

Os Rapazes da Praia Adoro

Alberto Cortés and João Gabriel



A new theatrical project by Andalusian dramaturg and theatre maker Alberto Cortés
in collaboration with Portuguese painter João Gabriel

Commission and production
BoCA – Biennial of Contemporary Arts

2025

SYNOPSIS

"The boys from Adoro Beach" is a result of a joint commission from BoCA and Teatro do Bairro Alto. A new work that opens a unique dialogue between two artists from Portugal and Spain, and between two artistic fields, theatre and painting.

In the paintings of João Gabriel we catch glimpses of ghosts wandering on the beach. In the pieces of playwright and stage director Alberto Cortés, words and bodies find each other and reveal themselves like landscapes. Out of this encounter emerges a vision of two male bodies, one Portuguese and one Spanish, who meet on a beach halfway between Lisbon and Madrid, precisely 312.45 kilometres from each city. This beach, named Praia Adoro, becomes a kind of odyssey, a hole in space-time and a queer paradise.

On Praia Adoro, these two bodies come together, merging in the intimacy offered by the hidden corners of nature's cruising spaces. They come together to find each other, their sexual encounter an intimate act seeking to settle outstanding debts between two countries that exist with their backs turned. Taking as a reference point the intimacy found in the audiovisual archive of 70s and 80s pornographic films that inspires João Gabriel's paintings, words overlay these bodies to imagine a different form of gay contact, one imbued with tenderness and poetry. New ways are posited of understanding sex between men, perhaps as a current need for it to be a healing act. Because that is what they desire.

TEAM AND CREDITS

Text, dramaturgy and interpretation: Alberto Cortés

Visual interventions: João Gabriel

Interpretation: Miguel Deblas, Saul Olarte (Madrid), Peter Arcanjo, Bruno Santos (Lisboa)

Composition and musical interpretation: Adriano Galante

Light design and operation: José Espigares

Head of production: José Maria Cortez (BoCA)

Commission: BoCA – Biennial of Contemporary Arts, Teatro do Bairro Alto

Production: BoCA – Biennial of Contemporary Arts

Coproduction: Teatro do Bairro Alto (Lisboa), Teatro de La Abadía (Madrid)

Artistic Residences: Goethe-Institut Madrid, Teatro da Rainha (Caldas da Rainha)

Support: Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) - Programa para la Internacionalización de la Cultura Española (PICE)

Duration and classification

45 min, 16+



BIOGRAPHIES

Alberto Cortés (ES)



Alberto Cortés was born in Málaga in 1983. A theatre director, playwright, and performer of his own explorations, Alberto graduated from the ESAD in Málaga with a degree in Theatre Directing and Playwriting, as well as in Art History from Universidad de Málaga. His path to theatre was not driven by love but by a search for answers to various youthful questions. In 2009, he began his theatrical journey with a peripheral, non-conformist dramaturgy that, over time, has become increasingly untamed in its pursuit of a freedom that remains elusive.

Since then, he has continually collided with creators, mentors, and friends who have inspired his path, producing works across various formats and disciplines in an effort to sustain faith in the intangible, the mysterious, and the human. His work has evolved over the years through theatre, dance, performance, and also folk traditions, flamenco, and site-specific creations. He collaborates with other creators by contributing direction and dramaturgy, and he leads workshops conceived as encounters where he shares the insights and research that inform his practice.

At a certain point, his artistic journey converged with the idea of understanding the stage as a space of desire and of exploring the romantic connection between performer and audience.

His works such as *El ardor* (2021) and *One Night at the Golden Bar* (2022) have been largely presented in different theatres and festivals in Spain, such as Festival de Otoño (Madrid), Festival Dansa Valencia, Festival Iberoamericano de Cádiz, FIBA - Buenos Aires, Teatro Central de Sevilla, Centro Cultural Conde Duque, or Festival TNT, among many others. While *One Night at the Golden Bar* was selected as one of the 10 best shows in Spain in 2023, with his latest production, *Alphabet* (2024) in collaboration with violinist Luz Prado, Alberto Cortés has become one of the most outstanding creators in the contemporary performing arts scene in his country.

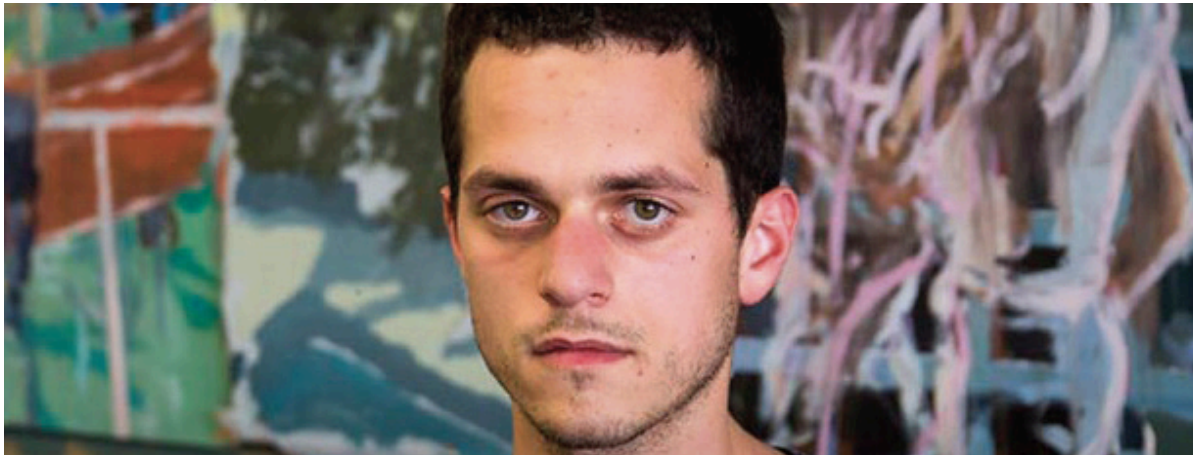
"I believe vulnerability can be a weapon that brings people together—a weapon of communion and community, a space of non-strength. We've always been told the stage is a place of strength, where you must show you've got everything figured out, that you're in complete control of the things you say, that it's a space of certainty. Very little room has been left for showing fragility on stage as a weapon."

Alberto Cortés

"I have no other way of being but to be in the fight—I'll always be there, it's inevitable. If my work is deeply tied to me and my own skin, the queer aspect will inevitably emerge and be highly present, taking a central place because it's part of who I am. So, I'll be doing on stage what I am, and it will sting some people, while others may shower me with kisses, depending on who's watching. What I champion, above all, is the use of the stage as a space where we can be who we want to be or who we feel we are."

Alberto Cortés

João Gabriel (PT)



João Gabriel, born in 1992 in Leiria, Portugal, is a visual artist living and working in Caldas da Rainha. He is known for his deeply experimental and narrative-driven artistic practice and for his vibrant exploration of themes such as identity, landscape, and queer aesthetics, which he approaches through painting and installation.

Often departing from pre-AIDS, 1970s gay pornographic imagery, João's paintings deal with desire, loss and nostalgia. Disinterested in the contemporary ideals of masculinity and their portrayals, João turned to vintage gay pornography as a source material to address the male form. His near-obsessive revisiting of the pre-AIDS era speaks to a notion of inherited trauma, and a desire to question the boundaries of joy, fear and sexuality in contemporary queer culture.

Gabriel's work has been widely exhibited in solo and group exhibitions across Europe, North and South America, and Asia. Notable solo exhibitions include *I was looking at you and you couldn't see me* at O-Town House in Los Angeles (2023), *Almost Blue* at Kunstverein Braunschweig in Germany (2022), and *Nightfall* at Mind Set Art Center in Taipei (2021).

In addition to his solo work, Gabriel has participated in numerous prestigious group exhibitions such as ARCOMadrid (2023) with his gallery Lehmann+Silva, *Fantasma Gaiata: A Coleção da CGD* at Culturgest in Lisbon (2023), *Talking Games: The EDP Foundation Art Collection* at ARCOLisboa (2023), and *Rooms of Resonance* at the Frédéric de Goldschmidt Collection in Brussels (2023). These exhibitions showcase his ability to interweave inclusive and diverse narratives into larger conversations within contemporary art.

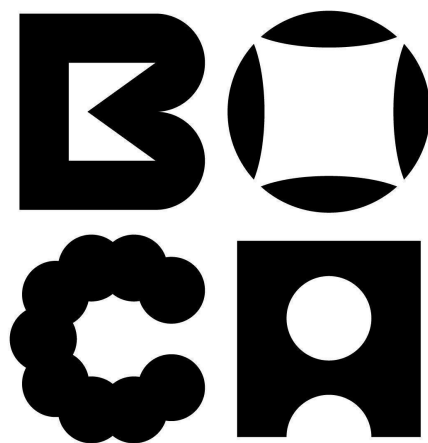
Gabriel's work has been acquired by significant public and private collections, including the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage (Portugal), the EDP Foundation MAAT (Lisbon), the SUNPRIDE Foundation (Hong Kong), and the Frédéric de Goldschmidt Collection (Brussels). Moreover, he created the poster for the film *O Ornitólogo* (2016), by Portuguese film director João Pedro Rodrigues.

Through his evocative use of form, colour, and storytelling, João Gabriel continues to push artistic boundaries, creating works that are both deeply personal and resonant with global discourses on identity, belonging, and representation.

"I want to create eroticism and represent men engaging in romantic and sexual activities. I like to portray the moments before or after sex, moments of eroticism, tenderness and intimacy. Going back to pre-AIDS times, when that trauma didn't exist yet —everything was promising and liberating. I suppose that I want to express my own experience, sexuality and desire. Ultimately, I'm just learning how to paint while enjoying myself with it."

"I paint simultaneously, and I often work on a smaller scale, rework, re-layer and even being new paintings as a way to resolve an unfinished issue encountered in a previous work. By this I mean, I often paint what might appear to be similar works sequentially. I do this not to create a lineage but rather a continual painterly process that might create an entirely new and independent work based on an existing image."

João Gabriel



www.bocabienal.org

Contact

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