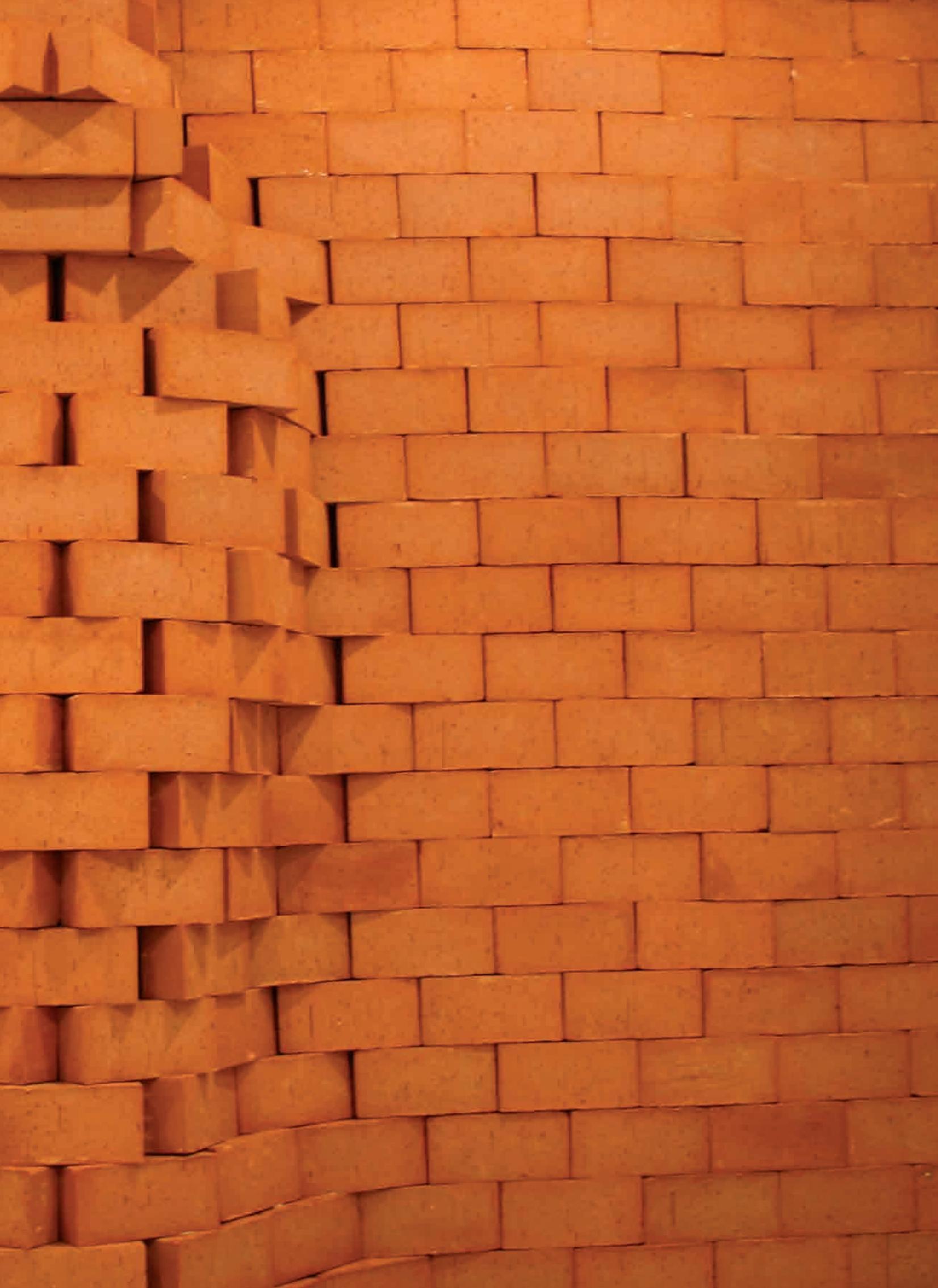


Pedro

breaking the boundaries of the body

Pires





Overstepping limits is something that he likes to do. It is not that he rejects rules, but he is interested in the symbolic and emotional charge conveyed by that imaginary line. With his sculptures he takes us on a journey through this breaking of horizons.

www.pedropires.pt

In what way does the body constitute a boundary? What force is borne by the line that separates two countries? Could it be that we all want to cross borders? These are some of the questions that might occur to the spectator when looking at Pedro Pires' work. He explores this question through his pieces. During the first year of the sculpture course at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Universidade de Lisboa, he became interested in the human figure. Since then he has been fascinated by the body as a volume, a container of the human being, "the physical boundary of which each of us is made". His decision to head for Athens as an Erasmus student coincided with his interest in classical Greek sculpture. It was there that he began to introduce a new element into his art which, although always present, had played a secondary role on this route that bears little resemblance to a Greek tragedy. "The sculpture department of the Faculty of Arts in Athens was full of copies of classical sculptures and the corresponding moulds. After a while I became much more interested in the moulds of these sculptures than in the multiples that they produce", Pires reveals. He was at a stage when he wanted to continue producing figurative work but with a stronger conceptual and symbolic charge and he has always found moulds to be sculpturally interesting, "I could even say beautiful". Now the sculptor sees that part of this interest stems from the fact that the mould is an object with a function, which serves a purpose. One day he decided to make his art even more personal and be-

gan to use his own body in the moulds that he constructs. The aim was never to make himself identifiable in his works. Rather, he was concerned that they should be "figurative and anthropomorphic, leaving space for spectators to be able to project themselves onto them".

In the play of creation

Pedro Pires is an artist with eclectic influences. He is often inspired by the new materials or design objects depicted within the pages of the magazine Wallpaper. But he does not limit himself to this example: "I am often inspired by visiting a building materials shop, or by a book, such as the O Bairro series by Gonçalo M. Tavares. I never begin an idea completely from scratch. Each new work proceeds from the previous one and aims to add something new, to tackle a new idea or the same idea in a different way". Some conversations and day-to-day situations also become good starting points for a project. It should be noted that

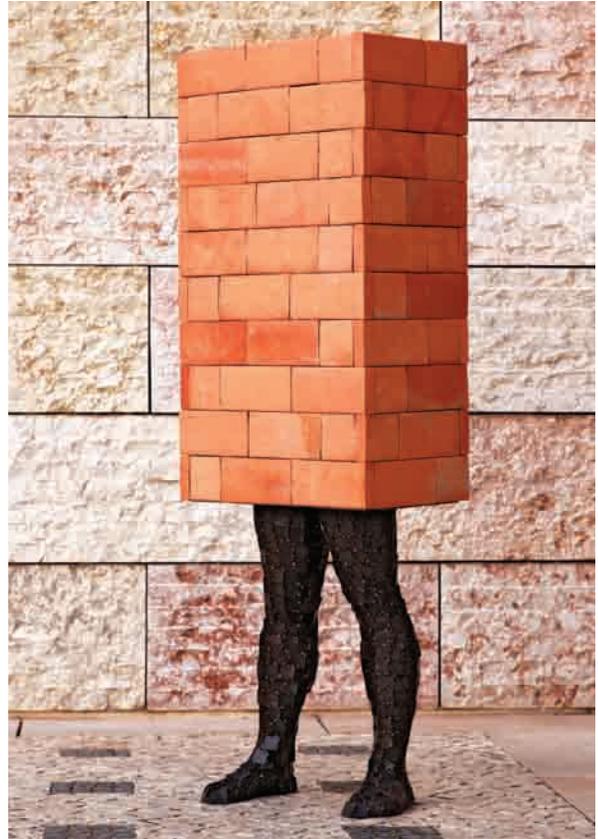
PREVIOUS *This House is not For Living*, 2008 – brick, iron, glue and wood, 350 x 225 x 40 cm

OPPOSITE TOP LEFT *Cabin*, 2011 – iron and brick, 86 x 102 x 75 cm

OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT *Mobil Shelter*, 2011 – iron and brick, 185 x 59 x 40 cm

OPPOSITE BELOW RIGHT *Study for the Extension of a house2*, 2010 – iron and brick, 162 x 40 x 45 cm

OPPOSITE BELOW LEFT *Unreachable*, 2011 – iron and brick, 244 x 76 x 99 cm





ABOVE LEFT *Eat #2*, 2008 – inox bowls, 198 x 75 x 45 cm

ABOVE RIGHT *Industrialized#1*, 2008 – iron, 202 x 75 x 50 cm

LEFT *New Skin*, 2009 – basket balls and iron, 220 x 48 x 78 cm

OPPOSITE *Wall Man*, 2008 – iron, 5 sculptures with 198 x 75 x 45 cm

his greatest influence in the artistic world is Tim Hawkinson, an American artist whose work he saw at close hand at an exhibition in Sydney. Hawkinson also works with the body, using sculpture, photography, painting and drawing.

Conceptualization is at the forefront of this creative play, to the detriment of the exploration of technique. "A large part of my work is obviously technique, but I have always focussed more on creating works that are the result of conceptualization. I think that part of my interest is this: presenting a figurative work that stems from conceptualization and a rational process".

Metal, brick, gunpowder, stone, lead bullets, bricks. In most cases, the material is chosen according to the concept of the piece. This is because "materials have different meanings, contexts, limitations, which is why the choice depends on which material best responds to the idea of the work, or which can help to construct a discourse or context". One of the initial ideas for his work involved covering the body with a material, hiding the identity of the person underneath. "And at the same time I tried to reveal something of the identity or personality of the person who was covered through the material and the way in which it was used". Speaking of creation, we can reveal that his studio is chaotic and increasingly full. Stuffed with materials, machines and life-size plaster moulds that he cannot resist keeping. He moves between London and Lisbon but spends most of his time in Eng-

land. "In the morning I work at home on the computer or I go out to see exhibitions and I spend the evening in my studio in Bermondsey developing work. When I go to Lisbon it's normally to produce a work and I only stay there for as long as is necessary, working in my studio in Sintra". This is a boundary that he often crosses frequently.

Men on the street

Drawing, sculpture, photography - Pires makes use of all of these media. In this respect also his creation has ceased to have limits. "It wasn't until 2010 that I managed to produce a photographic work that I thought was good enough to be shown. Photography fits neatly into my work as it is a rational and objective means of capturing the human body. During the Master's course in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, he took this step. His interest in drawing is rooted in the relationship between paper and different forms of matter and the way that the former reacts to the latter. As a record of an action, a mark. Essentially, he likes to experiment and break down such barriers: "The first drawings that I presented were done in burnt gunpowder, the main idea being to use a material with a strong symbolic charge, which acted directly on the paper".

Public pieces are a fundamental part of the artistic path that he has followed. "A work in the public space involves many prob-





lems that do not exist in a gallery or museum, such as safety, resistance, weather, and the impact on the social context of the local public". And all of this creates a great challenge which he cannot resist.

The year 2012 began with work for the visual artist. In May, he exhibited an open-air sculpture in Estoril, Portugal, consisting of a house measuring 2 x 2 x 2.5 metres made of double-glazed walls containing sand. "In technical terms, it was a huge challenge", he confesses. It is outside of the galleries that we can catch a glimpse of his Homem Muralha, in the Parque das Nações in Lisbon, and Homens que Navegam on the A17 motorway near Quiaios, Figueira da Foz.

He believes that rationality is the characteristic that best defines his work. His greatest ambition is to succeed in building an international career. In the past few months he has developed a

project for an exhibition at Ort in Birmingham which also opened in May. The work involves photography and electrical devices. "I took a series of photographs that deal with ideas such as equilibrium, the relationship with the planet, the Greek canon of proportions or measurements. They are displayed alongside simple devices such as a spirit level that repeatedly moves with the help of a motor". In the light of all this, what boundaries are left for him to break in his career? "To create a urban sculpture outside Portugal." ■

PREVIOUS *House 226*, 2008 – resin, tile from "viúva lamego", glue and poliurethane, 198 x 75 x 30 cm

BOTTOM LEFT *Mapping Series (Wall)*, 2010 – c-type print, 75 x 75 cm (Edition of 3+2 artist prints)

BOTTOM RIGHT *Mapping Series (Brick)*, 2010 – c-type print, 75 x 75 cm (Edition of 3+2 artist prints)

