

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**JOÃO PENALVA**

**23 JANUARY – 23 MARCH 2013**

**OPENING: TUESDAY, 22 JANUARY, 6:30 – 8:30 pm**

Simon Lee Gallery Hong Kong is proud to present an exhibition of new works by the renowned London-based, Portuguese artist João Penalva.

Penalva is best known for producing both large-scale, atmospheric installations and intimate, often obscure artworks. Weaving together a complex web that addresses the relationship between image, sound, and language, his practice draws attention to narrative modes and to the mechanisms involved in perception and interpretation. Through the use of photography, film, sculpture, projection, painting, sound and found material, Penalva persistently plays with ideas of memory, clichés, and the everyday, 'making us see and think about that which we usually take for granted and which we neither see nor think about'.<sup>1</sup>

For his first solo exhibition at Simon Lee Gallery Hong Kong, the artist will present a selection of new works from *Looking Up in Osaka*, a series comprising of over 300 photographs of utility poles and cables taken in the Japanese city between 2005 and 2006:

The photographic series entitled *Looking up in Osaka* (2005-2006) consists an infinite variation of dynamic drawing-like images of lines that race energetically across changing backdrops. These lines at times resemble supple whips, but then in the middle of the intricate interweavings suddenly turn into pathetic, sagging strings. At other times, they look like the clinging vines of parasitic plants that have grown out of control. Others have the appearance of robotic appendages discharging energy.

What this variety of lines actually represents is the shape of 'today' – the utility poles and the many power lines and connections that are constantly added to as more and more houses are built. Contemplating these vibrant portraits of utility poles, universe-like scenes drawn on the backdrop of the sky, there seems to be a mysterious presence that, while arousing confusion and loathing in the viewer's psyche, simultaneously supports the source of its richness and its chaos. Rather than a political statement, Penalva's perspective has more the feel of the breezy spirit of a free man demonstrating an alternative approach to the landscapes of civilization and its cities. Viewed in this way, each of his works begins to tell a story.<sup>2</sup>

João Penalva was born in Lisbon in 1949 and has lived and worked in London since 1976. He represented Portugal in the XXIII Bienal Internacional de São Paulo in 1996 and in the XLIX Biennale di Venezia in 2001, and was awarded the DAAD Berlin Artist's Residency in 2003-2004. He exhibited also in the Berlin Biennale 2 (2001) and the Biennale of Sydney (2002). Other solo exhibitions include Camden Arts Centre, London; Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck; Tramway, Glasgow; Rooseum, Malmö; Institute of Visual Arts, Milwaukee; The Power Plant, Toronto; Serralves Museum, Oporto; Ludwig Museum, Budapest; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; DAAD Gallery, Berlin; Mead Gallery, University of Warwick, Coventry; Lunds Konsthall, Lund; CAM – Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon; and Kunsthallen Brandts, Odense.

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<sup>1</sup> Isabel Carlos and Lars Grambye, 'Works with Texts and Images' in *João Penalva: Works with Texts and Images* (CAM – Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, and Kunsthallen Brandts, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Yuko Hasegawa, *Looking up in Osaka* (Azinhagas e Ribanceiras Edições, Lisbon 2008).