



[Primeiro Gesto]

Mariana Horgan

What compels the first gesture? A trace on stone, a scratch in wood, a finger dragged through sand. Long before language, there was the mark – a need to express something, however wordless, through movement, repetition, resistance. The mark precedes meaning, yet contains it entirely. In *Primeiro Gesto*, Mariana Horgan returns to this primal urge, not to romanticise it, but to examine what it still means to make a mark today.

Known for her layered, mostly monochromatic abstractions, Horgan has long approached painting as a negotiation between control and release. Her process unfolds through a continuous layering of intuitive, spontaneous outpourings followed by slower, more analytical phases – covering, scraping, adding, subtracting. Yet this exhibition marks a decisive shift in her practice. Where previously the force of gesture was contained beneath carefully composed surfaces, it now begins to emerge, gaining presence and making the paintings more alive.

Despite their abstraction, the works are grounded in the body. The gestures suggest writing, scarring, mapping, or movement. Materials include acrylic, powdered pigment, fabric fragments, and raw linen – sometimes left unstretched – reinforcing the physicality of painting as a site of live encounter.

At the centre of the gallery is a participatory installation: a raw canvas accompanied by a trolley of materials. On this blank surface, visitors are invited to leave their own marks, following specific instructions. Throughout the exhibition, the artist will return to intervene – not to complete the canvas, but to respond. This ongoing dialogue introduces a conceptual shift: the work is no longer a fixed object, but a living process shaped through exchange, contingency, and shared presence.

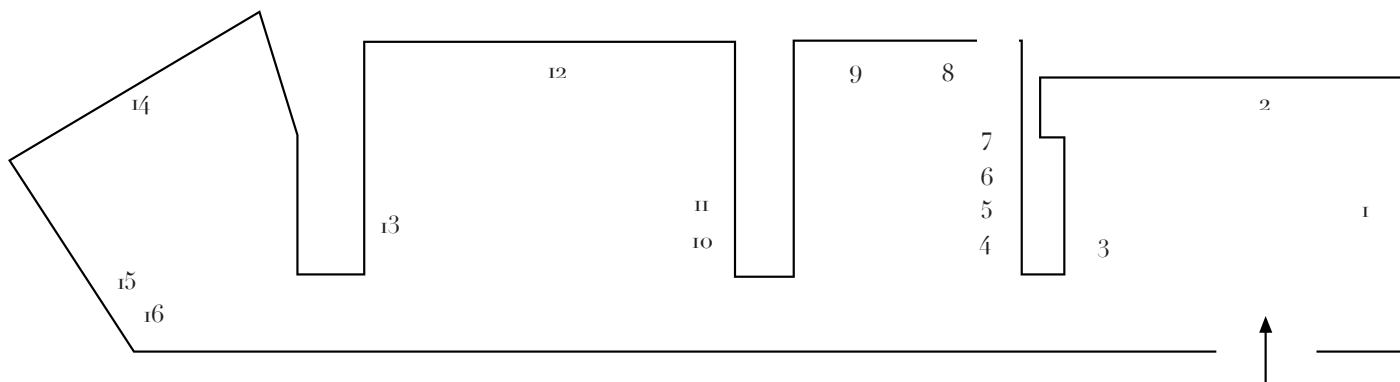
The installation evokes works like Abramović's *Rhythm 0* (1974) and Emin's *My Bed*, transferring agency to the spectator and dissolving conventional boundaries. The gallery becomes at once studio, performance site, and evolving archive, where meaning emerges through relationship – gesture, proximity, and time.

Primeiro Gesto is not concerned with beginnings in a linear sense. It is about returning to the act of making, to vulnerability, to the gesture as a primary structure of thought. Horgan does not abandon her visual vocabulary; she refines and extends it. What changes is what she is willing to leave exposed. The final structure of the exhibition mirrors this ethos. As in her paintings – where the first mark often becomes the last – the finissage becomes the true vernissage: the moment when the work – layered, communal, and complete in its incompleteness – reveals its final state.

Mariana Horgan (b. 1985, Lisbon) is a Portuguese artist whose practice encompasses abstract painting, sculpture, and monotype. She studied at Ar.Co – Centro de Arte e Comunicação Visual in Lisbon (2019) and completed courses in Painting and Relief Printing at the Art Academy in London (2022). Her work spans large- and medium-scale canvases and works on paper, constructing layered surfaces with acrylic, powdered pigment, graphite, charcoal, and fragments of fabric. Her muted palette, punctuated by moments of chromatic intensity, reflects a tension between gesture and revision, control and chaos. Rooted in the legacy of Abstract Expressionism, her work channels its emotional immediacy through a contemplative lens – evoking the restrained, memory-laden gestures of Cy Twombly.



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1. *Light the way*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, collage, plaster, spray paint, dirt, dry mushroom (daldinia concentrica), charcoal, pastels, pigments and graphite on canvas | Acrílico, óleo, colagem, gesso, tinta spray, terra, cogumelo seco (daldinia concentrica), carvão, pastel, pigmento e grafite sobre tela
180 x 160 cm | 70 x 62 in



2. *To dream in fragments*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, collage, plaster, pigments, spray paint, china ink, charcoal, pastels and graphite on canvas | Acrílico, óleo, colagem, gesso, pigmentos, tinta spray, tinta da china, carvão, pastel e grafite sobre tela
180 x 160 cm | 70 x 62 in

3. *Back to the night*, 2025
Monoprint; acrylic, plaster, china ink and pigments on bamboo paper | Monotipia; acrílico, gesso, tinta da china e pigmento sobre papel de bambu
46 x 36 x 4 cm | 17.9 x 14 x 1.5 in

4. *The quiet that follows*, 2023
Acrylic, pigment on hemp paper | Acrílico, pigmento sobre papel de cânhamo
29.7 x 21 cm | 11 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.

5. *Deixar a luz entrar*, 2023
Acrylic, pigment on hemp paper | Acrílico, pigmento sobre papel de cânhamo
29.7 x 21 cm | 11 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.

6. *In the Mist*, 2023
Acrylic, pigment on hemp paper | Acrílico, pigmento sobre papel de cânhamo
29.7 x 21 cm | 11 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.

7. *From the water*, 2023
Acrylic, pigment on hemp paper | Acrílico, pigmento sobre papel de cânhamo
29.7 x 21 cm | 11 3/4 x 8 1/4 in.

8. *Aware, alive*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, collage, plaster, spray paint, dirt, dry mushroom (daldinia concentrica), charcoal, pigments, pastels and graphite on canvas | Acrílico, óleo, colagem, gesso, tinta spray, terra, cogumelo seco (daldinia concentrica), carvão, pastel e grafite sobre tela
100 x 100 cm | 39 x 39 in



9. *Vulnerable*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, collage, plaster, spray paint, dirt, dry mushroom (daldinia concentrica), charcoal, pigments, pastels and graphite on canvas | Acrílico, óleo, colagem, gesso, tinta spray, terra, cogumelo seco (daldinia concentrica), carvão, pastel e grafite sobre tela
100 x 100 cm | 39 x 39 in

10. *The crack of the day*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, collage, dirt, pigments and graphite on raw canvas | Acrílico, óleo, colagem, terra, pigmento e grafite sobre tela crua
41 x 35.5 x 4 cm | 15.9 x 13.8 x 1.5 in

11. *Silent landscape*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, collage, dirt, pigments and graphite on raw canvas | Acrílico, óleo, colagem, terra, pigmento e grafite sobre tela crua
41 x 35.5 x 4 cm | 15.9 x 13.8 x 1.5 in

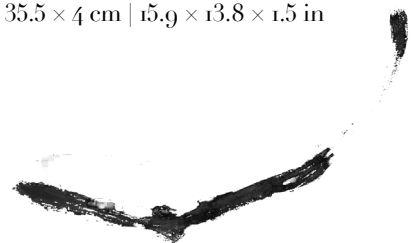
12. 2025
190 x 380 cm | 74 x 148 in

13. *Coming home*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, collage, plaster, spray paint, dirt, dry mushroom (daldinia concentrica), charcoal, pigments, pastels and graphite on canvas | Acrílico, óleo, colagem, gesso, tinta spray, terra, cogumelo seco (daldinia concentrica), carvão, pastel e grafite sobre tela
120 x 100 cm | 47 x 39 in

14. *Written poems*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, collage, plaster, spray paint, dirt, dry mushroom (daldinia concentrica), charcoal, pigments, pastels and graphite on canvas | Acrílico, óleo, colagem, gesso, tinta spray, terra, cogumelo seco (daldinia concentrica), carvão, pastel e grafite sobre tela
200 x 340 cm | 78 x 133 in

15. *Ritmos do nada*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, china ink, pastels and graphite on raw canvas | Acrílico, óleo, tinta da china, pastel e grafite sobre tela crua
41 x 35.5 x 4 cm | 15.9 x 13.8 x 1.5 in

16. *Eco*, 2025
Acrylic, oil, china ink, pastels and graphite on raw canvas | Acrílico, óleo, tinta da china, pastel e grafite sobre tela crua
41 x 35.5 x 4 cm | 15.9 x 13.8 x 1.5 in



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