



revista
brasileira
de estudos
em
dança



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HÉRCULES, Rosa. Consensus ou dissent? *Revista Brasileira de Estudos em Dança*, ano 01, n. 02, p. 341-355, 2022.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this experience report is to present and critically reflect on the process and resulting products from *Grua Flow Mexa* project, implemented throughout the year of 2021. The project was contemplated by the 29th edition of the Municipal Program Dance Fomentation to the São Paulo city and, invited by Grua, I've acted as dramaturgist in it. By presenting the genealogy of the two groups involved in the process, the proposal is to analyze the cooperation possibilities and the exchanges establishment between different artistic trajectories who have the Streets as their action field.

KEYWORDS: Body. Habit. Power. Creation Processes. Contemporary Dramaturgies.

RESUMO

O propósito deste relato de experiência é o de apresentar e refletir criticamente acerca do processo e dos produtos resultantes do projeto *Grua Fluxo Mexa*, implementado ao longo do ano de 2021. O projeto foi contemplado pela 29^a edição do Programa Municipal de Fomento à Dança para a cidade de São Paulo e, a convite do Grua, nele atuei como dramaturgista. Ao apresentar a genealogia dos dois grupos envolvidos no processo, a proposta é a de analisar as possibilidades de cooperação e do estabelecimento de trocas entre diferentes trajetórias artísticas que têm as Ruas como campo de atuação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Corpo. Hábito. Poder. Processos de Criação. Dramaturgias Contemporâneas.

Consensus or Dissent?

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Briefly

The Municipal Dance Promotion Program for São Paulo was created in September 2006 through Law 14.071/05. Since then, 02 (two) editions have been published yearly. Councilors from the Workers' Party presented the popularly-initiated bill: Tita Dias, José Américo, and Nabil Bonduki, who accepted the demands of the Mobilização Dança movement. The purpose of the movement was to obtain public funds to guarantee the conditions maintenance for the artistic works production by those involved in the lawsuit. In addition, activism brought together artists and dance bookishs who had in common a commitment to implementing research in the dance field. Initially, the law provided that the program would encourage continued research in contemporary dance. The proposal, here, isn't to discuss problems related to the logic of public notice and the deviations from purposes that occurred in the years of existence of the Promotion. However, it's worth highlighting two events that have occurred over the years. One of them concerns the misconception of some municipal managers of understanding contemporary as a synonym of currentness; the other is that all artistic lineages began to be enunciated as contemporary since this became the passport to be promoted. These facts, consequently, suppressed the necessary reflections on the assumptions that characterize contemporary artistic movements.

Fortunately, the above facts are not present in the project submission by Grua to the Promotion Program, which had as its structuring axis the approximation with Mexa, because both groups developed their artistic activities in the Streets. For some years now, Grua has been thinking about its practice. The exchanges with another group, with such distinct constitutive traits and who practice a different understanding of the street, presented themselves as an opportunity to transform and revise the assumptions adopted in the actions that develop. Thus, the partnership between these two groups was born. They were willing to face the challenge of cooperating and creating together.

Genealogies

Grua (Street Gentleman) was created in 2002 by the initiative of dancers who were interpreters of the São Paulo City Ballet, one of the stable bodies of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. Initially, in my understanding, going to the Streets referred to the search for freedom spaces of expression and resistance to the institutionalization of their bodies and to establish another condition of artistic performance. The idea was to be different from the Company's heavy and disciplinary day-to-day, guided by a modelizing tacit consensus about the body that dances. A routine structured by technique classes, rehearsals, and presentation of third-party choreographic pieces, often without access to the logic inherent in the compositions performed.

Disciplinary technology emerged in the 17th century and aimed at training and monitoring the individual body. This “anatomy-politics of the human body” sees man as a complex machine. Instead, it constitutes and structures perceptions and habits that it oppresses and veils. In opposition to traditional forms of domination such as slavery and servitude, discipline can increase the body's forces for its economic use and weaken them for its political submission. This coupling of economic and political imperatives underlies the discipline's peculiarity and status as a technology. (LENKE, 2018, p. 56-57)

In its 20 years of existence, with its continuity guaranteed by Jorge Garcia, Osmar Zampieri, and Willy Helm, many dancing bodies passed through the group, but without a doubt, all of them possessed an undeniable technical excellence necessary for art making. Nevertheless, there is a problem to be faced: how does this body not allow itself to be captured and transformed into a technology of domination?

However, the presentation of a choreographic composition articulated in the immediate present, with improvisation as a strategy, calls for constructing other perceptive skills different from those required on traditional stages. The social choreographies, although with agreed circulation rules, are unpredictable. Thus, a first question arises: How to move from a controlled and

protected environment (stage) to another (street), where a high rate of unpredictability is continuously occurring?

The specialization of the body that dances, that is, the perceptive abilities of the movements while movement happens, and spatial orientation and location are not enough for bodies that intend to work with group improvisation. It's also necessary to develop the ability of anticipation, which consists, in summary, of deliberately activating the perception of what the movement of the other indicates, as well as of recognizing the action/relationship proposals that the announced gesture carries. It's up to each member to choose whether or not to adhere to this proposal that emerged within the group. Some indications have the power to operate as attractors and are externalized by the great adherence they conquer.

At that moment, what is presented as a movement acquires the possibility of having its relationships developed and deepened. Thus, the GRUA operates and moving – in and with – the urban space is configured, then, as a purpose.

Due to the genealogy of GRUA, I think that is important to open a parenthesis to look at what the Municipal Theater symbolizes. In order to mirror the eloquence of the Paris Opera and follow the current architectural trends in Europe at the time of its construction (1903/11), the building was erected as a symbol of an idea of civility associated with urban and technological development. A monument conceived to certify the powers of command, political and economic, of the industrial and coffee elites of São Paulo.

By reproducing European values, which had already drawn the abyssal lines between “high culture” and “low culture,” the idea of art as synonymous with erudition is adopted. This fact demarcates which productions should occupy its stage and which people could attend its hierarchically projected audiences. Such classist colonial premises are present in the DNA that constitutes the stable bodies of the theater, founded to lead the naturalization process of this type of sociocultural order. Among them is the Corpo de Baile Municipal (1968), later designated as the São Paulo Ballet City (1981).

Regardless of professional performance in official companies, we cannot ignore the ascendancy that (romantic) ballet techniques had in the formation of dancing bodies in Brazil. We also know that when we learn ballet steps, together with them, understandings of body, movement, space, expression, and language, among others, are also acquired. Bodies formatted to convey anthropocentric ideas of the world, presented through clear and distinct lines (analogous to cartesian clear and distinct ideas), interdicting the occurrence of impulses that escape the control of sovereign rationality, occupying places that do not strain the limits of an institutionally standardized order. Most of the time, bodies are technologically equipped as replicators of knowledge, unaware that they are used to replicate the inherent logic of the dominant classes positions of power and privilege.

Anyone who has spent hours of their life with their hands on a ballet barre is not immune to being contaminated by these consensual understandings materialized by classical techniques. Not to mention the modernist training techniques that arrived here, especially the americanism ones. For the most part, it linked to the expression of an inner space strictly psychological, which publishes its emotions and personal feelings through the presentation of well-designed body images that aim to occupy a previously given space (due to the misconception of understanding space as a synonym for place) and associate movement solely with its continuous flow (analogous to industrial production lines). Bodies are constructed to disregard the economic conditions and political circumstances of the world that this individualized “me” inhabits.

It is not a question of denying the knowledge produced by dance training techniques. On the contrary, we are tributaries of the physical skills they enable, especially concerning the possibilities of reorganizing movement as an artistic language, that is, as a communication media. However, it is always necessary to remember that dance is not limited to its steps and that if we want to put something in progress in our field of action, it is necessary to produce critical reflections about the understandings related to

our doings, favoring the transformation of what is known in acquaintance. Another issue to be observed is that training in dance and professional performance based on learning steps (prepared by third parties) do not enable us to recognize the specificities of the instructions that constitute them and, thus, favor the restriction of the possibilities of transformation of the movement habits they establish.

Every experience produces knowledge, whether or not we know the theoretical-practical lineages to which this knowledge belongs. Nevertheless, despite repeating experiences tending to stabilization, there will always be the possibility of change within them. Although what is lived cannot be erased, since nothing that occurs in the body is disposable, everything can be modified, obviously keeping the respective temporalities necessary for reconfiguring the information that formed us. Therefore, encounters and exchanges resulting from partnerships with differences are always welcome in the search for the destabilization of what is consolidated in our bodies. Moreover, it was from Grua's desire for transformation that the rapprochement with the Mexa group was born and, fortunately, with the admirable Trans Women who are part of it.

Mexa was created in 2015 within the Centers for Culture and LGBT Reception, created during the administration of Mayor Fernando Haddad, aimed at assisting people in vulnerable conditions. The centers offer decent housing for those who, until then, lived on the streets. Inevitably, given the conditions of its origin, Mexa carries political issues in its genesis and looks to the streets as a space for activating possible reflections on our behavioral habits, automated reproducers of a cursed heritage that perpetuates the colonial, racist and misogynistic mentality, which extends its elitist values to homophobia and transphobia. Therefore, the relationships between Art and Life are inseparable in Mexa's artistic productions. Moreover, although they assume autobiographical reports as a substrate of creation, the mistake of self-referentiality is not committed, as the political dimension of personal experiences is evident in all their actions.

The power of its urban interventions materializes, in its fullness, the famous phrase of Pina Bausch: “It is personal, but it is not private.” It occurs through actions that manifest, publish and denounce the erasures suffered, often physically eliminated for being socially excluded bodies and intellectually minorized by bourgeois hypocrisy. It is a given that it is up to the bourgeois oligarchies to promote inequalities constantly and insist on determining which bodies are authorized to have their voice. Mexa arrives, messing with this bizarre social order that uselessly tries to silence everything that escapes this anachronistic morality and its heteronormative binary logic.

This activism, which shakes the homeostasis of all the bodies involved through the dissent it promotes, was present at the three Grua-Mexa meetings (from 06/16th to 06/22nd, from 07/16th to 07/20th and from 08/09th to 08/12nd of the year of 2021). It is all marked by an unrestricted availability to the other and by the surprising intensity of exchanges. In the first meeting, the experiments were conducted by Mexa; in the second, by GRUA (both occurred at Casa do Povo, involving few people per day due to the devastating health crisis we were thrown into); and, in the third, to close this phase of the Grua Fluxo Mexa project, with everyone vaccinated, we went to the streets. After all, they were the ones who initially brought together two groups with such different trajectories.

The artistic encounters between Grua and Mexa, shrewdly named Mana-a-Mano², mobilized multiple affects in terms of affection and affectation. Moreover, the artistic exchanges with Mexa lit a red light in our thoughts because when we cease to be affected by inequalities, prejudices, and discrimination, as well as when we cease to be indignant with all the resulting violence, we thoughtlessly abdicate our humanity and are assimilated by this perverse exclusionary social pact. As a result, we run the risk of reaffirming the values of whiteness and its spaces of privilege.

² **Mana-a-Mano activators:** Ale Capoeira, Anita Silvia, Anne Dourado, Barbara Brito, Daniela Pinheiro, Fernando Martins, Ivana Siqueira, Jerônimo Bittencourt, João Turchi, Jonathan Vasconcelos, Jorge Garcia, Laysa Elias, Lu Mugayar, Luiza Brunah, Osmar Zampieri, Patrícia Borges, Roberto Alencar, Roberto Lima Miranda, Rosa Hercoles, Tatiane Dell Campobello, Vinicius Francês e Willy Helm.

As expected in every creative process, the Grua/Mexa co-operation favored the emergence of many questions, fortunately without the definitive answers that usually lead to stagnation. However, on the contrary, there is a taste of wanting more, and the concerns that arise never cease. They unfold in other projects that continue to move bodies and make the city's landscapes move.

Bodies and Contexts

When understood within evolutionary assumptions, any project of an artistic nature declares the intentions that will guide the process, not a prior definition of results to be achieved (Katz, 2011). Therefore, there is no way to separate production from production conditions, as well as to recognize the fact of the incidence of variations that can redirect what was initially projected. These conditions concern the already consolidated repertoires brought by the bodies involved and the circumstantiality of the initially available resources. Based on this assumption, conditions, and circumstances are understood as inseparable and simultaneous instances inherent to any processes aimed at artistic production.

Thus, it is worth enunciating the premises adopted here to reflect on the productions that have procedurally as a substrate. It is also worth remembering that assumptions are the foundation of the possible developments and referrals that these processes will materialize. So, it is understood that:

- the environment where production takes place conditions the resulting product (e.g., painting, music, poetry, dance, etc.);
- the materiality of the medium, as well as its formal properties, delimit the modes of existence of what is produced (e.g., paint, sound, words, movement, etc.);
- contemporary artistic productions insert their procedural products into the world to ask something of it, questioning the way it is ordered, tensioning institutionally agreed norms, values and beliefs;

- the contestatory nature of art, which, through the publication of some dissent, seeks to displace sensibilities and promote changes in perceptive habits (making it imperative to add political, social, and cultural dimensions to production conditions).

According to O'Reilly (2009), in the mid-20th century, discussions regarding how the Arts represented the body underwent profound transformations. One of them, perhaps the most relevant, concerns the break with the body understanding adopted by secular conventions that sacralized, mythologized, or idealized it. The abandonment of these assumptions completely repositioned how the body had been understood. Consequently, dualistic ideas (such as those of support, vehicle, or instrument) were deliberately rejected, coming to be understood as how ideas, questions, and concerns materialize. I associate this reflection with Agamben's proposal (2015) that the body is organized as medially and, as such, is not concerned with obtaining ends, nor does it have the ability to materialize matters that are foreign to its nature.

After this rupture arises the need to approach the body as an agent in producing interfaces between the world and the sensibilities. In this paper, it is understood as communication media of the issues that constitute and cross all bodies (in terms of historical, cultural dimensions, social, political, economic and communicational that delimit both the production and the conditions of production). This perspective fully involves the body as an agent of the scenic experience in the here and now, body and culture, art and life, subject and context. For the philosopher and playwright Bojana Kunst (2015), the artist is not a subject separated from his world:

There is little to be done beyond attributing ideological blindness to an artist who opts for autonomous heteronomy (because the artist committed to the system still believes in his own unaltered autonomy). However, in a world of politics as spectacle, creative economy, and capital governed by institutionalized political and critical discourses, it is not easy to believe in undiminished³ autonomy. (Ibid., p. 09).

³ There is little to do but ascribe ideological blindness to an artist who decides on autonomous heteronomy (because the party-member artist still believes in their own undiminished autonomy).

As Agamben (2009, p. 57-59) warns us, “contemporary is that one who does not adhere to his time”; that is, he does not adhere to what is institutionally agreed upon and, above all, does not allow himself to be institutionalized. However, norms of conduct, moral values, absolute certainties, and fundamentalist beliefs are not consolidated overnight. Adopting understandings of the world and their consequent social behaviors in the public and private spheres concern construction and learning with historical and cultural ballasts. Given that, for some understanding of the world embody and acquire stability, its replication over time is necessary.

Capitalism, since its emergence in Modernity, has implemented a type of moral pedagogy aimed at building a General Intellect (Sennett, 2012), called by Virno (2013) Common Intellect and by Dardot and Laval (2016) General Rationality. This is through the implementation of power devices that naturalize social hierarchies and model the behavior of populations. In this way, political and economic domination over bodies is guaranteed, developing disciplinary devices of subjection and servitude to build docile subjectivities. Moreover, we know how relevant the role played by dance was in the construction of these bodies, especially in the 17th century.

(...) I will call the device anything that can capture, guide, determine, intercept, model, control, and ensure living beings' gestures, behaviors, opinions, and speeches. (AGAMBEN, 2009, p.40).

I call the subject what results from the relationship and the melee between the living beings and the devices. (ibid., p.41).

Thus, Foucault showed how, in a disciplinary society, devices aim to create docile but free bodies that assume their identity and 'freedom' as subjects through a series of practices, discourses, knowledge, and exercises. In the very process of its subjection. (ibid., p.46).

In a world of politics as spectacle, creative economy and capital governed by institutionalized critical and political discourses, it is very hard to believe in the undiminished autonomy.

Artists and their productions are not immune to the devices that operate in constructing general intellect in the dance environment. We must recognize that we are liable to be ensnared by their logic and that the vaccine is found in accessing the information that constitutes the context that educated us (understandings of creation, spectacle, repertoire, and technique, among others). It often intends to generate subjects incapable of producing critical reflections, understood here as ways of putting something in motion, something that moves in the direction of transformations of hegemonic mentalities in our environments. If we so wish, there is no way to escape the issues conveyed and replicated by the general intellect.

For Agamben (2009), the only way to circumvent the disciplinary technologies of domination is profanation, a way of escaping from the devices of power. “Profane, [...] is said, in the proper sense, that which, sacred or religious it was, is returned to the use and property of men”. (Ibid., p.45):

This means that the strategy we must adopt in our melee with the devices cannot be simple since it is about releasing what was captured and separated through the devices and restoring them to possible everyday use. From this perspective, I would like to talk to you about a concept I recently came to work on. It is a term that comes from the sphere of law and religion (law and religion are, not only in Rome, closely connected): profanation. (ibid., p.44).

Dissent as a form of Profanation

It is nothing new that artistic endeavors seek to strain the limits of the order their materiality imposes on them (light, sound, word, movement...). Thus, perceptive windows have opened that favor other ways of looking at this world that does everything to remain as it is, always intending to maintain the power relations it has established and that it continually establishes. Let us not be naive enough to believe that artists are immune to these devices of power, which capture desires and shape behaviors. However, Art has been one of the fields of knowledge that bravely resists these assimilation processes.

I dare say that, perhaps, this resistance is one of the most relevant features of contemporary artistic productions that, as previously mentioned, broke with secular conventions by abandoning attempts to respond to this centralized world, for some and hierarchical, for many. After all, generalizing responses are nothing more than sterile attempts in the face of the diversities and multiplicities of the extra and interpersonal relationships that occur in them. The abandonment of closed and finished speeches is another one of his traits, as there is nothing to be understood. It is not a question of meeting expectations that project idealized aspirations. Nevertheless, yes, ask, ask, ask...

The residences implemented by the Grua/Mexa partnership favored the recognition by the Gruers⁴, of their privileged places, guaranteed by the whiteness and their logic that traces the lines, geographically and epistemologically, and organize the world through the apartment and the segregation between the center and periphery, between legitimate and bastards, between included and marginal, between cabins and arenas. Lines that, in their radical nature, define those who deserve to live from those who can be killed (physically and/or symbolically).

Possible Solutions

Contaminated by these experiences, the resulting product, to finalize the project presented to the Promotion Program, received the title: *What we leave for later*, with the premiere on 02/02/22. Formalized through an itinerancy that started at Roosevelt Square and moved to the intersection of Avenues Ipiranga and São Luiz in the center of São Paulo. The urban interventions had the participation of two performers from Mexa (Luiza Brunah and Tatiane Dell Campobello), an unexpected development for the project, which occurred due to the strong connection established between them and Grua during the three residencies planned and completed in August 2021.

⁴ Gruers that perform in the Project: Alexandre Magno, Fernando Martins (trail), Jerônimo Bittencourt, Jonathan Vasconcelos, Jorge Garcia (direction/coordination), Osmar Zampieri (direction/videography), Roberto Alencar, Vinicius Francês e Willy Helm (direction).

The formalization of the work was permeated by several behavioral questions, among them: Are we still capable of cooperating? Or is the other just a simple mirroring of projected expectations? Or has the world disabled us from putting ourselves in situations of intimacy with the unknown without adopting effective practices? Fortunately, the process favored the affections to circulate in the wealth of details brought by the singularity of the different, ensuring that all bodies manifested themselves with the magnitude of their real pride.

The Grua/Mexa alchemy opened a fissure and inaugurated a dissent by exposing bodies in motion willing to transform the patterns that constituted them, bodies that find the possibility of change in availability to the other, bodies that, by abandoning their vanities, no longer need place themselves as subjects of action and, in this, lies the beauty of reinvention.

The understanding in this paper is that it is in the fissures of ambiguities, as well as in the dissent that it produces, that *counter-devices* capable of displacing preconceived understandings are found. Both concerning the world and to the bodies that inhabit it, including those that make art, on stage or in the streets. Moreover, as the purpose is not to answer, it is still up to GRUA to ask himself: What are the premises that move the movement? And, after 20 years of existence, based on which street understandings will your projects continue? Anyway, go to the streets for what? Because it is not enough to move in and with the streets. Instead, it is necessary to think about how to move – the – streets.

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Recebido em 02 de novembro de 2022.

Aprovado em 02 de novembro de 2022.

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Anda
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