

Mike Tyson's worst nightmare

Francisco Corrêa

Curated by
Sofia Medeiros
e Tomás Longo

Zé dos Bois Bookstore
23/05 to 31/08 - 2026

Monday to Saturday,
from 6pm to 10pm
Rua da Barroca, 57

Francisco Corrêa presents an installation that is, at once, the end of one story and the first step toward another yet to be told. The work is part of a larger project that will take its full form at Centro Cultural Raiano, in Idanha-a-Nova, as part of a partnership between the two institutions.

In the center of the room, a game has been interrupted. Nothing moves, but everything pulses with the tension of a gesture that never quite happened. Those who enter become silent witnesses to that moment — a frozen memory that no longer belongs to anyone, yet still summons us. It is the territory where the pain of a stranger becomes, for a moment, a life that could have been our own. The objects that are there don't represent anyone: they are what remains of a presence that has gone.

There are works about death and works against death. This one may not answer that question — perhaps it leaves it hanging, like everything else. What remains is a handful of motionless figures, a title that evokes someone else's nightmare, and the strange familiarity of a game that someone has paused.

If the upcoming exhibition opens itself with a trunk — the gesture that triggers a narrative —, the installation now on view at Zé dos Bois Bookstore shows its reverse side: the final memory of a character whom only fiction could save. Between chronicle and game, *Mike Tyson's worst nightmare* invites us to remember: *re-cordis*, to pass through the heart once more.

Mike Tyson's worst nightmare

There are lands where silence does not come from God. The valley closes in between low hills, the river flows brown among stones no one names, and the air stands so still that you can hear your own blood pulsing in your veins. It was here, or in a place like this, that a knight disappeared.

The dogs know it, sniffing the ground near the tower and backing away. The children know it, playing darts with olive wood sticks and suddenly falling silent, tugging at their brother's clothes and pulling him home.

The knight arrived one spring, perhaps one autumn. He carried a crossbow, a leather pouch with a few coins, and a way of speaking that made his words seem grander than they were. He didn't say why he had come, but everyone knew. They always come for the same thing — a treasure, a secret, an old debt. They come looking for what they haven't lost and leave without finding what they once had.

But this one did not leave. Weeks passed, months, and he stayed. He slept in the dovecote, they say, or in the ruins of a hermitage that a fire had devoured. He asked for nothing. He made no threats. He would climb the hill at dawn, with his crossbow on his back, and stay there for hours, motionless, like a stone landmark. People grew accustomed to his presence — a lady would bring him bread, a shepherd would leave him a wineskin. And he would thank them with the nod of the head reserved for equals.

The pigeons, at first, fled from him, as they flee from everyone. Then, little by little, they began to come down from the roof, to perch on the wall, to accept the grain he held out in the palm of his hand. He spoke to them — as one speaks to the rain, to the trees, or to the weather itself. Things no one understood. Things about a safe, a key, and a name that only the birds could remember. The children laughed, hidden behind the hedges; the adults did not. Experience told them that there were words that should not be spoken, and that the pigeons, when they hear them, truly hear them.

One morning, the dovecote woke up without him. The pigeons were there, on their perches, with their eyes wide open and their wings tucked in. But the knight was not — his straw bed was untouched; his crossbow lay on the ground, cocked, with the arrows lined up beside it, as if he were about to shoot and had been interrupted.

The game was left hanging in mid-play and the player had vanished.

The children searched for him. In the hills, in the rivers, in the nearby villages, in distant cities. Nothing. And his face began to fade from the memory of those who had seen him. A shepherdess swore he had light eyes; a mule driver insisted they were dark. It doesn't matter. The only thing left of him was not what he was, but what he left behind: a trace of fear in the birds' gaze.

I went to see the pigeons. In the dovecote, the wooden door was ajar, and the interior smelled of old straw and cold stone. The birds were there, on their perches, just as I had been told.

They were looking at me.

And I saw, as clearly as I see this hand that writes, that their eyes were not those of birds. They were eyes that had witnessed an ancient fear, one that did not belong to them and yet was there. Where does the pigeons' fear come from? Does it come from the knight who has gone? Or was it already there before him, and he merely awakened it? Like a bell that no one knew existed and suddenly rings.

Some say — and here their voices lower, and their eyes flee to the ground — that the knight did not disappear. That he became something else. That the pigeons carried him away, crumb by crumb, until nothing remained. Others say he is still there, standing, invisible. And the elders, without fear of being wrong, say he was never there. That the crossbow, the arrows and the dovecote were nothing more than a dream the valley had on a windy night, and that the pigeons are just pigeons, and that the fear in their eyes is the fear we put there.

But then why, when I walked away from the dovecote and night fell over the valley, did I feel the steady gaze of someone who wasn't there on my back? And why, ever since then, whenever I see a pigeon landing on an eave, do I wonder if it might be him returning, just for a second, to see if the game has started again?

Tomás Longo (Associação Lugar de Junho)

Mike Tyson's worst nightmare,

2025

Papier-mâché, wood, K-line,
plastic, polystyrene, and acrylic
paint

Variable dimensions

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zedosbois.org

Curated by

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