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In this thoughtful and erudite essay, popular art is the starting point for unfolding Portuguese cultural history and identity. The uniqueness of the country caught between its past grandeur and its present economic crisis is rendered by means of intertwined stories, things and museologies. Such an insightful analysis of the imaginaries of Portuguese identity could only be carried out by someone located both inside and outside Portugal. It is not unsurprising that Anthony Shelton considers this book as 'a sort of album' in which texts dialogue with visual images; he invites us to reflect on the past-present connections weaving cultural history and politics, popular art and religion, museums/ exhibitions and puppet theatre into a tapestry full of intuitions. Yet, *Heaven, Hell and Somewhere In Between* can also be envisaged as a personal album – like all albums – in which experiences, affinities and above all fortuitous meetings determined both the order of the chapters and the line of the argument running throughout the book. Thus, the album starts with 'the kingdom of the marvellous', in fact the shop of David Silva Gomes, a cabinetmaker, located in a street named Rua do Anjo - Angel Street (Braga), whose shop 'appeared like an apparition' to Shelton the first time he entered in. David Gomes's shop with diverse objects pertaining to distinct historical periods somehow encapsulated the different layers of Portuguese stories, it was a kind of 'museum of Lusitania', in Shelton's words, a place 'where things were taken apart, reassembled, classified and reclassified and new things were invented'.

This essay can also be read as an argued defense of popular art. By extending the category of popular art to contemporary cultural expressions, such as murals and graffiti, Shelton aims to demonstrate both the vitality of this form of art and its potential of disruption, to the extent that it can be considered as 'an outsider art'. Shelton's contention that popular art 'does not blandly reflect the forces that produce it but mediates them through its own specific visual strategies and technologies', challenges the current assumptions about the presumed relationships between popular art and the community or the social context. Individual artists mediate and create new universes, new mental spaces located somewhere between Heaven and Hell. From this perspective, popular art is 'an art of nostalgia' idealizing a world that does not longer exist and reproducing subjects and themes pertaining to religious and literary traditions.

That popular art in Portugal was 'discovered' first by ethnographers then by modernist artists shaped undoubtedly the ways in which it was perceived and its contexts of

reception and display. The implicit and /or explicit parallels between popular art and the so-called 'primitive art' that pervaded these approaches tended to circumscribe the sphere of popular art to sculpture, mainly ceramic sculptures. Popular art was thus equated with the lament for a vanishing rural past as illustrated (throughout the chapter 8 ) by the several attempts to create a museum dedicated to Lusitania.

In 1995 the Museu Nacional de Etnologia (Lisboa) curated an exhibit 'Onde mora o Franklin? Um escultor do acaso' entirely devoted to the work of Franklin Vilas Boas (1919-1969). It was the first time that a sculptor was detached from the category popular art – as a presumed homogeneous whole – and exhibited as an individual artist. The next exhibit dedicated to a popular artist was held in 2007 at the Museu de Olaria (Barcelos) and it was a retrospective of Rosa Ramalho's work. The time-span between these two exhibits highlights the problematic status assigned to popular art within Portuguese museology as illustrated by the current situation of the Museu de Arte popular in Lisboa (right now devoted to contemporary art exhibits). As the product of a historical process of categorization of objects related to rural European societies, the notion of popular art has been equated with other notions such as folk art and traditional arts. Gradually the notion of popular art extended both to other geographical regions and to different social groups with their diverse cultural manifestations, an inclusion that contributed to the blurring of the boundaries between popular art and urban art, outsider art and popular culture. Thus, the distinction between functional objects and artistic ones as well as the distinction between artisans and artists became problematic. Although popular art has been and somehow continues to be marginalized in museums, some of its manifestations have been recently promoted to the status of intangible cultural heritage.

The recent inscription of black ceramic from Bisalhães in the Portuguese National Inventory is deemed to be a step for its further inscription in the UNESCO's List of Intangible Culture Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The supposedly endangered status of the black ceramic resides on the imminent physical disappearance of its five producers and their technological skills associated with an archaic practice. Faithful to the 2003 UNESCO's Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage, black ceramic is presented both as a social practice involving a community producing utilitarian objects and as a singular practice of a sculptor fabricating decorative pieces. Black ceramic from Bisalhães illuminates the tensions somehow inherent to popular art, struck between the

recognition of the individual creator and the role of the community that supposedly generated him or her. It also highlights the ambiguities and the contradictions underlying the appropriations of popular art either by museums or by national and international organisms dealing with heritage.

In 1930, Georges-Henri Rivière, sub-director of the Musée de l'Homme, published an article provocatively entitled "Religion et 'Folies-Bergère' " at *Documents*, the surrealist art magazine edited by Georges Bataille. Rivière suggested to consider music hall and its ritual ceremonies as equivalent to a religious manifestation, thus worth of being studied by ethnologists. For the future founder of the Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires (Paris), the borders between the religious and the profane were porous like the boundaries between high culture and popular culture. As mediators between official religion and popular religion, the saints and devils as well as the supernatural and marvelous creatures of Rosa Ramalho's sculptures beautifully analyzed in *Heaven, Hell and Somewhere in Between* act for the present and for the mortals.

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