

**PRESS RELEASE**

# Portuguese artist dedicates major artwork to the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Cristina Rodrigues a former resident of Manchester and Portuguese artist is preparing an art installation for Manchester Cathedral that will be inaugurated in the autumn of 2017.

Cristina's project involves creating seven textile works for four of Manchester Cathedral's altars and it is the product of a partnership with the Municipality of Castelo Branco, a town in the interior central area of Portugal, home to the sumptuous and noblest of Portuguese embroideries, known as the Castelo Branco Embroidery.

The name Cristina Rodrigues is not unfamiliar to Manchester, a city where she has lived, studied, worked and where she began her career as an artist. She was lecturing at Manchester School of Art when, in 2014, she presented '*Women From My Country*' at Manchester Cathedral, an exhibition that was viewed thousands of visitors between July and September of that year. In 2016, Cristina appeared on the cover of the January/February issue the American magazine *SCULPTURE*, and she had a monumental exhibition across various monuments in Seville, Spain, until 20th November. She also exhibited at the Colombo Art Biennale in Sri Lanka, on invitation from Alnoor Mitha, the Biennial's curator and one of the most prominent curators in the UK.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's State Visit to Portugal. During this visit, the people of Portugal marked the occasion with an offering of a traditional bed spread embroidered in Castelo Branco especially for Her Majesty. In the autumn of 2017, the work which Cristina is dedicating to the reign of Her Majesty

will be presented in a solemn event at Manchester Cathedral, where it will remain before going on exhibition throughout the world. This gift from the People of Portugal also comes as a great sign of the Portuguese artist's love of England and as a reminder of the oldest alliance of these two countries in the world.

As part of the preparation for receiving this gift, The Dean of Manchester will lead a delegation to Portugal on 9<sup>th</sup> March to meet with dignitaries and visit the workshop where the artwork is to be produced. He will also attend a press conference at 18.00 at the Castelo Branco Municipality.

The Dean of Manchester, The Very Reverend Rogers Govender said ***“Cristina Rodrigues is an international artist and I am pleased that she has exhibited her work at Manchester Cathedral in recent years. I am looking forward to her design work on the new altar frontals that the People of Portugal are gifting to Manchester Cathedral. This is, in fact, a gift to the people of England which I am very grateful for as we renew our historic friendship between our two great nations. These works of art being prepared by our friends in Portugal will be a wonderful addition to our collections at the Cathedral and will be available to go on tour around the world. Long may our friendship and collaboration continue for the common good and for the peace of the nations of our world”.***

The Mayor of Castelo Branco, said ***“We feel proud, this is a symbolic moment in the long history of our two people and our two nations, sharing the oldest alliance in the world. For this reason the pride we feel is institutional but also personal to the people of Castelo Branco.’ Luís Correia continues, more so, since the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London, will own the largest and most interesting collection of traditional Castelo Branco embroidered bedspreads on record, outside of the Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior Museum, in Castelo Branco. I hope this will be the first of many joint projects involving Manchester and Castelo Branco.”***

**Notes for Editors - Notes for Editors - Notes for Editors**

*Castelo Branco Embroidery*

The art of embroidering, between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, was developed essentially in convents and affluent homes. It is in these lavishing environments that Castelo Branco Embroidery technique emerges.

This embroidering technique was always a very luxurious craft given the materials utilized in the production – linen and animal silk. Castelo Branco embroidered coverlets are today part of significant museum collections, such as: the Victoria & Albert Museum, in England; *MNAA – Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, in Portugal and *Museu Francisco Tavares de Proença Junior*, in Portugal.

The first Castelo Branco embroidered coverlets appeared during Portugal's Imperial period, and present two really strong influences in the selected motifs: coverlets inspired the Southern Chinese motifs and coverlets inspired by the Southern Indian motifs.

This exquisite technique travelled through land and sea and is today produced exclusively in Castelo Branco, using the finest silk and linen, and the most skilled artisans, with years of practice producing outstanding coverlets for the most exquisite architectural spaces all over the world.

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