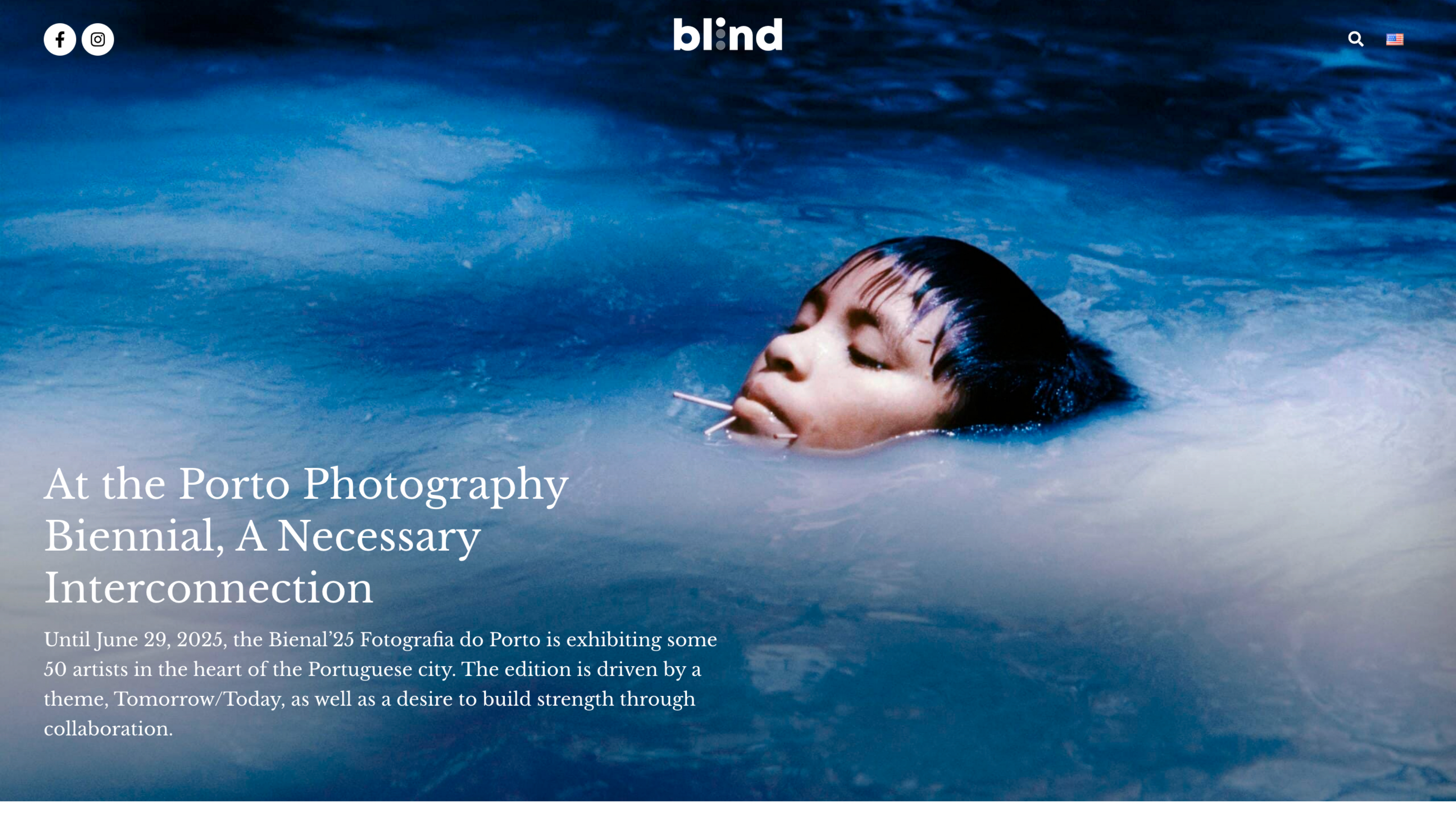


At the Porto Photography Biennial, A Necessary Interconnection

Until June 29, 2025, the Bienal’25 Fotografia do Porto is exhibiting some 50 artists in the heart of the Portuguese city. The edition is driven by a theme, Tomorrow/Today, as well as a desire to build strength through collaboration.

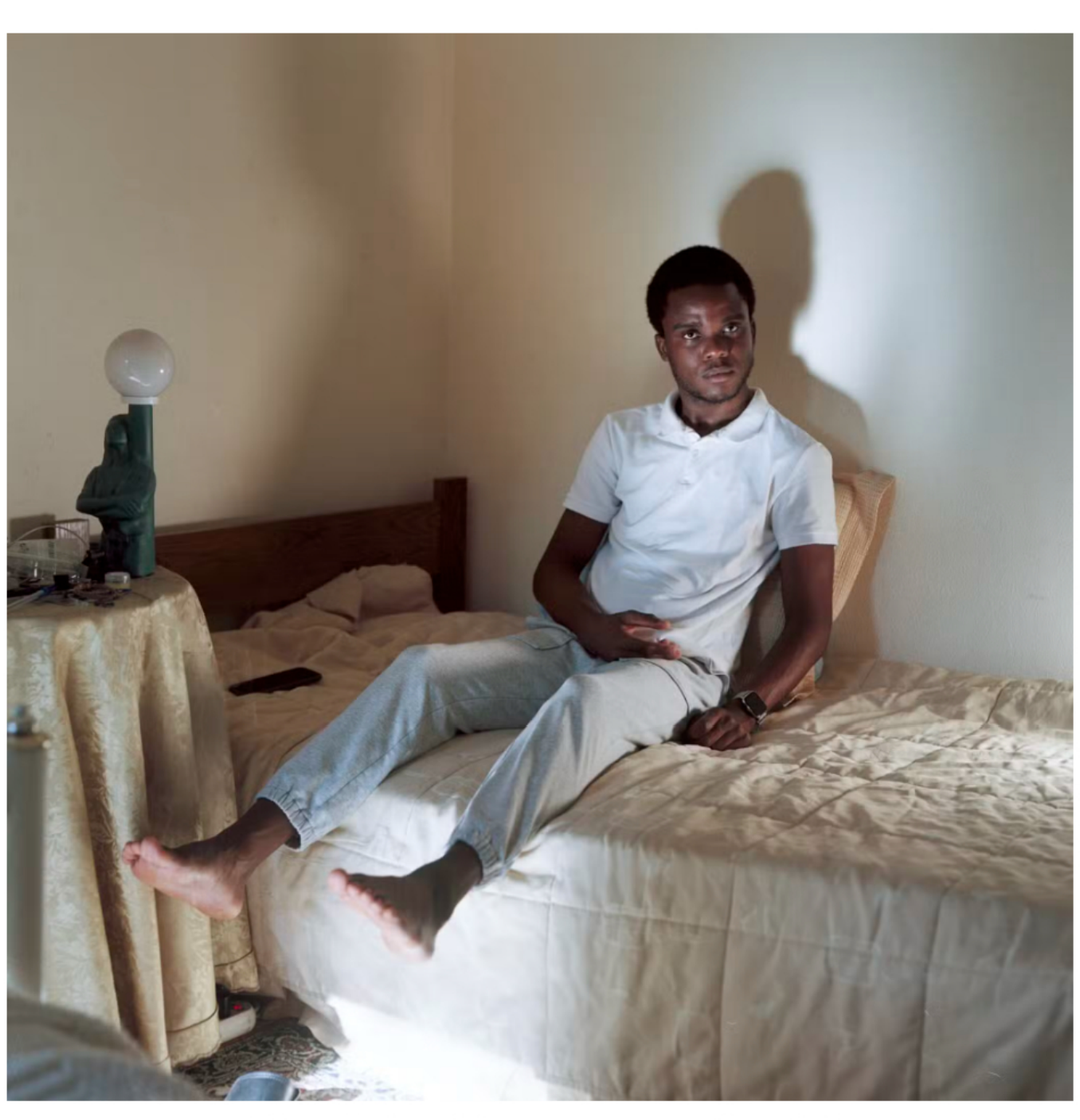
News - May 20, 2025

by Lou Tsatsas

It is under the spring sunshine of Porto, at the turn of the city’s emblematic mosaic facades, that the 2025 edition of the Bienal Fotografia opens. An event structured in four chapters: “Vivificar,” a cycle of residences in rural areas near the Douro; “Conectar,” a curation platform designing collaborative exhibitions aimed at creating a dialogue between various ecosystems; “Sustentar,” a creative laboratory based on exchanges between scientists and artists and designed to promote works dealing with the notion of sustainability; and “Expendir,” a program dedicated to emerging authors working at the frontiers of research and creation to imagine new socioecological models.

The common thread is a shared desire: to make things happen and evolve points of view through sharing. “While art can be made alone, it also depends on our interactions. Here, we ask ourselves: how do we communicate to produce? Find a new form of responsibility? Some of these projects can truly influence certain perceptions if enough people work on them collaboratively,” say the publishing house’s artistic directors, Jayne Dyer and Virgilio Ferreira.

© Luca Locatelli, Future Studies. Clouds rising from geothermal wells in Hellisheidi Power Station in Iceland; August 6, 2019.



© Lara Jacinto, No tempo das cerejas, 2025

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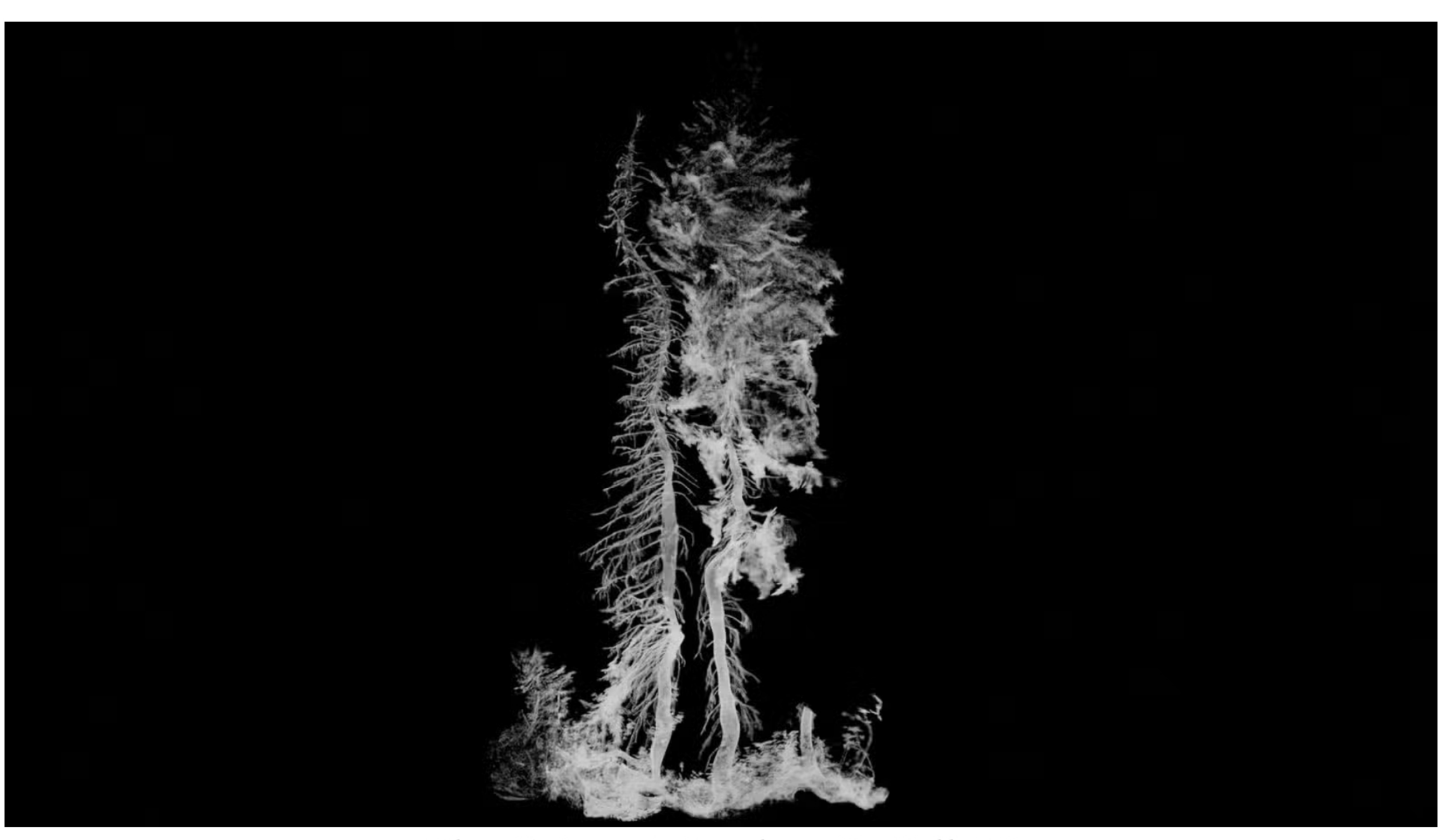


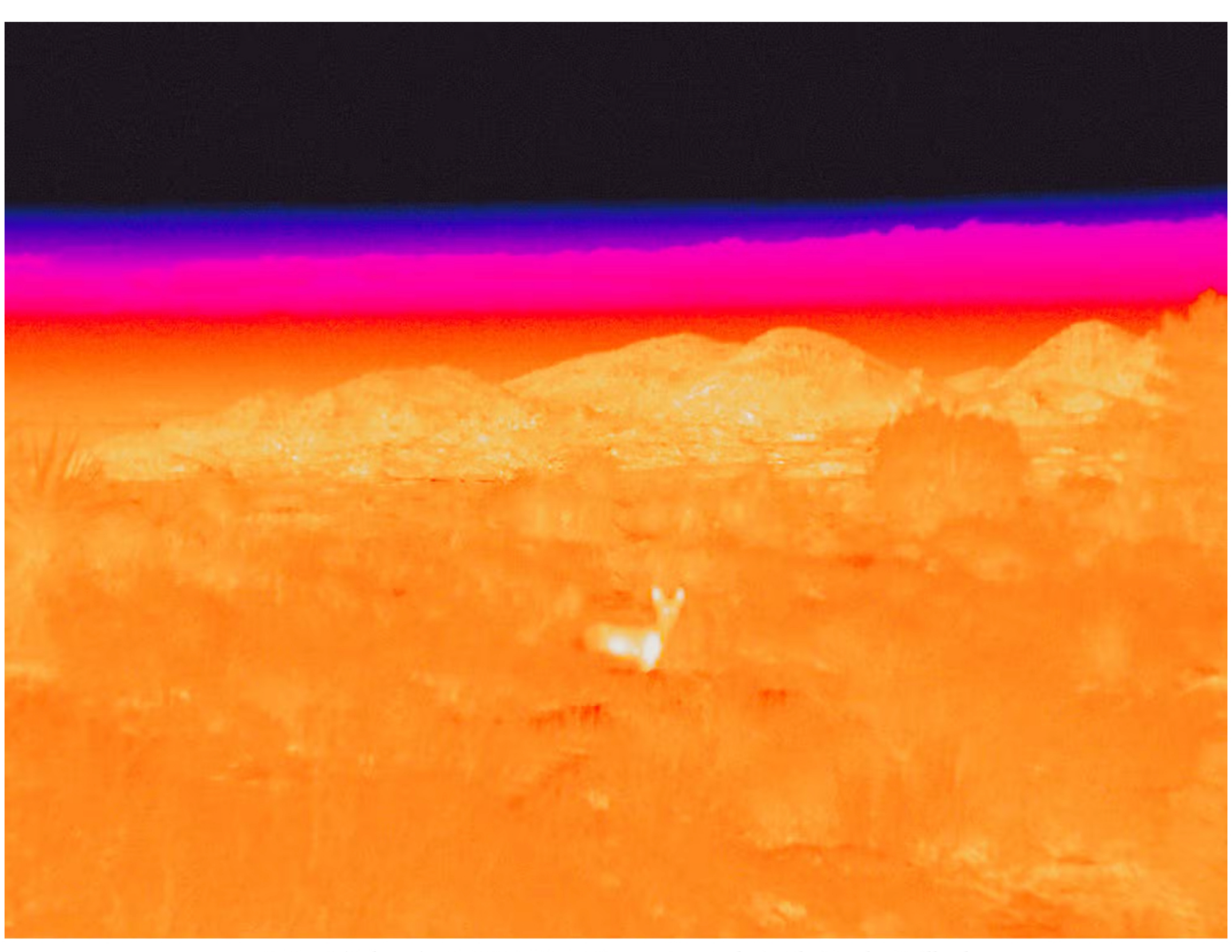
© Sheung Yiu, Between Two Trees, There are Many Worlds, 2023

51 authors and 14 curators are thus summoning this notion of exchange at the heart of 16 exhibitions. In symbolic locations—the Soares Dos Reis National Museum, the Municipal Gallery of Porto, and the Centro Português de Fotogafia—as well as in more unique places—a metro station, a bookstore, or even a theater—the photographers display their works, not without originality. Everywhere, screens replace simple frames, and videos echo the still images.

It features, in turn, phantasmagorical visions of fantasized landscapes, communities forgotten or torn apart by a relentless ecological war, and poetic flashes revealing horror – among them, *Mid-Air Collisions* by Kathrin Stumreich. In the heart of the Mojave Desert, solar panels raise the temperature of the light rays they reflect to more than 1000°F. The birds that rush into these invisible corridors traced in the sky then catch fire, forming white swirls that swirl and fall, like a dance of death that the artist immortalizes on video.

Trance by light

At the heart of this creative effervescence, resonances are woven and writings respond to each other. It is within the photography center, formerly a court of appeal and then a prison in Porto, that “Lightseekers” is unfolding, an exhibition combining the perspectives of Claudia Andujar, SMITH, Hoda Afshar, Christo Geoghegan and the Pariacaca collective. Conceived by curator Sergio Valenzuela-Escobedo, the event gives pride of place to light, the light that nourishes photography, the light of myths and legends, like those of modern metropolises. “I am interested in the link between the medium and the history of Latin America,” explains the curator. “When the camera arrived on the continent, some native communities associated it with dreamcatchers, they feared that the camera would capture their souls. Today, the latter is seen as a tool for fighting.”



© Dami (Fulmen), SMITH 2023-2024, courtesy Galerie Christophe Gaillard

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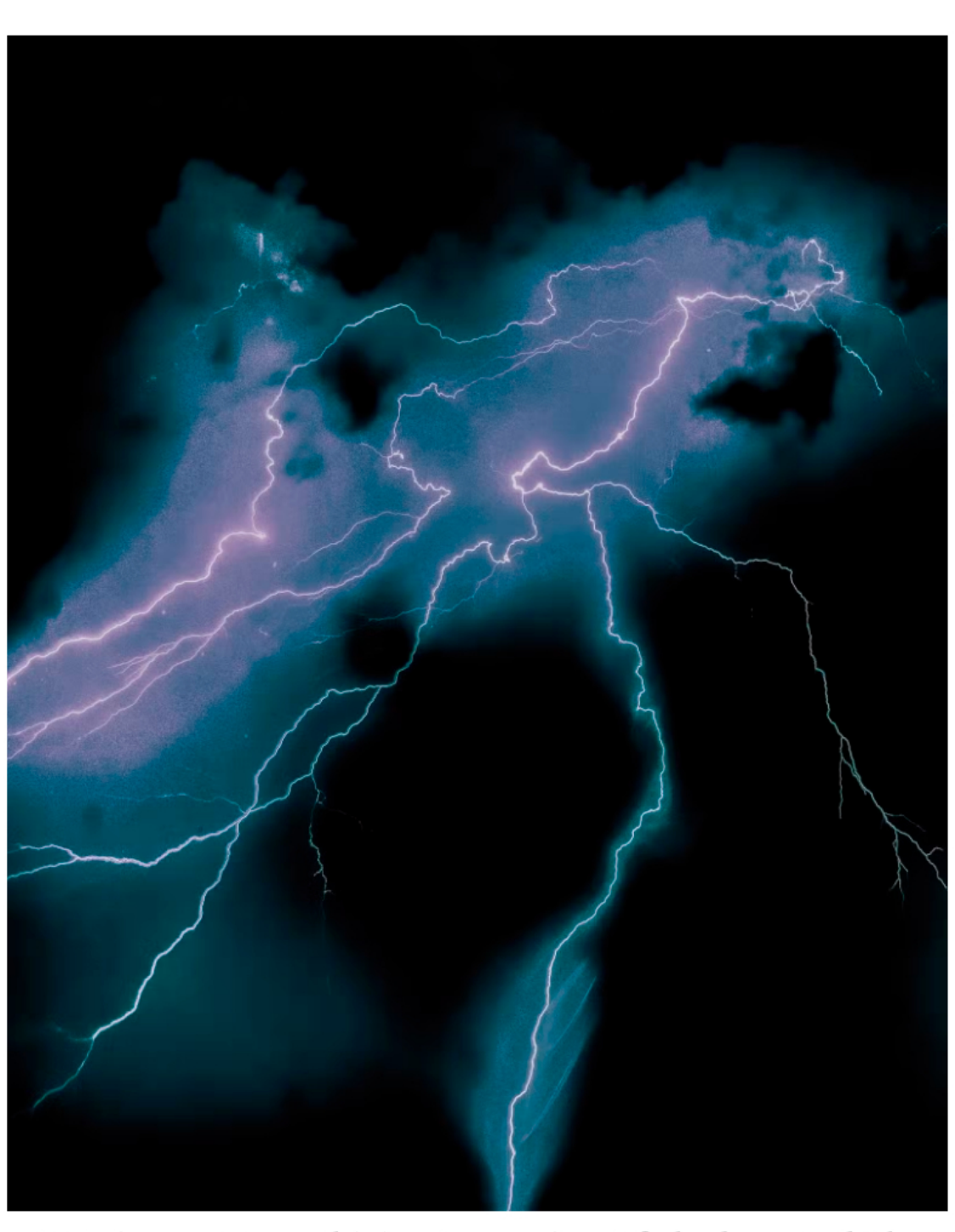

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How, then, can we represent the nuances of this light? What does it symbolize? Is it the revelation of the end of the world—what Catholicism calls the apocalypse? Or does it serve to illuminate contemporary issues? “Within the exhibition, I wanted to highlight the wet and dry lights, those of forests, shadows, and rituals, of the darkness that enters, and that of deserts, which abounds in excess, propelling us closer to God, through this injunction to ‘go toward the light,’” continues Sergio Valenzuela-Escobedo.

From the Yanomami of the Amazon, brilliantly photographed by Claudia Andujar, to the windy beliefs of an island south of Iran crossed by gusts of wind reinterpreted by Hoda Afshar, to the witch hunt targeting shamans in Peru by Christo Geoghegan. From the metaphorical story of a star imagined above Lima through a hallucinatory video installation designed by Pariacaca to the thermal allegories of SMITH summoning the notions of interconnection between all beings, “Lightseekers” frees itself from all temporality to create a dialogue between legends and technologies, visible and invisible. A form of trance emerges, a strange specter moving from hanging to hanging to anchor in this common space these minorities that are threatened with erasure.

© Christo Geoghegan, Witch Hunt Vol. I – The Banished of Balsapuerto, 2016-2023

Yanomami hut on fire. Catrimani, Roraima, Brazil, 1972-1976. © Claudia Andujar & The Yanomami Struggle, Claudia Andujar Collection / Moreira Salles Institute

Maloca near the Catholic mission on the Catrimani River. Roraima, Brazil, 1976. © Claudia Andujar & The Yanomami Struggle, Claudia Andujar Collection / Moreira Salles Institute

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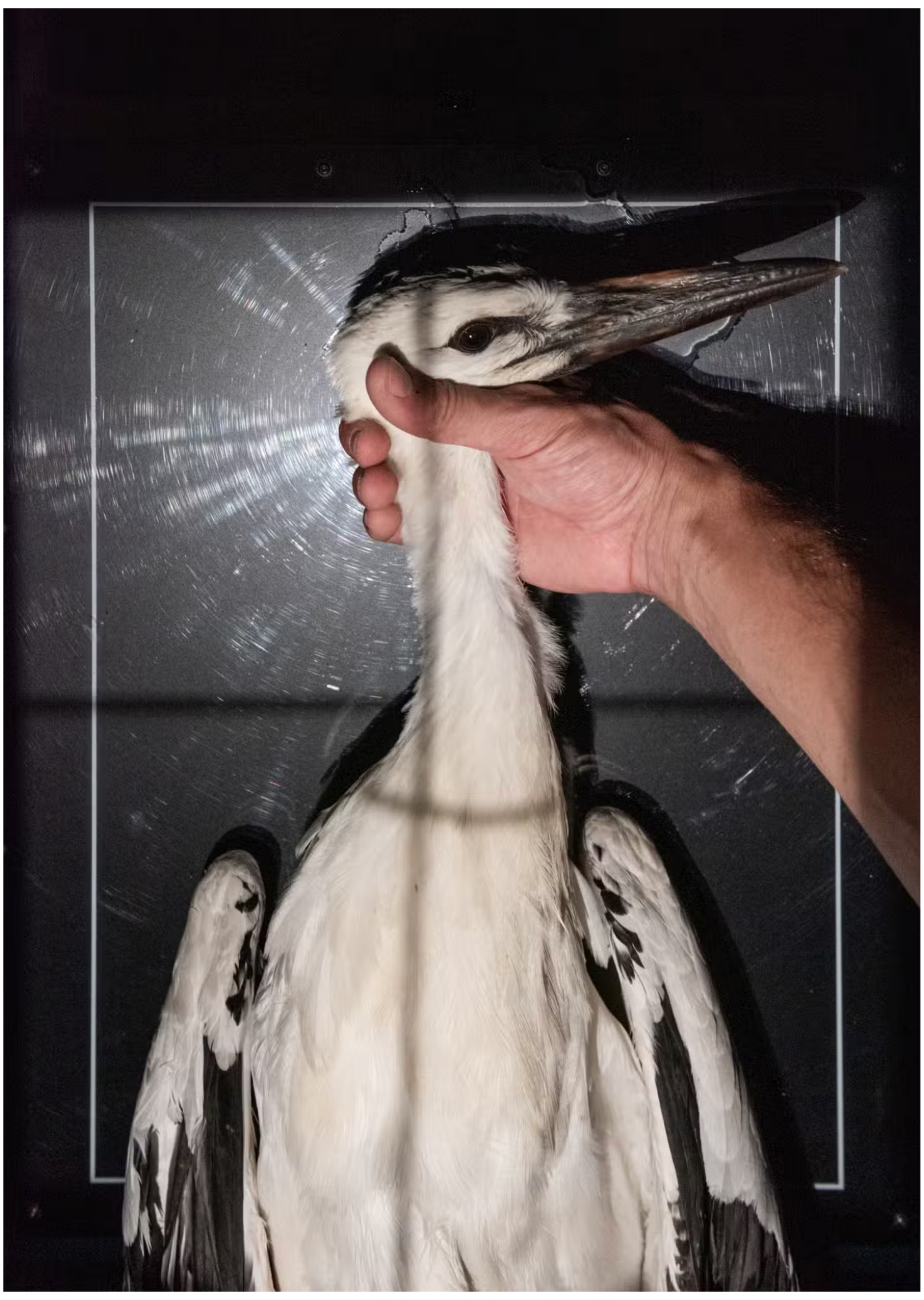
From one room to another, video, photography, drawings, and research documents encourage the visitor to follow the lights. Those that guide and, in guiding, reveal territories and marginalized existences, those that plunge us into a meditative fascination and remind us that we are human.

The 25th Porto Photography Bienal is on view in several locations in Porto until June 29, 2025.



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Lou Tsatsas

Lou Tsatsas studied languages, history and political science before turning to the art world. After a brief stint in New York, where she worked with various designers, she returned to France and began her journalistic career at Arts in the City. In 2018, she joined the Fisheye Magazine team, becoming its web editor in 2022. She also signed the foreword to Momo Okabe's Sub #02 Ilmatar, an immersive carte blanche into the photographer's world. Today, as a freelance journalist, she collaborates with several media: Blind, Fisheye, Mouche, keeping her favorite themes at heart: emerging art and photography, the visibility of minorities, feminist commitment.

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