

# EX-VOTES | ART OF FAITH

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DA SILVA  
MIXED TECHNIQUE  
OVER CANVAS  
CARDBOARD  
39,5 X 29,5 CM  
PORTUGAL, 2020

CHURCH OF N.ª SENHORA DA GUIA, 16<sup>TH</sup>  
OF OCTOBER TO JANUARY 2022

Ex-vote, etymologically, comes from the Latin name *votum*, that, after the ex means “accordingly to a vote, in compliance with a vote made to the Gods, for a gift provided after an appeal”.

Therefore, we can face ex-vote as “a painting or image that is offered for the fulfilment of a vote”. It is like badges of a well succeeded exchange between the Divine Being and the human being. The believer implores to a saint a certain blessing and, if it is granted, then, he shows his gratitude.

These are offers of thanksgiving, most of it without a great monetary value but, sometimes, of great interest, as pieces of popular art. There is a wide diversity of ex-votes, it can be, for example, wax figures: legs, arms, feet, heads, several organs from the human body, even full body images.

Very common were the reproductions of oil paintings, of small size, over different supports, almost always naïf art paintings, usually made by popular autodidact artists but interesting enough.

The area most represented in the boards was the most discreet space of the family house, the bedroom, that would reveal the diseased social status, through the bed, the walls, the props, decoration or even the clothes quality.

Usually, in a top ex-vote corner, there is a celestial space, and it is there that a figure is revealed, showing signs of glory and it may be a representation of those to whom the request was addressed. In the picture lower margin, it is common, on purpose, to be told the story and the name of those who received the miracle, mentioning the name of its disease and its severity, having obtained the cure in a miraculous way.

In the age-old tradition of the graphic arts, connected with the practice of the graces memorial perpetuation, miracles and favours obtained by celestial intervention, here it comes this piece, almost naïf, as it is usual in the style of these votive arts, commemorating the 20 years of the “granted grace”, justifying the “memorabilia” in the family context and in the Hermitage cultural space, where the granting saint is venerated.

In the lower left corner, in front of a kneeler, equipped with a scarlet cloth of arms, where it can be seen the Bettencourt coat of arms, in the visible sides, we can see the benefited figure, in his knees, over a pillow, hands in pray position and up turned eyes, towards the top right corner.



TEXT: JÁCOME DE BRUGES BETTENCOURT  
PHOTO: MIKE MACIEL

In this top, over a clump with halo, it is shown the figure of Our Lady of Good Health, from the place of Varadouro, facing the applicant, crowned, with aureole and golden halo. By her side, also among the surrounding clouds, it comes the prefiguration miniature of her Invocation Hermitage, in the village and parish of Capelo, Fayal Island.

From her, it shines a compact golden flash, surrounding the applicant, expressing the granted favour. In the left top corner, as it was a vote title, in calligraphy mode, one can read: “Ex-vote made by Jácome de Bruges Bettencourt in the year 2000 to Our lady of Good Health from Varadouro”, being the grace story in the lower right corner, since the halo ray breaks the text graphical stain.