



## SUNT LACRIMAE RERUM

Art historian Anne Simone says of the work SUNT LACRIMAE RERUM: “...the origin of the Latin phrase is found in the fate of the legendary Aeneas, who was rescued by his father from the burning city of Troy and, after this propitious escape, would go on to found the city of Rome. When the Trojan hero one day sees a fresco of the ruins of his destroyed home city, his eyes fill up with tears and one of the most enduring phrases of the Classical Age is coined: *SUNT LACRIMAE RERUM – THE WORLD IS FULL OF TEARS*. Tears as salty as the sea that always tells of a fate steeped in suffering. Ophelia suffered such a fate. Spurned by Hamlet in his madness, she seeks her own death-by-drowning, a motif that became an evergreen of 19<sup>th</sup> painting. But changing times change quantity ratios and, especially, contexts. How do we see the representation of bodies of water today? Even when they are devoid of human figures, as in the case of Fernando de Brito, associative images nevertheless impose themselves. Evoked by the data flood of our times, what first springs to our mind’s eye now is likely to be the recent so-called wave of refugees, and the fate of all those whose journey has ended at the bottom of the sea. In a digitally linked-up world, the fate of the individual becomes the fate of many. But the sea of tears could equally be an image for drowning in one’s own emotions, leading us back to ourself.” (...)

Perhaps Fernando de Brito’s own biography – born in 1956 in Portugal, emigrated at the age of 12 with his parents to Hamburg – makes him especially receptive to the issue of migration and to the plight of all others who set out to seek a new life for themselves under extreme and extremely uncertain conditions. But maybe it is simply because he is a

sensitive, open person who sees himself as a citizen of the world, formed by Western European humanistic culture, and who counts himself lucky to live in a wealthy, democratic country today.

Since 2011, Fernando de Brito has very intensely explored this multi-layered topic and his options for translating it into a language of images. The pictures from the SUNT LACRIMAE RERUM series reveal a clear visual kinship with the artists' previous "seismographic" artist portraits exhibited at the Van der Grinten Galerie in 2017, large-format ballpoint pen drawings that reveal an inner world of highly sensitive density. In these latest works, however, the parallel lines no longer appear purely as an element of pulsation, of oscillation. Here they also vibrate like the surface of the water with the light reflecting off it.

Using various techniques, including ballpoint pen, painting and scratch drawing in countless laboriously applied layers on a base of paper, MDF or wood, and with variations in color, the abstract compositions, divided into the various thematic groups '*Persons*', '*Quattro*', '*Anonymous*', '*Regions*', '*Unknown*', leave open an associative space for seeing and sensing ... a journey across the sea, the horizon line that can be seen to come ever closer, or move ever farther out of reach. This could represent a destination just within or just out of reach. The notion of sinking down into the depths and the very fathoms of the sea itself are also present....

Here, it appears that Fernando de Brito has undertaken a sensitive search for a possible correspondence between content and form, and has succeeded, it seems, in finding his own empathetic way of retelling individual stories, sparing them from the fate of forgetting.