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Culture: Challenging? Negotiating? Or Infiltrating?:
Cultural Appropriations as Aesthetic Strategy**

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Brazilian Interventionist Art in the Midst of Mass Culture: Challenging? Negotiating? Or Infiltrating?: Cultural Appropriations as Aesthetic Strategy

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Abstract: Paralleled to methods and processes of articulation intrinsic in Brazilian culture, interventionist art has become a tool for critical distance, anarchic political action, and to create subtle shifts in the oligarchic monopoly of media culture. Although culture and politics have often been linked throughout modernist Brazilian history—in the demonstrations of the Week of Modern Art in 1922, in the anthropophagic manifesto in 1928, in the Concrete project in the 1950s, and Neo-concretism in the 1960s—it was only in the 1960s, during the military dictatorship, that a more explicit expression of activist art was popularly experienced as subversive resistance against the status quo. In their manifestations of resistance, contemporary Brazilian artists created an art that became increasingly inscribed by social and political situations rather than a representation of these situations, articulating the social polarities within cultural production itself. In the 1990s, a similar mobilization in the arts reemerged, but now a new generation of artists perceived differently their relations with the institution. Instead of resisting the infamous institution, they decided to collaborate with it, creating interdependent ways of rearranging critical culture. Their educational background has also shifted from the canons of art history to the canons of communication technology and media arts. The work of collectives helped to push concepts such as anonymity and immediacy further, challenging Western canons of art history grounded on the autonomy of aesthetic form, and more current links between the auteur and discourse. These concepts have been inverted by global technologies, by the two-folded relationship between visual culture and communication. Having become aware of the subtlety of these mechanisms, Interventionist artists have attempted to redefine discursive processes through performative articulations, fostering collective processes of communication that are rooted on mechanisms of insertion, circulation, and the absorption of visual excess.

Keywords: Brazilian Contemporary Art

PARALLELED TO METHODS and processes of articulation intrinsic in Brazilian culture, interventionist art has become a tool for critical distance, anarchic political action, and for creating subtle shifts in the oligarchic monopoly of media culture. Although culture and politics have often been linked throughout modernist Brazilian history—in the demonstrations of the Week of Modern Art in 1922, in the anthropophagic manifesto in 1928, in the Concrete project in the 1950s, and in Neo-concretism in the 1960s—it was only in the 1960s, during the military dictatorship, that a more explicit expression of activist art was popularly experienced as subversive resistance against the status quo. In their manifestations of resistance, these artists created an art that became increasingly inscribed by social and political situations rather than as a representation of these situations, articulating the social polarities within cultural production itself.

The Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles describes Rio's cultural scene in the 1960s and 1970s as a time of cultural awakening and interchange of ideas among artists of all creative fields (Paulo Sergio Duarte, 2000). His work *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* examined the mechanisms of information and circu-

lation as strategies to counteract hegemonic power and control. The work consisted of stamping the phrase *Yankees Go Home* on notes of *1 cruzeiro*, and inserting them back into circulation. The series of *Insertions* was based on the artist's observation of popular practices and methods of exchange, such as the circulation of votive letters, the sending of messages in bottles or in paper-currency, and the recycling of soft-drink bottles. (Herkenhoff, 1999: 48)

Meireles' *Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project* (1970), in which he printed phrases on Coca-Cola bottles, questioned the methods and policies of the military dictatorship, replacing empty consumerist mechanism with political mass information and exchange. As Brazilian critic and curator, Paulo Herkenhoff, observes, these *Insertions* acted as local guerillas or as grassroots' interventions against capitalist mechanisms, which at the time were linked to the policies of economic and political repression of the military dictatorship. It was not unusual that artists would take the side of political criminals idealized as heroes to the members of the political left. (Herkenhoff, 1999: 48-50)

Another factor that distinguished avant-garde artists who were more politically inclined from those who were complacent to the status quo was how they



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related to the art institution. Avant-garde artists challenged the place and role of art by questioning the methods of the museum through their art process and concepts. They also started gearing their works to audiences other than the upper classes by creating art in the streets, in the slums and peripheries, which reached out to the poor and working classes.

Given a clear division between government's interests and society's needs, and an increasing diffusion between political and economic policies, some artists felt moved by the situation of the poor, interacting directly with less privileged communities. Hélio Oiticica's work involved the experience of marginalized individuals through their participation in the work and by integrating aesthetic canons—i.e., formalist ideas of monochromatic colors and geometric shapes seen in the *Parangolés*, adopted from Neo-constructivism (which borrowed from Constructivism and Neo-Plasticism)—into popular day-to-day situations, such as the organic architecture of the slums and the dancing of samba, that way blurring set divisions between high art and popular culture. By inviting a living person to participate in his art, Oiticica fused subject and object, shifting the focus from the art object as an end in itself to the process as continuum, which involved daily experiences, the body, and ritualized *Situations* as “revolutionary” forms of social and political awakening. In his series, *Parangolés* (1960-1974), capes of geometric forms and monochromatic colors assembled on the body of a samba dancer from the slums of Mangueira Hill, the body is a conduit of lived experience, emphasizing the importance of local space and transitory time over universal ideas of permanence and autonomy.

In Oiticica's *Parangolés*, the ritualized body of the marginalized subject represents its exclusion from elitist cultural constructs of society. This ritualized body is not reified by society's mechanisms of production and consumption; it is erased from the city's administration in its “classificatory operations.” Michel de Certeau observes:

Administration is combined with a process of elimination in this place organized by 'speculative' and classificatory operations. On the one hand, there is a differentiation and redistribution of the parts and functions of the city, as a result of inversions, displacements, accumulations, etc.; on the other there is a rejection of

everything that is not capable of being dealt with in this way and so constitutes the 'waste products' of a functionalist administration (abnormality, deviance, illness, death, etc.). (De Certeau, 1993: 94-95)

The *Parangolé P 15, Cape 11* (1967), worn by Nildo da Mangueira, with the words *Incorporo a Revolta* (“I Embody the Revolt”), points to both “embodying” as “being possessed” and “revolt” as a state of transgression, a transgression that is not individual, but communal, in the social imaginary of Afro-Brazilians. The religion of the majority of Afro-Brazilians in the 1960s was mainly the syncretic rituals of Candomblé and Umbanda, which fused magic, possession of spirits, music and dance. The “violent” dances of war or hunt of the African and Native ancestors are embodied in Oiticica's *Parangolé*, mixing fetishism and a state of revolt or resistance against the dominant culture. This resistance transgresses an immediate sense of history through the communication and possession of spirits, and the connection with African ancestors. This transgression is perceived not only as a transgression of the dominant culture and history, but also as a redefinition of class status.¹ Thus, it is important to state that not only members of the African race are involved in the syncretic sects, but members of other races and classes are also believers and participants, as there are Afro-Brazilians who choose not to participate or believe in these sects.²

The connection between the *Parangolé* and the Afro-Brazilian cults is mediated through the *samba*—since the main idea in the *Parangolé* is the *samba*-dancing body of the participant. In the rituals, the dances are accompanied by the percussion rhythms of the *atabaque* or the *agogô*. By bringing art to the streets, to the slums, and mixing it with the carnival, Oiticica challenges the traditional space of art—the museum—and traditional viewers—the elite—creating new spaces and new audiences. His work brings to the fore the main dichotomies of “high” art—culture versus nature—which refers to the importation of cultural ideologies by the elite and the erasing of vibrant popular expressions grounded on ritual.

Today, a critique on the exoticization of the poor by feminists and cultural studies' academics has become part of the complex relationship between artists

¹ It is important to point out that in the local macro dynamics, class stratification is far more determinant of inclusion or exclusion in the local dominant culture than race. The reason is both social and political. Socially, it defines Brazil's national identity as embedded in its colonial past—in which all Brazilians are a product of racial hybridity—and politically, it places Brazil side-by-side with other developing countries, emphasizing more their plight toward economic ascendance and further independence from First World countries. Although the issue of race is used as a stigma that limits one's ascendance toward upper-class statuses, once the person has ascended, racism alone will not impede that person to sustain or continue growing in economic or class statuses.

² In the case of the latter, the main reason has been the growing influence of Evangelization in the last 20 years, which today, 45 years after Oiticica's *Parangolés*, has become the main religion for the poor and working classes, as well as for the “new rich.” These new middle and upper-middle class groups who have gained economic status through new businesses since the 1980s, have also been the main proponents of the influence of Evangelization through local politics.

and residents of slums and peripheries. While the collaborative projects of high art and other cultural markets (film, literature, and media culture) depict the poor as protagonists of a “new” narrative of heroic marginalization, the rhetoric of poverty becomes the new subject of media exploitation and political partisanship. Poverty becomes also a product of capitalization for non-profit businesses, and its spectacle fosters internal tensions between residents and the police, increasing the stigmatization of the residents by outsiders, as well as the repression by drug dealers who are the governing power of these communities. This is why some contemporary artists utilize the strategy of anonymity to foster a more egalitarian and immediate relationship with the street viewer, creating art that communicates, and that is a transient part of everyday living, rather than a marketable object, or a canonical emblem.

The *Parangolata* (2002-2004), by the Brazilian artist Edson Barrus, is a work reminiscent of Hélio Oiticica’s *Parangol é* (1961 to 1974). *Parangol é* means, in popular slang, confusion, noise, and chaos. The *parangolata* is a linguistic mixture using the suffix and morpheme (*para-ango*) and *lata* (which means “soda can”). As the *Parangol é*, which is made with found objects, the *Parangolata* is the assemblage of found soda cans. The soda can’s economic value is based both on its product—the soda—and on its emptiness, the can itself. Soda cans are a commodity for small businesses that make some

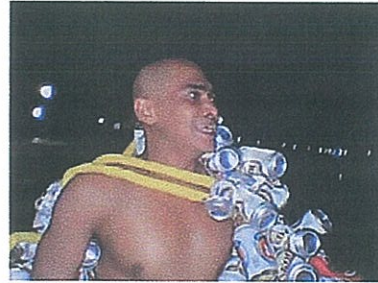


Edson Barrus, *Parangolata*, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2003)

Since the 1990s, a new generation of Brazilian artists reawakened some of the concepts manifested by avant-garde artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Searching for anonymity and for new audiences for their art, their focus has been on collaborative approaches with other artists and viewers. Whether many of these artworks are accessible to less literate audiences or not, their aesthetic lexicon is still orchestrated within an elitist intellectual discourse. Despite the control of the foundations and institutions, artists continue to challenge the status quo by changing the rules that apply to the arts. The focus on the process as a strategy of immediacy ignores the emphasis on the object as a consumable product, and brings artists’ works to the streets and to alternative spaces outside

profit out of their collection and recycling, in which the employees who collect them are usually homeless people. In Barrus’s work, the connection between the body and the soda can suggest similar ideas to the *Parangol é*, such as the body in movement, in a state of celebration, or moving as a sign of resistance. The difference is that the *Parangolata* does not represent the permanence usually given to the object of art. We can compare Barrus’ work with Gabriel Orozco’s *Island within an Island*, 1993, in which there is a clear connection between the subjective content of art—here not formalist and fetishistic or transformative of economic value, but simply as language of cultural critique—and the temporary condition of the materials that define it.

There are also differences in the level of resistance that both Oiticica’s *Parangolés* and Barrus’ *Parangolatas* have with the institution. Oiticica’s piece confronts the museum, challenging its authority. Barrus’s *Parangolata* avoids the connection with the museum, and does not attempt to create sensationalism by engaging the work with the institution, rejecting the exploitation of the media at large. It also avoids the kind of attention that would compromise his methods, or that would be geared solely to advance his career as an artist. Barrus claims that his work should be anonymous, merging it with participants who are more “invisible,” such as the homeless.



the patriarchal constraints of the institution since the 1960s. These tendencies of disrupting the status quo are so tightly constructed within the politics of culture that it becomes difficult to state whether the “text” or language of art has become more readable among the poor classes. Barthes points out that in earlier histories, before the onset of democratic culture, reading and writing were equally privileges of class and signifiers of greatest social division.

Rhetoric, the great literary code of those times, taught one to *write* (even if what was then normally produced were speeches, not texts). Significantly, the coming of democracy reversed the word of command: what the (secondary)

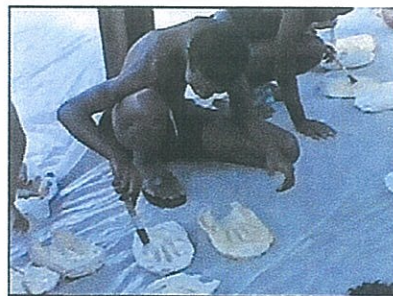
School prides itself on is teaching to *read* (well) and no longer to write (consciousness of the deficiency is becoming fashionable again today; the teacher is called upon to teach pupils to 'express themselves', which is a little like replacing a form of repression with a misconception). In fact, *reading*, in the sense of *consuming*, is far from *playing* with the text (Barthes, 1971; 1985: 173).

High art in any method or concept tends to become textual and discursive, representing an internal rhetoric that excludes non-initiated audiences. Artists continue to redefine the limits of art, using the body in space as a source of resistance to purely visual situations, previously connected to modernist ideas of representation. Artworks that emphasize issues of space have become increasingly associated with notions of "anti-art." The process of the work as interactionist is imperative for this art. It departs from the concept of space as a reversal approach to that of "purely" optical art, which has already been appropriated by media cultures. The concept of space has been vital for artists to question the repressive policies of the status quo. Space and process were connected, given that it was in physical space that art became experimental. A continuous time can be exemplified by an art that includes the conception of its idea, the collection and application of materials, the exploration of these materials in relation to viewers or participants, as well as the ongoing negotiations of discourse and practice, dislocating and redefining high art into living culture. Today, space and time seem fused, as cyber-technology and mass communication continue to explore time factors in the reproduction of virtual space. This is why many artists took a new interest on issues that bring the

body to the center of aesthetic discourse. Performing seemed to have become a language of resistance, because one can utilize performance to speak anything without having to face the consequences of being criminalized. But, artists need to be authorized by the institution to articulate their ideas without police harassment. The art institution legitimizes the artist for free speech.

The association of art practices with social and economic productions can be guided by the concept of articulation theorized by Stuart Hall. For Hall, articulation can allow us to think specific practices and their contradictory mechanisms that, although constituted in different ways and times, can "nevertheless be thought together." Hall stresses that the structuralist paradigm can serve to orient our ability to "conceptualize the specificity of different practices (analytically distinguished, abstracted out), without losing its grip on the ensemble which they constitute" (Hall, 1980a: 69). Adapting Hall's thought to my own investigations, I argue that interventionist art can articulate theory and local social relations through the use of structuralist mechanisms of accessibility and communicability of the media culture.

Contemporary artists Maurício Dias and Walter Riedweg have tried to reformulate the lexicon of art with an iconography constructed by less privileged classes. Creating art as dialogue with individuals and communities of the margins, their art practices involve anthropological methods of research and interterritoriality, which sustain the awareness of specific differences as functions in the fostering of dialogue. Their work creates interactive experiences that could be extended to distinct geographical and cultural contexts. The school, the prison, and the experience of exile were subjects to be shared between the artists and distinct populations.



Dias & Riedweg, *Devotionalia*, Rio de Janeiro, 1994-1997

In "Devotionalia" the artists worked with more than 600 children and teens from the streets and slums of Rio, in collaboration with many social workers and employees from charity associations. Dias and Riedweg used a mobile studio to create wax castings of the participants' hands and feet. In each cast was a wish from a participant. The artists called the pro-

cess of collecting wishes from the young participants, a collective process of enunciation and exchange, redirecting popular practices into an experimental and continuum discourse of high art. "Devotionalia" can be compared to the process of casting in John Ahearn's *Bronx' Bronzes* (1986-1991), in which community residents became the main representat-

ives of the piece. The difference is that in “Devotionalia,” each participant became co-creators of the installation by learning to cast their own feet and hands in clay, plaster and wax. These sculptures resulted in an installation of collective ex-votos placed “not in the church, but in the museum, not



Dias & Riedweg, *Devotionalia*, 1994-1997, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio, and traveling through other museums in Europe, the installation later returned to be displayed at the National Congress in Brasilia. Dias & Riedweg’s project was expanded into a series of video conferences via Internet, which included twenty federal political deputies and senators debating with eighteen of Rio’s

non-governmental organizations. The subject of the debate was the stigmatization of these teens by the consenting society, and their persecution and murder by the police. After the death of several of the boys less than a year later, these 86 hours of video recordings became an important documentation of social crime. (Dias & Riedweg, 2002: 34)



Dias & Riedweg, *Devotionalia*, 1994-1997

It is the process of involvement that makes the dialogue effective. As Grossberg has observed, “articulation is the production of identity on top of differences, of unities and fragments, of structures across practices. Articulation links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meaning to that reality, this experience to those politics. And these links are themselves articulated into larger structures, etc.” (Grossberg, 1992: 54; Slack, 1996, 1996: 115) The dialogue that artists create with the homeless is not only compelling to their own artworks, but also to the institutions and nonprofit organizations that support them. Their support, even if connected to internal interests and political agendas, fosters other social mobilizations, multiplying the possibilities of integration between classes and political positions.

As media culture took over the space of cultural production and consumption, artists decided to interact and challenge the subjective response of pedestrians in relation to the overpowering appeal of the media.

The art of “collectives” give new meaning to concepts such as authorship, propriety, and medium, expanding the meaning of anonymity, of art as language and process. Collectives employ site-specificity, which implies working directly on spatial areas and applying the artwork to the surrounding architecture. These groups work with language rather than objects, making a dialogue with other visual imagery. Their practices may include traditional printing techniques to compete with state-of-the-art advertising; performances that aim at creating dialogues with the viewer; and video projections and

installations that deal directly with the commercial life of the city. Their goals are to counteract the effects of technology by reclaiming the role of the subject in daily life, and to emphasize critical languages of subversion against the monopoly of mainstream culture.

Atrocidades Maravilhosas (Marvelous Atrocities) is a group of 20 artists working in the streets of Rio and São Paulo. Their work began spontaneously in 2000 as a need to respond to the monopolizing

strategies of advertising billboards and posters placed all over the city. One of the artists, Alexandre Vogler, talked about the first project being a series of 250 posters with social commentaries to be placed on different street walls in Rio. Vogler's poster was the image of hands with the sentence "These are your mother's hands after using detergents." According to him, all the themes of the project were general, targeting a general public. Their making was fairly inexpensive.



Vogler, "These are your mother's hands after using detergents," 2002 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo: Claudia Leão.

Vogler states that emerging artists are much more influenced by media culture (e.g., visual displays, billboards, Hollywood films, MTV), than by theories of visual arts or art history. He points out that art is only able to compete with the effects of visual culture through works that are large in scale and through the use of redundancy. Redundant messages are more effective in media cultures because they diffuse information. The artists' use of redundancy is a strategy to diffuse messages that are critical—creating generalized critiques of negative situations (e.g., police racism, detergents that damage women's hands). The use of universal symbols and easily absorbed messages is fundamental for the effective result of mass-assimilation. Images appropriated from media culture are the most effective tools of representation. Furthermore, redundancy for artists like Vogler means to make works that affect the masses—works that incorporate themes that are already part of the language of media display, and works that become, at the same time, redundant in meaning and effective in scale. The main challenge for artists, however, is not the message or the medium, but the economic resources to create works in large scale and accessibility. (Vogler, 2004)

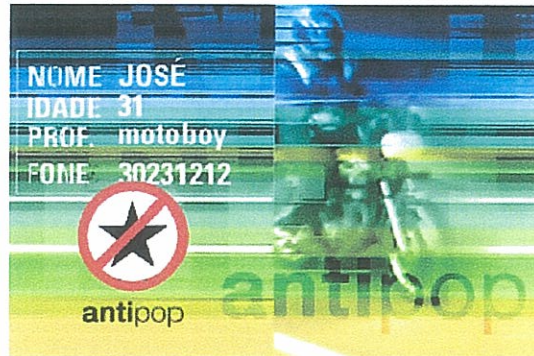
The influence of media culture on this new generation of artists has also determined different approaches to methods of articulation that do not reject dominant culture, but negotiate it. These artists utilize media technologies and languages (processes of in-

sertion, working with high volume of information, focusing on large scales or large quantities, redundancy, the use of collective messages, and collaborative approaches). This approach has led many artists to create groups and to become anonymous. Homogenizing audiences and becoming anonymous producers are also strategies used by media cultures to diffuse information and to reach out to wider audiences. These artists' messages, however, are quite different from those of media cultures, which are usually formulated under the goal of commercial gains and ratings. Artists' messages, in contrast are critical to issues of governmental corruption, police brutality and racism, the killing of the homeless, and the banalization of media culture. These messages are used as methods of communication and negotiation, including physical interactions with pedestrians, in such a way that fosters dialogue among groups. These negotiations are most effective when they are done directly with marginal communities, when they provide new social roles for the art process, and when they are not dependent on institutional support.

The work of the group BijaRí, from São Paulo, explores the life of the peripheries of São Paulo through digital photography and video. They can be compared to graffiti art due to their interjection with immediate marginalized communities and popular practices. Though the work of the group is rendered in a-state-of-the-art technology, with digital photo-

graphy, sophisticated audio installations, or video projections, these fragments of their excursions are merely visual documents of the real work, which is the process itself. "Motoboy" (2002), for example, depicts the working day of José Nascimento, a young man from the poor class, feverishly driving his motorcycle throughout the city. No one knows where he works or who he works for, only that he drives his motorcycle the whole day in the dangerous traffic of São Paulo. The motoboys appeared in the mid

1990s as small companies offering delivery services to their customers, confronting the rush hours' traffic-jams in cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In the late 1990s, the motoboys became increasingly connected to the services of drug dealers in the slums, though there are still numerous motoboys who work as deliverymen of goods from stores, restaurants, pharmacies, and others of the hundreds or thousands small business in the overpopulated cities of Rio and São Paulo. (BijaRi, 2003)



BijaRi, Motoboy, São Paulo, Brazil, 2002

The artist Monica Nador began making large paintings and murals in the late 1990s, as a result of her observations of anonymous icons painted on the

walls of São Paulo's peripheries. She appropriated these symbols into patterns that suggest an alternative iconography in the margins of the city.



Monica Nador, *Wall Paintings*, 2002, São Paulo, Brazil.

She also recreated these murals on the walls of the Museum of Modern Art and on other cultural spaces. Her work continued to change and she started to involve the residents of the city's peripheries in her murals, teaching the residents to reclaim these icons and decorate their own residential areas. She designed a project with the support of a non-profit organization called Associação Despertar, working with residents of poor communities, asking them to

paint how they lived, their day-to-day experience, their histories. Using the same kind of pattern of her work, reminiscent of mural techniques, Nador and the residents began to paint their icons inside and outside their homes, and on street walls in the neighborhood. They used a technique called *mascara* (mask), making paper stencils or modes, and then pasting paint over them.



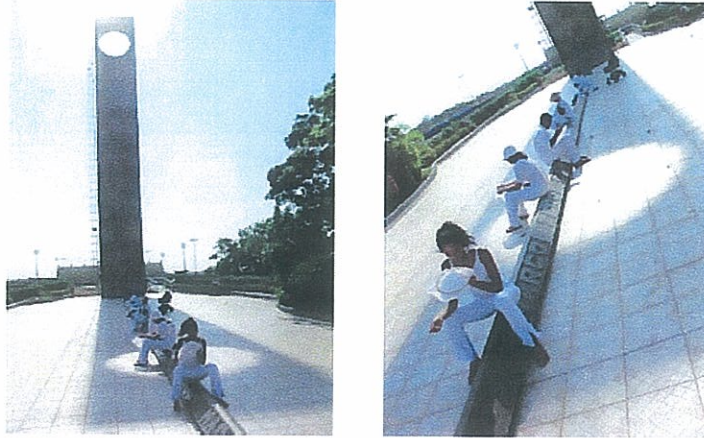
Monica Nador Painting with Residents outside a home in Jardim Miriam (2003)



Jardim Miriam, São Paulo, 2003

Little by little more residents got involved. Nador's intention was to mobilize the community, but also to create some sort of profession for them. For the project to become effective it needed to be continuous for at least one year. However, after three months, the project was cancelled. "It was frustrating for me and for the children," said the artist. "I realized then that I had to work without institutional support." That is when she formed Jamac (Jardim Miriam Arte Clube), a group of artists who would work inside the community of Jardim Miriam (Nador, 2003). Jamac's proposition is similar: it brings art to the poor communities, and involves their residents in the process and theory of art. In 2001, Jamac rented a house in the poor district of Jardim Miriam to work directly with its residents, teaching basic concepts and methods in painting, and creating a project for gardening and pinhole photography.

Another group, Urucum, from Macapá, the capital of the state of Amapá in the north of Brazil, deals with various local situations as they celebrate a back to basics lifestyle. They create large and long interventions, sometimes taking the whole day or weekend. The intervention, *Imaginary Divisor: Poetics/Politics in the Center of the World*, was held at the central square of Macapá, located on the equator, to celebrate the equinox of the sun on September 26, 2003. On the divisor line between the northern and southern hemisphere, the artists sat down to embroider white handkerchiefs with the words "divisor" and "imaginary." The group is aware of the political pressures in regard to territorial divisions in the world today, and the fact that economics play an important part in the decisions of world powers, but they insist that culture is also fundamentally important. (Urucum, 2004)



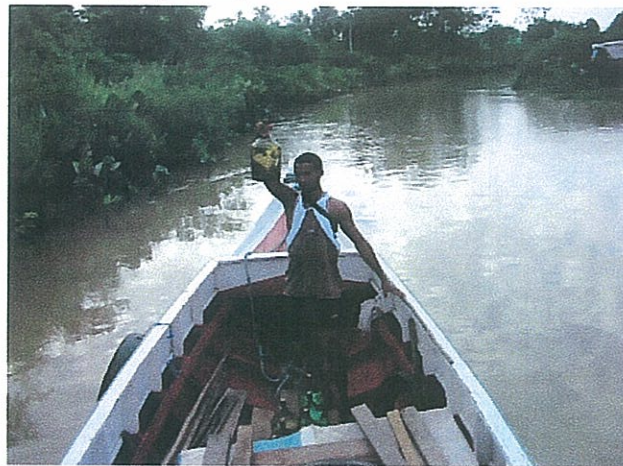
Urucum, *Imaginary Divisor: Poetics/Politics in the Center of the World, central square of Macapá, located on the equator, September 26, 2003* Macapá, Northern Brazil



Urucum, *Imaginary Divisor, 2003*

Urucum's intervention, "*Mensagens Vazias*" ("Empty Messages"), uses ritual to celebrate a forgotten art. In the new year's eve of 2003, the group asked parti-

cipants to think of an emotion they wished to have, writing it down on a piece of paper and placing it inside a bottle to be thrown in the river.



Urucum, *Empty Messages, 2003, Northern Brazil*



Urucum, *Empty Messages*, 2003, Northern Brazil

This process is not so different from popular Afro-Brazilian celebrations in other parts of Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, etc.) that involve the throwing of flowers in the sea to Yemanjá. This intervention, however, was near the Amazon, with direct influence from indigenous cultures. The idea of mixing art with popular culture was still a bit new for the popu-

lation, which asked questions such as, if they would have to pay to participate or if it had anything to do with witchcraft. What is different is the mixing of art themes with themes of popular culture. The artists insist that the idea behind this intervention was to make art outside the market of art, reclaiming the mystical art of early indigenous societies.



Urucum, "Empty Messages," Brazil, 2003

Groups of artists such as Urucum, Atrocidades Maravilhosas, Jamac, and BijaRi are examples of how artists are uniting to create works that involve the masses, and aware of how important their participation is in the articulation of knowledge. These interventionist processes of articulation can be both socially and politically inclined, as well as mere mechanisms of the communication engine. More importantly, by prioritizing articulations as their main languages of constructive knowledge, interventionist artists foster new directions for the arts. Contemporary articulation can be interpreted as an effect of

globalization within culture. Multinationals create the "empires" that will regulate and administer these global visual codes, constituting new forms of displacement and exploitation. By interacting with the process of media cultures, artists can rearrange the visual codes that are implied. Spatial interactions counteract visual oligarchic networks, repositioning visual and cultural collective discourses into physical dialogues between individuals.

Through globalization, the value of art has changed. Sophisticated media markets affect today's art production and its circulation in the global eco-

onomy, but art cannot be measured through its effects in the economic market. According to Nelson Gavazzoni, auctioneer from Bolsa de Leilões da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro (Auction House of the City of Rio de Janeiro), the value of art is ideological. Art is not equivalent to its exchange value because art is valued over time, and the art market is not able to fully state its value. He observes: "What is sensed in the last ten years is the velocity of the processes of integration. Information that has been produced in certain geographical areas is not even digested yet by the people in that area, while that same information is digested somewhere else in a much faster pace. In my understanding, globalization has two movements: one, when homogenizes information; and the other, when it diversifies its effects through its processes of distribution." (Gavazzoni, 2004) This explains why *Interventionist* art is more efficient as a collective process, and why artists don't need to claim individual authority over art. This also poses a problem: of the value of these kinds of art processes. Their role in society has shifted from the commodity to that of language, which makes it less able to survive without outside support. They become an extension of communication, but autonomous in their formal elements. To some extent, the aesthetic form of these works is intrinsically connected to the social context that they represent.

Collective tendencies that homogenize in the name of a dominant ideology are consistently rejected by interventionist artists. Their motivations do not fall into any nationalistic discourse. In fact, their works show their strong opposition to discourses that are

created in the name of a higher power. Although these artists do not use their work to represent national policies, their ideas are consistent with the political ideologies of the current administration. In my interview with the Secretary of Culture, Paulo Miguez, he stresses: "The mission of Lula's government is not to feed the Brazilian people or to guarantee the distribution of income, but to reclaim national dignity. The great question posed to the Ministry of Culture was how to become strategic in formulating cultural politics, and without culture we cannot change the country. And this cannot be done utilizing economic mechanisms. The role of culture is fundamental in the incorporation of the democratic dimension of the country." In Ernesto Laclau, the same discourse that constitutes the subject position and the social agent also constitutes the system of rules in which they apply. (Laclau, 1990. Hall 1997: 70) Artists and politicians may share similar views or actions within different social discourses, given that the discourses that they enact already predict their social roles. However, it is through the negotiation of these enacted roles that the discourses will change, becoming less the discourses of power and more those of articulation.

It is in the negotiation between action and meaning that the work of articulation is most effective. Although claiming a place for the poor and working classes in the center of cultural knowledge can be a positive political strategy to advance social movement, it is only effective if there is a constant involvement of diverse identities and classes.

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My work encompasses art practices, art criticism, curating, and writing scholarly and creatively. My scholarly research has been shaped around global perspectives of art, particularly on Brazilian contemporary art, and on international interdisciplinary art and new media. Among my recent research in art theory are: artworks drawing from mechanisms and strategies of media cultures (e.g., dissolution, diffusion, persuasion, articulation, etc.); artworks using intersectionist theory as a peripheral dynamics to those of dialogical practices; my work on recent shifts in mimesis and connectedness; and recent writings on new discursive methods in teaching.

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