brick, a plank or a piece of marble has and I cherish the idea that the materials have already been used, that I'm at the end of the line, as in a relay race, depriving them of the noise of their original context and placing them on the threshold of abstraction.' The evident pleasure which he takes in his materials is heightened by juxtapositions that emphasise the contrast between qualities such as rough and smooth, transparent and opaque, structural and decorative, old and new, glossy and matt, industrial and hand-made, personal and impersonal etc.

In Back Door, for instance, a large double-glazing panel rests on a rusting RSJ welded at right angles to a longer steel beam. It could be a segment of a larger structure, but the addition of various ad hoc elements indicates that, rather than being compiled from the order book, it has been cobbled together from diverse sources. A length of two by four holds the glass panel in place while, attached to a vertical batten is a battered old door that has lost its handle and much of its peeling paintwork. The door came from his mother's house and, swinging freely on its hinges, acts metaphorically, as a doorway to memory; but it also

exemplifies the difference between items drenched in personal or collective history and the anonymity of modern building materials. At issue is what you lose when you replace old buildings with new ones – a process that is only now gathering momentum in Portugal, so that the mistakes made in this country for instance can still be avoided.

Meeting Point was placed in the central hallway at Camden, an awkward space with seven doors that, perhaps, is reminiscent of the flat where Cabrita Reis grew up 'in an old and rather sad residential part of town. The apartment was a corridor, with rooms to each side, like a system of cells clustered around a main vein'.<sup>(3)</sup> The linear orientation of the work means that one's experience of it unfolds little by little, as you progress round it. The journey is punctuated by a dramatic stopping point – a window that acts like a moment of transition from one episode to the next. Supported on RSJs, a double-glazing panel is set at window height, like an opening onto an adjoining room; covering two thirds of the glass, though, a film of pale yellow paint prevents you from seeing through to the other side, where an old work table perches on a steel beam.

Appropriated from the gallery workshop, the table shows signs of wear and tear; the surface is scratched and gouged except in the section near the window, which has been sanded smooth to erase all traces of its history. Below the top is a shelf for tools and materials; a steel girder has been thrust through the space between the shelf and table top, lifting the table off the floor to balance precariously on the metal shaft. The violence of the penetration is ameliorated by the formal restraint of the work, but it still feels like a rape, which implicates the window – turning it into a metaphor for voyeurism. Inevitably, one wonders whether the young Pedro saw things not meant for his eyes.

This is the nearest that Cabrita Reis gets to introducing a narrative element to the work. 'Things are loaded with meaning from a different life', he says, 'which you bring to the work... everything comes from something, things are not floating in the air of pure intelligence. With objects found in the garbage, like the corner of a window, a door knob or a fragment of stairs, something specific attracts you – you grab little moments; but to erase their original beauty and transform them with a new beauty you have to inject a quality of oblivion into these fragments. That's the tyranny of the artist; you deprive things of those little moments of sadness and sorrow so as to establish a beautiful world of truth. The encounter is

like an enquiry, a dialogue between, say, abstraction and figuration. It's an interrogation of the degree to which things have a single identity.'

Made from a series of 'I' beams, Stillness resembles the partially-completed skeleton of some misguided utopian scheme; it appears abandoned, left to rust, except that someone has left the lights on. Attached at ceiling height to the main beam and a subsidiary, fluorescent tubes cast a harsh white light. 'As an object, (the fluorescent tube) already has a quality of melancholy embedded in it', says Cabrita Reis. 'It belongs to lost alleys, suburban places, factories where people are exploited, a history of sadness and exploitation.'(4)

Fundamentally forlorn, this abject structure seems trapped in suspended animation while awaiting a decision on its fate. It brings to mind a new form of urban blight – those patches of ragged waste land where buildings have been ripped down to make way for new developments that never materialise. Every element is exposed to view; dangling from the lights, the electric cable trails across the floor and disappears behind white panelling – a reminder that, like Haunch of Venison, the gallery is clad in an envelope that, hiding irregularities, transforms the old building into a white cube. By comparison, the steel girders are naked – they are like the bones rather than the flesh of a building; with these structural elements stripped bare, one notices the surprising diversity in their alignment. The long horizontal bar is in two sections; one girder is placed in the 'I' position, the other in the 'H' position, the disparate elements being united by the neon tubes. Welded at right angles are several subsidiary beams; if this were a building, they would be the room dividers. Details like these are important only because they reveal the degree of attention lavished on a structure that looks as if it had been slung together thoughtlessly and then abandoned.

Pearl 2003

More often, though, the earlier work refers to ad hoc assemblages of found materials cobbled together by individuals in a desperate attempt to provide shelter or create a sense of place; such personal endeavours are at the other end of the spectrum from the construction methods used on modern building sites. The relationship of Pearl, an artist's run space, to smart West End galleries could be likened to that of a shanty town and a downtown skyscraper; the self-help ethos of the alternative gallery is diametrically opposed to the commercial orientation of a dealer.

In *Retriever*, the exhibition at Pearl, Cabrita Reis showed two sculptures that declared his sympathy for the shoe-string intensity of the enterprise. *Vallance Road* is a battered wooden bar top bought from a salvage merchant. Cabrita Reis sanded one end, added a band of green paint and hung it up so that the space cut out for the sink was transformed into a window opening onto the wall. Literally and metaphorically, the work frames its environment. This is the nearest the artist has come to using an item that has scarcely been altered. 'Normally, I prefer not to use objects in an immediate recognizable way.', he explains. 'I run away from Duchamp's concept of the readymade as I run from hell and I'm not a Surrealist or into symbolism or esoterism. I have a house full of beautiful things, but they have to be admired for themselves. You can't create a marriage with them in the work; if you introduce them to something else, you always lose. They are an open door to literary infections, they bring an illustrational discourse.'

*When I dance I dance, when I sleep I sleep* (Montaigne by Murphy) also features a found object or, rather, an assemblage – a sheet of white formica framed with strips of MDF from which hangs a projection screen. Cabrita Reis added a fluorescent tube to the top and painted the formica with an orange rectangle; having cut an uneven strip from the bottom of the board, he attached it to the top to double the length of this strange object. The additions create the impression of a carefully considered composition in which contrasts are drawn between verticals and horizontals, solids and voids, moving and static parts, rigid and flexible elements and so on. Laying claim to the status of a work of art in both the minimalist and dadaist traditions, the piece is both humorous and ironic.

With so many decisions (both practical and arbitrary) contributing to its appearance, the assemblage is like an emblem for the make-do-and-mend ethos. Like much of Cabrita Reis's earlier work, it is inspired by the creative ingenuity of people who depend on their ability to fend for themselves, whether it be running an educational programme on a shoestring budget or opening a fringe gallery – enterprises whose peripheral status increases rather than diminishes their importance. Like the British artist Richard Wentworth, he has accumulated thousands of photographs of instances of ad hoc alterations and repairs, such as a doorway bricked up with breeze blocks or a branch holding open a window, which he refers to as 'a catalogue of fake Cabritas from real life'. He uses them like a sketchbook, not as ideas to borrow but rather as things to avoid, since his interest is not in specific examples of Heath Robinson-style inventiveness so much as in the attitude which prompts people to improvise. 'My work', he says, 'is

a celebration of the creative spirit in everyone, of people's ability to invent and create, a way of teaching people to be open to "mistakes".'

Frieze Art Fair 2005

The works at Haunch of Venison, Camden Arts Centre and Pearl all established a dialogue with their surroundings, but they also function as autonomous objects independent of their context. Asked why architecture plays such an important role in his work, Cabrita Reis replied: 'because nature has disappeared as a reference. We have lost it within ourselves to such a point that we have come to the moment where the exercise of architecture is the only form that makes the world comprehensible. After all, architecture is more about defining territories than actually building houses.'(5)

Installed in Regent's Park during the Frieze Art Fair, *You Shouldn't Walk Over Ploughed Fields* is an outstanding example of a work that, while enriched by its context, doesn't rely on it for meaning – despite the fact that the sculpture referred both to its open-air location and to the broader urban context. Lengths of square-section aluminium tubing were raised above the grass on bricks and scrap wood; attached to the tubes were white neon strip lights. The tubes resembled furrows – as if the park's pristine lawn had been ploughed up – but, laid out in two rectangular blocks, they also reminded one of a ceiling torn down or awaiting installation. The shifts which this association provoked in the alignment of one's thoughts encouraged one to compare two primary needs – for a roof over your head and ground beneath your feet. By defining a territory roughly the size of a dwelling in terms that conjure associations with the land, Cabrita Reis invites one to ponder the relative importance of one's country and domicile, the place to which you belong, and the one that gives you shelter, which may not be the same.

Lisbon

PCR Studio 2005

Hanging on the wall of his Lisbon studio, *Antwerp Stairs*, made in 1987, is quintessential Cabrita Reis. Lengths of black aluminium tubing are shaped like the treads of a staircase seen in profile. Leading your eye up the stairs and down again, it takes you on a journey – from nowhere to nowhere. With its understated

humour, it is like an ironic emblem of impotence. Art, it seems to say, can neither transport you very far nor reveal very much – apart from the fact that we are stuck in limbo, moving from doubt to uncertainty and back again.

That should not prevent you from enjoying the experience, however; despite the fact that it frustrates at every turn, the work is endlessly seductive. Windows, doors and stairs fail to differentiate inside from outside and here from there, or to act as intermediaries leading us – mentally or physically – from one place to another. Instead of offering escape to an imaginative realm, Cabrita Reis forces your attention onto the here and now, which does not mean that he makes concrete assertions. On the contrary, the duality, ambiguity and general slipperiness of his work makes its meaning extremely elusive. Rather than providing you with a view of the world for reassurance and contemplation, he turns paintings into mirrors in which you see only your own reflection and that of your surroundings. Frustrating your expectations and redirecting your queries back to their source, he invites you to either reconsider your (unrealistic) desire for certainty, or to search for your own answers. The sculptures meanwhile encourage you to embrace the ambiguities, complexities, and relativity of contemporary life by offering an example in the form of contradictions and paradoxes. Continually refusing to choose between opposites Cabrita Reis embraces both painting and sculpture, figurative and abstract, order and disorder, inside and outside, memory and amnesia, the contemporary and the classical.

This inclusiveness is a far cry, though, from the purity of 'pure intelligence', which he also craves. As we have seen, the elegance and restraint of the work invites comparison with Minimalists who, by taking refuge in pure geometry, thought to conjure the timeless realms of perfection and the ideal. In Cabrita Reis's sculptures, perfection is adulterated by scruffy reminders of everyday life; materials blemished with traces of their own history amply demonstrate time. Once the doors of perception have been opened, associations flood in to enrich the work, but they also introduce an awareness of the imperfections of daily reality – the earlier work, in particular, is infected with a sense of loss, a falling from grace.

Stillness is like a ruin which anticipates the inevitable failure of utopian projects; pieces such as *When I dance...* on the other hand celebrate people's ability to adapt and survive in difficult circumstances. Doubting the efficacy of grand

schemes, Cabrita Reis seems to put his faith in individual creativity. 'The work', he says, 'is a celebration of pragmatism, because that is the closest thing to real life – walking, loving, eating, drinking. That's where our power comes from – self-awareness.'

Does his scepticism about collective action arise from previous experiences of political activism? As a student, he took time out to support the revolution that toppled Salazar in 1974. Ridding one's country of a dictator is a glorious achievement, but establishing a democracy is quite another matter; politics is a game of compromise that is bound to seem sordid to the architects of a better tomorrow.

Beneath the irony, humour and affirmation that make the work so intensely pleasing, one senses a reservoir of melancholy and regret, which come from the realisation that Utopia is not just around the corner; in fact it is not even on the agenda. 'Melancholy is the essence of the work', confirms Cabrita Reis. 'It's an interior silence, a measure of the individual loneliness that you feel when confronting your fate in an uncertain world.' Rather than diminishing the impact of the work, though, it gives it greater maturity and deeper resonance.

Cabrita Reis hasn't given up on youthful idealism altogether, though. The duality between the idealist seeking perfection and the pragmatist embracing compromise continues to enliven the work with a rich seam of contradiction. Whereas in life, qualities such as ambivalence and duality may be undesirable, in art they can be refined to become a form of celebration. The artist who portrays himself as a Janus figure may relish ambiguity but, when all is said and done, Pedro Cabrita Reis has put his faith in individual creativity – in the power of one man to make a contribution not through politics but through art. 'Art', he says, 'is the most important form of human knowledge; it tells us who we are. It is the only possible means of redemption for humankind. We're lost, alone; that's why we make these things. They are already a little victory.'

(1) Unless otherwise stated, all comments are from conversations

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KENT, Sarah

- *Border crossings*.

A.A.V.V. – **Pedro Cabrita Reis: London**. London: Haunch of Venison, 2005.  
(english).