

JAIME FERNANDES

Text by João Pedro Frois, foreword by Michel Thévoz

Jaime Fernandes was born in 1899, in a small village, near one of the most unspoiled and rebellious rivers of Portugal, the river Zézere. He grew up in an idyllic rural landscape, a crossing site with a geography of fertile lands, where gold, wolfram, and tin were extracted from its entrails. A small rural landowner, he married and watched over his five children up to 38 years of age, when he entered Miguel Bombarda Mental Hospital in Lisbon, 300 km from his village. He is the most important Portuguese artist to emerge from a psychiatric institution.

About **ninety drawings in ink, lead pencil, and ballpoint pen on paper**, of varied sizes and quality, are known. His artistic activity, entirely lacking the supervision of any visual art atelier, was encouraged by his hospital psychiatrist, who collected most drawings by Jaime. The crudeness of these drawings impresses the unwitting observer: they are anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations—cattle, goats, elephants, fish, and birds. The human figures burst through as bodies are placed on hold, arms in the air, eyes wide open that observe, others, sometimes, appear merged with animals. Jaime practiced drawing and wrote lengthy semantically indecipherable texts, in a singular calligraphy, where time is set in long numbers. He did this solely motivated by the pure pleasure gained from this slow exercise of revisiting his memories. In that pleasure, he would have acquired a taste for the imaginary, the world of dreams and fantasies of creation, of being cherished by all who participated in the portraits that he gave us to observe. Jaime died in Lisbon in 1969.

João Pedro Frois was born in Lisbon in 1957. He is a university professor and researcher and is currently a guest researcher at the School of Medicine of the University of Lisbon. He worked as a psychologist in the area of mental healthcare and rehabilitation of children and young people. He coordinated the Gulbenkian Programme on Aesthetic Research and Development and several research projects concerning Education in Art Museums, funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). He is the author and co-author of various books on education and the visual arts, two of which published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. He has published studies on the aesthetic theory of Lev S. Vygotsky, and translated two of his books. He regularly publishes in the area of the Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and Visual Arts. He worked on the biography of Jaime Fernandes and studied his art for over a decade, which gave rise to several articles published in international journals. He was vice-chair of the International Association of Empirical Aesthetics (IAEA). He is an affiliated researcher at the Center for Phenomenological Psychology and Aesthetics (CPPA) at the University of Copenhagen. Currently a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and Portuguese Society of Psychiatry and Mental Health (SPPSM).

Michel Thévoz was a conservator at the Cantonal Museum of Fine Arts in Lausanne from 1960 to 1975. Following his contacts with **Jean Dubuffet**, he initiated the creation of the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne (Switzerland), of which he assumed the direction from its foundation in 1976 until 2001. Professor of Art History and Museology at the University of Lausanne from 1977 to 2001, he published about twenty books.