

# Maria Oliveira

Bone Foam



# **Maria Oliveira**

## **Bone Foam**

Project Groundswell is organised by Photo Museum Ireland,  
Fotohof, Cortona On The Move, Imago Lisboa

# Bone Foam

Álvaro Domingues

## ( BIOGRAPHY )

**Maria Oliveira** (1982) lives and works in Porto, Portugal. She has exhibited regularly since 2011 in Portugal and abroad, and her work is in numerous public and private collections. In 2024, she was selected for Portuguese Emerging Art 2024 and the Feature Shoot Emerging Photography Award 2024, participating in a group exhibition at Clamp Gallery, New York. Her project **Bone Foam** was also exhibited at Galerie Huit, Arles.

Between 2016 and 2017, she was an artist-in-residence at Ci.clo – Photography Platform, where she developed **Saving fire for darker days**, later exhibited at the Portuguese Center of Photography (Portugal), Fotofestival (Poland) and the School of Visual Arts (New York).

In 2019, she received the FNAC New Talents Award and published her first book, **Saving fire for darker days**.

mariaoliveira.pt | @\_\_maria.oliveira\_\_

**Álvaro Domingues** is a geographer, holds a PhD in Human Geography, and is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto, where he teaches in the Integrated Masters and Doctoral programs. He is also a researcher at CEAU-FAUP, the Centre for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism.

## ( EN )

It could be morning mist hiding the secrets of the forest, or golden light breaking through the treetops and falling through the tangle of branches to land in the clearing as if it were a stage set, or else the open mouth of the earth leading to an abyss hidden in the depths; another time it was a circle of fire or flames transparent as lights; another time, the transfiguration of a gorse branch wrapped in a fine spider web; the fleeing wing of a river nymph, the horns of a sacred ox breaking through the ground at the edge of the known world where everything merges, light and darkness; before the world, the priestess of the moon goddess, guardian of the valleys, lady of fertility and primordial waters, of death, of the bowels of the underworld; on the day of creation, the luminous egg of origins, germination, the eyes of stones.

Everywhere, the multiplied female: holding the hem of her tunic from which the water drips, fertilising the ground; her face hidden, her eyes closed, her body, her head buried in the tangle of fruits, the urgency of the vital forces that expand from the fruits or roots, her hand holding and offering these essences, scattering the seeds that the light has ignited; the acts consummated, the stone in place of her head as a mineral memory of endless work. In the forest, the large stone, the altar of offerings to mother earth, the fruits, the slaughtered animals, the birds, the feathers that clung to the branches, the veil of the deities of the springs. At the end of another day, darkness descends on the hills until once again the goddess is transfigured, touched by light, and everything returns to being fertile, life, death, brilliance, flame, or shadow ... until everything begins again.

This is the world that inhabits Maria Oliveira's photographs. Everything is presented to us as enchantments, as figurations of a primordial world that inhabits us, but which we persist in not seeing, rushing as we do through the confusion of days that grind the past and future into the constant urgency of events, noise, fleeting memories and thoughts about trivial, practical things where there is no place for the depth of the firmament, the spirits of the springs, the silent germination of seeds, the gods and myths that dwell in everything we do not understand, in what we fear, in hauntings, in the mystery of life and death. Maria once told me a story about a woman, an aunt who lived with her, who was like a second mother and told her certain premonitions about the death of neighbors or friends. As a child, Maria was enchanted by these stories, by the images and accounts of these wonders and predictions, which were not frightening at all – they were always beautiful images taken from the magical atmosphere of a **Tarkovsky film**.

( PT )

Continuing in Maria's own words: a week before she died, (my aunt) told us that a miracle had happened to her ... something that was a little hard to believe ... but she was very happy about it. It had to do with water ... and there were other episodes related to water that happened to her during those days (there is a song by Rodrigo Amarante that says 'dying is a river flowing into the sea'). On the day of the wake, I was with my mother in the chapel when a girl, about 8 years old, whom no one knew, entered. She went straight to the coffin and said a number of things to me. She asked me not to leave my aunt alone, that she was very beautiful. And not to worry because she was fine, just a little cold. That soon she would be nothing but bones and foam.

Then she said she had to leave. I gave her a hug and she told me her name was Maria.

Just like that. Bone and foam are materials that represent the two sides of life and death that are hidden to us: bones because they are part of bodies and lives that stubbornly persist; foam because it is almost immaterial, almost nothing. Mary, one or the other, is the Eternal Feminine that Carl Jung speaks of, the archetype of the Great Mother as a primordial force that reveals itself in fertile places, in the depths of the forest, in light and darkness, in sown fields, in springs. The Great Mother is the magical authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any useful instinct or impulse; everything that is benign, everything that nurtures and sustains, that promotes growth and fertility. The places of magical transformation and rebirth, but also the underworld and its inhabitants, (...) where the archetype of the mother is associated with all that is secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, all that devours, seduces, and poisons, which is terrifying and inevitable as fate.<sup>(1)</sup>

Pode ser uma névoa matinal ocultando segredos do bosque, ou uma luz dourada que rompe da copa das árvores e se despenha entre o emaranhado dos ramos para poisar na clareira como se fora cenário, ou então, a boca aberta da terra para um abismo escondido nas profundezas; de outra vez era um círculo de fogo ou as chamas transparentes como luzes; de outra, a transfiguração do ramo do tojo envolvido na teia finíssima das aranhas; a asa em fuga da ninfa dos riachos, os cornos do boi sagrado rompendo do chão na fronteira do mundo conhecido onde tudo se confunde, a luz e as trevas; perante o mundo, a sacerdotisa da deusa da lua, guardiã dos vales, senhora da fertilidade e das águas primordiais, da morte, das entranhas do submundo; no dia da criação, o ovo luminoso das origens, a germinação, os olhos das pedras.

Por toda a parte, a fêmea multiplicada: segurando as abas da túnica de onde escorrem águas que fecunda o chão; a face oculta, os olhos fechados, o corpo, a cabeça metida no emaranhado dos frutos, da urgência das forças vitais que se expandem dos frutos ou das raízes, a mão que segura e oferece essas essências, que espalha os grãos que a luz acendeu; os actos consumados, a pedra no lugar da cabeça como memória mineral de um trabalho sem fim. No bosque, a grande pedra, o altar das oferendas à mãe-terra, os frutos, os animais degolados, as aves, as penas que se prenderam às ramagens, o véu das divindades das nascentes. No fim de mais um dia, a escuridão que desce sobre os montes até que de novo a deusa se transfigure tocada pela luz e tudo volte a ser fecundo, vida, morte, fulguração, chama ou sombra ... até que tudo recomece.

Este é um mundo que habita as fotografias de Maria Oliveira. Tudo se nos apresenta como encantamentos, como figurações de um mundo primordial que nos habita, mas que persistimos em não ver, velozes que vamos na confusão dos dias que trituram passado e futuro na urgência constante feita de acontecimentos, ruído, passagens fugazes pela superfície, pelas coisas práticas onde não têm lugar a profundidade do firmamento, os espíritos das nascentes, o germinar silencioso das sementes, os deuses e os mitos que moram em tudo o que não compreendemos, naquilo que tememos, nas assombrações, no mistério da vida e da morte. Maria contou-me, uma vez, uma história acerca de uma mulher, uma tia que com ela vivia, que era como uma segunda mãe e lhe contava certas premonições acerca da morte de vizinhos ou amigos. Ainda criança, Maria encantava-se com essas histórias, com as imagens e relatos desses prodígios e adivinhações onde não havia nada de as-

( 1 ) Carl Jung, 1954, 'Die psychologischen Aspekte des Mutter-Archetypus' in The Collected Works of Carl G. Jung, Part I: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, vol.9, Part 1. Herbert Read, M. Fordham, Gerhard Adler eds, Princeton University Press, 1961, p.90

sustador – eram sempre imagens bonitas tiradas do ambiente mágico de um filme de Tarkovsky.

Continuando pelas próprias palavras de Maria: uma semana antes de morrer (a tia) disse-nos que lhe tinha acontecido um milagre ... coisa que custava um bocadinho a acreditar... mas ela muito feliz por isso. Tinha a ver com água ... e houve outros episódios relacionados com água que lhe aconteceram nesses dias (há uma música do Rodrigo Amarante que diz “como se morrer fosse desaguar”). No dia do velório, estava com a minha mãe na capela e entrou uma menina, com cerca de 8 anos, que ninguém conhecia. Foi diretamente ao caixão e disse-me uma série de coisas. Pediu que não deixasse a minha tia sozinha, que ela era muito bonita. E para não me preocupar porque ela estava bem, só um pouco fria. Que, em breve, seria só osso e espuma.

Depois disse que tinha de ir embora. Dei-lhe um abraço e ela disse-me que se chamava Maria.

Assim, tal qual. Osso e espuma são matérias que guardam as duas faces de tais assuntos que nos estão vedados: os ossos porque foram parte de corpos e vidas que teimam em persistir; a espuma por ser quase imaterial, quase nada. Maria, uma ou outra, é o Eterno Feminino de que fala Carl Jung, o arquétipo da Grande Mãe enquanto força primordial que se revela nos lugares férteis, nas profundezas do bosque, na luz e na escuridão, nos campos semeados, nas nascentes. A Grande Mãe é a autoridade mágica da fêmea; a sabedoria e a exaltação espiritual que transcendem a razão; qualquer instinto ou impulso útil; tudo o que é benigno, tudo o que acalenta e sustenta, que promove o crescimento e a fertilidade. Os lugares da transformação mágica e do renascimento, mas também o submundo e os seus habitantes, ... onde o arquétipo da mãe se associa a tudo o que é secreto, oculto, escuro; o abismo, o mundo dos mortos, tudo o que devora, seduz e envenena, que é aterrorizante e inevitável como o destino. <sup>( 1 )</sup>

( 1 ) Carl Jung, 1954, '**Die psychologischen Aspekte des Mutter-Archetypus**' in The Collected Works of Carl G. Jung, Part I: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, vol.9, Part 1. Herbert Read, M. Fordham, Gerhard Adler eds, Princeton University Press, 1961, p.90



























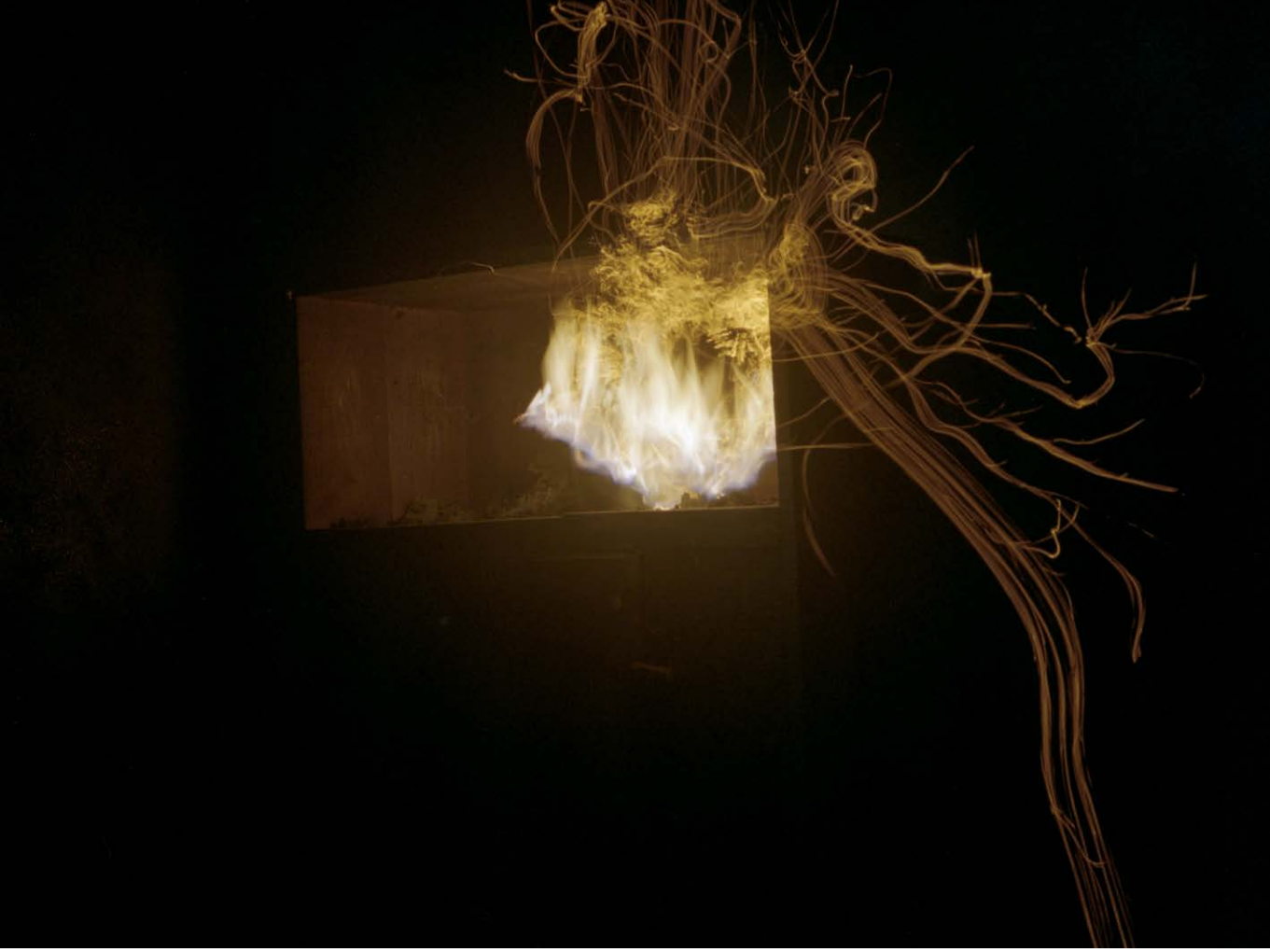
















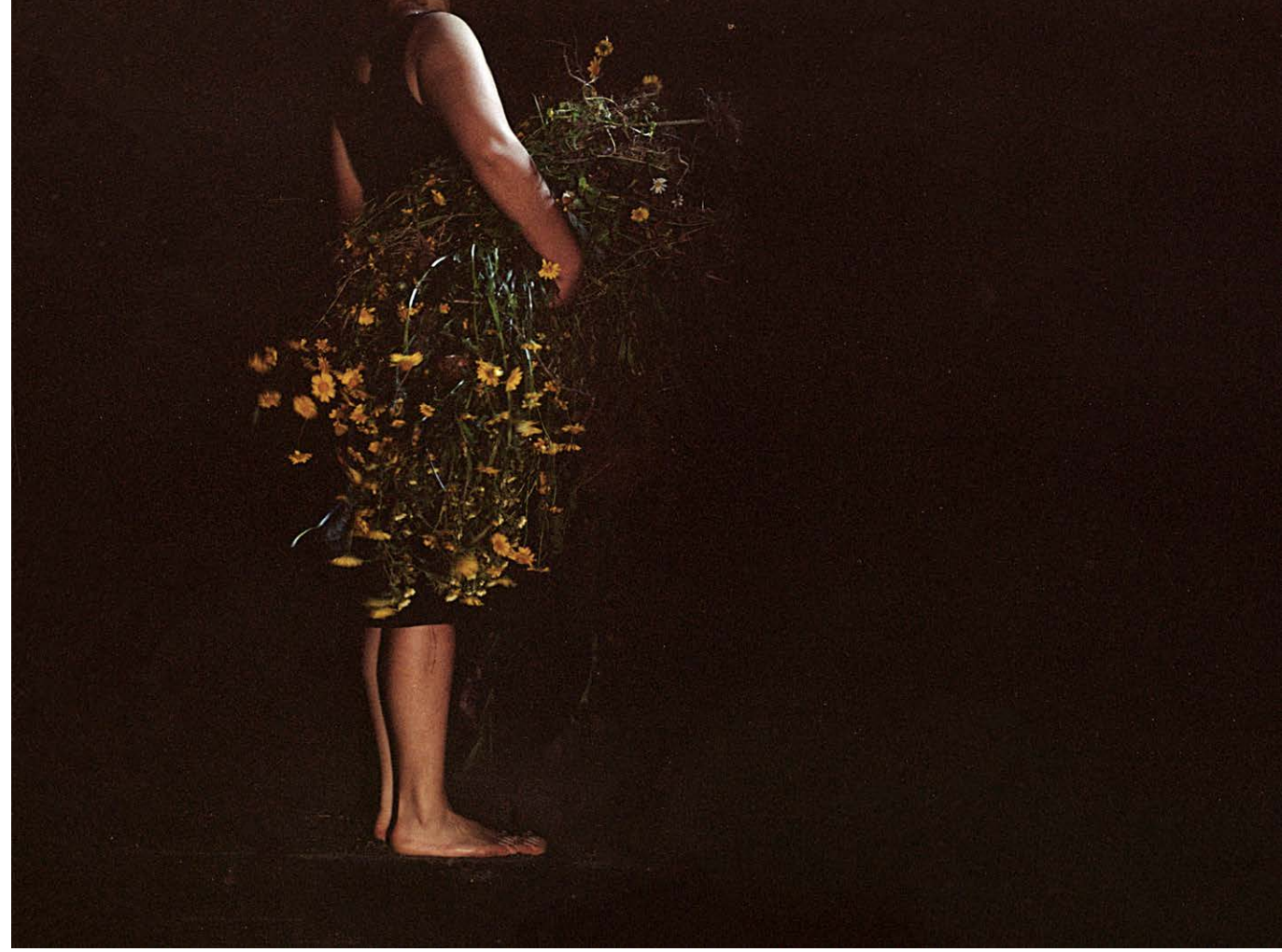


















# About Project Groundswell

Project Groundswell was initiated in 2022 by Photo Museum Ireland together with three other European photo organisations – Fotohof (Salzburg, Austria); Cortona On The Move (Cortona, Italy) and Imago Lisboa (Lisbon, Portugal).

The project arose from the desire of the four partners to work together to create opportunities for artists and audiences to engage with the climate emergency – the defining challenge of our time. All four organisations had already been working independently to incorporate environmental themes into their respective activities, so the Creative Europe programme presented a marvellous opportunity to coordinate and focus our efforts, and to amplify our collective impact. Over a two-year period, the partners came together online to develop and refine the Project Groundswell proposal, which successfully received funding support from Creative Europe in 2024.

Thanks to this support, the partners can now work on a wider canvas, and can forge new connections with artists, communities and audiences that would otherwise be beyond our individual reach. What's more, the support has enabled us to be more ambitious in our creative remit. From the outset, the partners recognised that we wanted photographic discourse to move beyond raising awareness of the **effects** of climate change, and instead embrace ways of **being the change we want to see**. In the photo space, that has meant constantly reappraising our practices along sustainable lines, carefully evaluating immediate carbon footprint against long-term usage and re-usage of materials. For example, this photobook has specifically been designed and produced in such a way as to minimise waste and harmful, carbon-intensive processes. Or to take another example, a key strand of Project Groundswell is devoted to providing online training webinars and workshops on sustainable practice, culminating in an in-depth series of workshops that led to participants gaining certification from the Carbon Literacy Project.

Another important consideration was that the opportunities we created be open and freely accessible to as many artists as possible. Thus we organised an Open Call for artists and its resounding success is a testament to the burgeoning interest and commitment among Europe's photographic and lens-based artists to address climate action.

The Project Groundswell Open Call attracted 480 artists who submitted 571 projects. The international jury had the difficult task of selecting just 12 Finalists.

The Finalists are:

**Chloé Azzopardi** ( FR )

**Marco Buratti** ( IT )

**Sean Charlton White** ( NL )

**Gonçalo Fonseca** ( PT )

**Matjaz Krivic** ( SL )

**Camilla Marrese & Gabriele Chiapparini** ( IT )

**Yvette Monahan** ( IE )

**Ingmar Björn Nolting** ( DE )

**Maria Oliveira** ( PT )

**Oliver Ressler** ( AT )

**Nora Schwarz** ( DE )

**Adam Sébire** ( NO )

An audiovisual Showcase of these artists' outstanding works can be seen on [www.projectgroundswell.eu](http://www.projectgroundswell.eu)

From the twelve finalists, four overall winners were selected by the Jury. They are: Gonçalo Fonseca, Yvette Monahan, Ingmar Björn Nolting and Maria Oliveira. These four projects are included in a specially curated exhibition that will be presented in Salzburg, Dublin, Cortona and Lisbon throughout 2026. In addition, this photobook that you have in your hands, and three other photobook publications, explore the winners' projects in depth. These monographs stand as an enduring record of the individual artist's works for the future.

#### ( PHOTO MUSEUM IRELAND )

Photo Museum Ireland is Ireland's national centre for contemporary photography. It is dedicated to advancing the development, appreciation and understanding of photography and visual culture in Ireland and internationally. In its purpose-designed space, Photo Museum Ireland organises innovative exhibitions and curated programmes that address important social and cultural issues. With 5–6 major exhibitions annually, Photo Museum Ireland enlightens, challenges, and inspires over 60,000 visitors each year. Its dynamic engagement programmes enrich public awareness of photography and its subsidised darkrooms and digital production and printing facilities are a vital support to practising photographers. It also operates a specialist book shop and photobook publishing. Since its establishment in 1978, the organisation has been to the fore in facilitating meaningful exchanges between artists and the public, ensuring that great photography is accessible to all.

[photomuseumireland.ie](http://photomuseumireland.ie)

#### ( FOTOHOF )

A dynamic collective established in 1981, Fotohof operates Austria's most active centre for contemporary photography exhibitions, archival projects, education and publications. Fotohof has a clear Europe-wide focus, showing around 50% Austrian artists, 40% rest of Europe, and 10% rest of the world.

In addition to the exhibitions in the gallery, Fotohof's program includes one of the most extensive photo-specific libraries in Austria (comprising 17,000 photobooks and photorelated publications), an internationally active photo book publishing house (400 published books), an archive for historical and contemporary photography, international touring exhibitions, a wide range of educational offers with workshops and discourse events.

In addition to presenting the Project Groundswell exhibition in its purpose-designed space, Fotohof brings unrivalled expertise in the area of photobook publishing. Their publishing imprint, Fotohof Editions, has published over 380 mainly monographic titles and has developed strong international distribution channels. Like Photo Museum Ireland, they also operate pro-quality exhibition printing facilities.

[fotohof.at](http://fotohof.at)

#### ( Cortona On The Move )

Nestled in the ancient Tuscan hills, Cortona On The Move festival was founded in 2011 by the cultural association ON THE MOVE, whose goal is to disseminate and promote the visual arts, particularly contemporary photography. From the outset, the festival has championed contemporary photography, promoting innovative interpretations of the medium's language and codes. Each year, from July to November, it attracts a growing audience with its dynamic programme and high-quality exhibitions. True to its **On The Move** ethos, the festival fosters curiosity, observation,

# Colophon

and a profound engagement with the changing world. Now in its 15th year, Cortona On The Move has evolved into a vibrant platform for contemporary photography and visual storytelling, bringing together diverse voices to share stories that inspire reflection and dialogue.

Today, Cortona On The Move is more than a photography showcase; it has become a hub for production, exploration, and critical thought. It stands as a vital reference point for photographers, enthusiasts, and a global audience, including a steadily increasing number of students from high schools and universities.

[cortonaonthemove.com](http://cortonaonthemove.com)

## ( IMAGO LISBOA )

Imago Lisboa – Photo Festival is organized by Cedilhas e Legendas – a non-profit cultural association. This is a group of people who use the visual arts, and particularly photography, as their tool for cultural activism. With different paths in the cultural area, their common interest in images brought them together and awakened the desire to move forward with this project.

Photography has gained a growing presence in the visual arts and respective markets. Its functionality is diverse and complex. In addition to the arts, photographic recording is also linked to history, anthropology and science in general. From this broad base, Imago Lisboa sets out to:

- Promote emerging artists and contemporary photography in general without neglecting knowledge of classical authors.
- Stimulate reflection around the different territories of photography.
- Create a platform for promoting younger authors.
- Create a space for constructive knowledge, equality and freedom.

## ( FOTOHOF>EDITION )

Inge Morath Platz 1–3  
5020 Salzburg, Austria  
[fotohof@fotohof.at](mailto:fotohof@fotohof.at)  
[www.fotohof.at](http://www.fotohof.at)

## ( ISBN )

978-3-903595-08-8

## ( VOLUME )

350

## ( PHOTOGRAPHY )

Maria Oliveira

## ( TEXT )

Álvaro Domingues

## ( PROOFREADING )

Tanya Kiang

## ( GRAPHIC DESIGN )

Studio Fjeld, Salzburg

## ( LITHOGRAPHY )

Pixelstorm – Kostal & Schindler OG, Vienna

## ( TYPEFACE )

Ft System, Frost Type

## ( PAPER )

Rives Design Bright 170 g  
ICON Nature rough pastel blue 270 g  
Salzer Touch 150 g

## ( PRINTING )

Gerin Druck, Wolkersdorf

## ( TEAM GROUNDSWELL PHOTO MUSEUM IRELAND )

Sophie Branigan, Darren Campion, Niamh Ferry,  
Tanya Kiang, Trish Lambe, Vita Ryan, Darragh Shanahan,  
Liam Weir.

## ( TEAM GROUNDSWELL CORTONA ON THE MOVE )

Veronica Nicolardi, Nicola Tiezzi, Carmen Liuzzi,  
Alessio Barbini, Renata Ferri, Paolo Woods, Silvia  
Bonaventura, Stefano Carnelli, Laura Tota, Paolo Duranti.

## ( TEAM GROUNDSWELL IMAGO LISBOA )

Rui Prata, Elina Heikka, Bárbara Dias, Noora Manty.

## ( TEAM GROUNDSWELL FOTOHOF )

Sebastian Albert, Mateusz Dworczyk, Katharina  
Eckschlager, Martin Mlineritsch, Helena Kalleitner,  
Andrew Phelps, Herman Seidl, Nadine Weixler.

FOTOHOF  
>EDITION



PHOTO  
MUSEUM  
IRELAND



C O R T  
O N A  
N T H E  
M O V E

**( FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT )**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

**( SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION )**

The Project Groundswell publications were produced in an environmentally conscious and climate-friendly manner at Gerin Druck in Wolkersdorf / Vienna. Gerin's print products have been awarded the Austrian CSR seal of approval – this certification stands for the high environmental quality of products and services, sustainable business management, and social responsibility. The new Heidelberg DryStar-LE-UV printing machine guarantees CO2-neutral printing. The paper used is produced in the immediate vicinity of the printing plant.



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**



