

mas-
culinities,
art&potencias
from the periphery

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THE GLOBAL **g**race PROJET

Financed by RCUK's Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF), the Global Grace project, Global Gender & Cultures of Equality (www.globalgrace.net), was carried out between 2018 and 2021. The project sought to identify and mobilize artistic interventions, curatorships, and public exhibitions that enabled research and to construct inclusive approaches to gender in cultural and artistic fields. Led by a team from Goldsmiths, University of London, the project included academics and NGOs from Bangladesh, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa and the United Kingdom. In Brazil, the project grew out of a partnership between the PUC-Rio university affiliated Instituto de Relações Internacionais (IRI-PUC-Rio) and the NGOs Instituto Promundo, Instituto Maria e João Aleixo and Observatório de Favelas. The work here was carried out under the theme "Decolonizing knowledge and rebuilding masculinities through art: culture of equality in Rio de Janeiro's urban peripheries", focusing on the intersection between art and gender in order to produce equitable and non-violent masculinities in urban peripheries.



**MIAS
CULI
NITTI
ES**

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCUSSING THE CONCEPT OF MASCULINITIES?

Over the last decades, gender relations have been debated and deconstructed through several feminist contributions that remain extremely important and necessary today. In recent years, the concept of masculinities has become a crucial aspect of analysis and reflection, namely within these debates in feminism. In discussions of gender violence, with a focus on femicide and rape and other situations of risk that many women are subjected to, we analyze the ways in which gender norms limit and (re)produce stereotypes according to the expectations of society's patriarchal structure.

Patriarchal structures that (re)produce unequal gender norms and standards are, however, relational. In this sense, it is necessary to open the debate to the production of plural masculinities. What is the importance of discussing masculinities for feminist and gender studies and for reflections on a more equal and healthy life in society for all the people?

The debate about masculinities arises from ongoing developments within discussions about gender relations. **After all, how can we think about "women" without thinking about "men" since these identities are related and imbricated?**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MAN?

Just as Simone de Beauvoir affirmed that "one is not, but rather becomes, woman", with men "people aren't born virile, they become it", as Arnaud Baubérot echoed (Baubérot, 2013). Within our social imaginary and our very relationships, when we are questioned about what is to "be a man",

we are immersed within a series of meanings and symbols.

A masculine body is expected to be strong, virile, unsentimental, protecting, providing, "macho". Various meanings and attitudes are taught to, repeated to and instilled in boys from an early age about what it means to grow up and be a man. If they do not match expectations and adhere to certain social norms, they will lose social status through an association with femininity, as if the latter is inferior.

Men are expected to not demonstrate feelings and affections. It is expected (and valued) that men be violent, sharp, competitive, hard and rough in their relationships. Men are expected to be heterosexual and never demonstrate desire for the same gender; otherwise, they run the risk of having their masculinity questioned. Men are expected to always be assertive, objective, and brief, without being able to reflect on their ideas or admit that they do not know about a certain topic. Men are expected to be the family breadwinner, which, in a patriarchal society often results in a subjective understanding of their right to underestimate and even violate the people who depend on them. Socially, the demand that men embody hegemonic masculinity remains; as such, within debates about power relations and gender norms, this need to adhere to hegemonic masculinity is known as a "toxic" masculinity, given how "being a man" is always the object of questioning



and social surveillance in order to fulfill this role of toxic masculinity.

It is necessary to think about plural expressions of masculinity, emphasizing multiple ways of being and of performing masculinity in society. **It is through collective experience, in relation to other men, that this identity is constructed: men become men among men, taking the example of other men, based on the biological notion of the body that is juxtaposed to women and on the social and cultural context in which they are situated.**

Everything that is seen as feminine—sensitivity, fragility, commitment to the care of others and of oneself, delicacy—is rejected and distanced from the performance of masculinity. Within the stereotypical and universalizing ideal of masculinity, it is impossible to conceive a man who cries, a man who speaks about his feelings, a man who express himself artistically, a man who is delicate, subtle, kind, equitable and who doesn't resort to violence, whether physical, verbal or psychological in order to solve his daily problems.

For this reason, thinking about the plurality and the non-universalization of the category “man” is so important, precisely because it affords us the possibility to reflect on the multiple ways **to “be a man” and the implications of “being a man” within various social and cultural contexts.** In this sense, an intersectional feminist perspective has very much to offer us, aiding in reflecting on that multiplicity.

But do all men experience these social expectations in the same way? Are all men seen the same way socially? Are all men challenged by society in the same way? Are there differences in treatment, expectations, or demands?

MASCULINITIES AND MARKERS OF DIFFERENCE

When thinking about markers of difference as identity categories that are socially set, we are proposing a reflection based on social power relations. We contend that these power relations are constructed within social structures through the existence of these same markers of difference (which announce a break from hegemonic standard and that they intersect once they cross) to produce the plurality of **“being a man”** in society. From this approach, we propose widening discourses and strategies to include the **concept of masculinities.**

In relation to racial markers, for example, we can observe differences in terms of access, demands, behaviors and possibilities. Racialization is an example of these intersectioning oppressions that cut cross masculinities. In Brazil, for example, a colonial country built upon the exploitation and dehumanization of black and indigenous communities and individuals, it is necessary to reflect on the specific context of being a black man, since black men are in a structural position of vulnerability when compared to their white counterparts. According to the Atlas da Violência (2020), **the homicide rate among black men grew 10,5% in the last 10 years, while in the same period the homicide rate among non-black men fell 12%.** With this in mind, one might ask: do all men go through the same experience? In the face of structural racism, can black men move around the city at ease, without running the risk of being stopped by police officers, being violated or murdered?

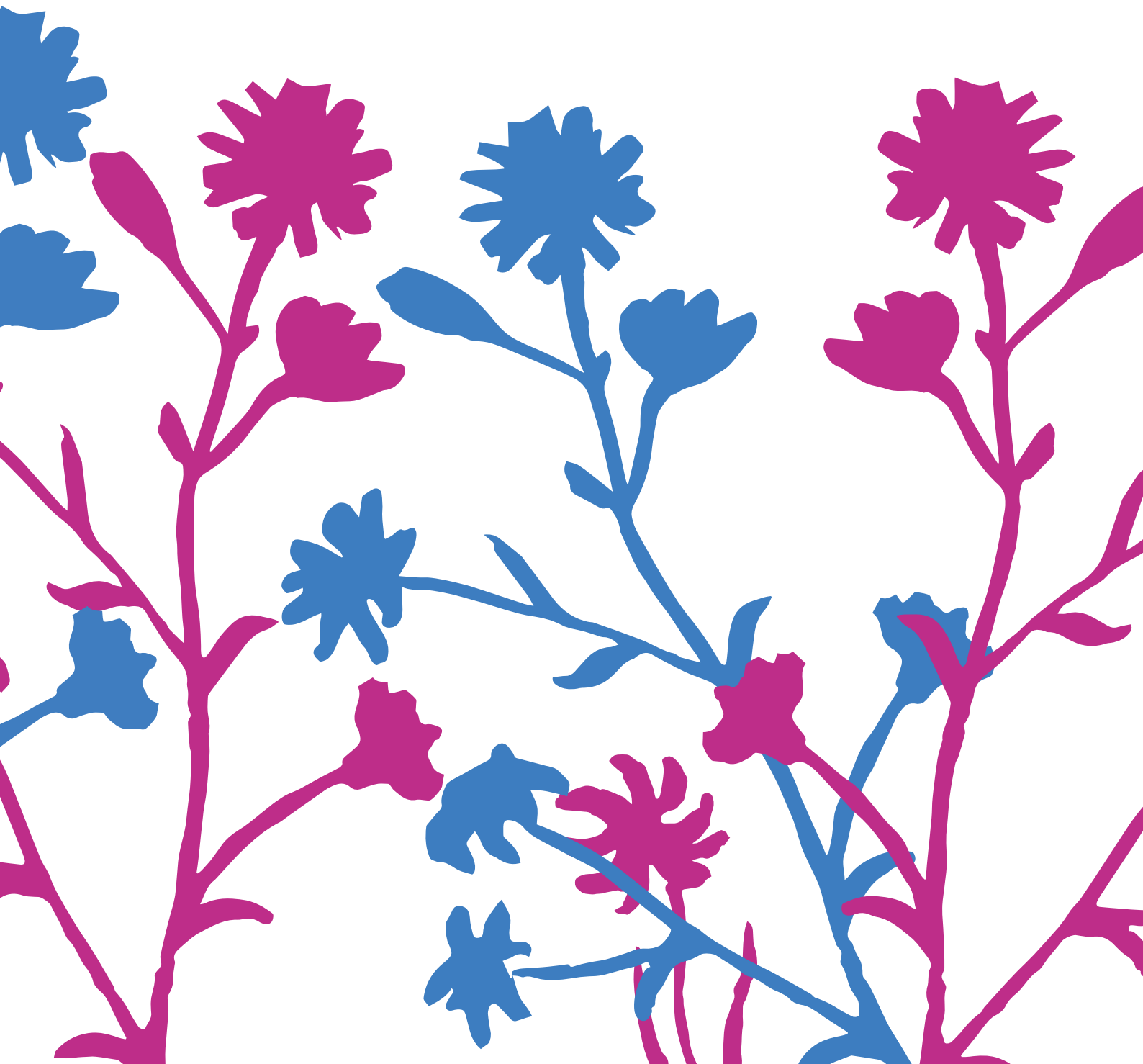
Markers of social difference constitute men's position within the social dynamics of power relations. For example, in Brazil it is much easier for a white man, with the sum of his racial and gender privileges, to

advance within his career than it is for a black man or a woman.

There are a lot of nuances within this reflection, although we must not create hierarchies between oppressions, as Audre Lorde (LORDE, 2009) asserts. In order to analyze masculinities, it is necessary to be cognizant of these specificities and consider the experience of privilege within a collective reflection that aims to deconstruct rigid structures that foster and institute these same social privileges.

When talking about the construction of masculinities, two aspects are frequently highlighted: paternity/care and the job market; reproductive and productive work.

Society teaches and expects men to be responsible for providing for the family, allowing men access to public space and prioritizing their gainful work outside the private space of the home.



BE A MAN: PROVIDER

The responsibility of financially sustaining a family within a capitalist and patriarchal society confers power to men. Power to control, power to decide, power to intervene in the concrete reality of women and their sons and daughters. Within heterosexual relationships, women become dependent on their husbands due to the fact that many women are not allowed to study nor work outside the house in gainful jobs (due to family prohibitions or to cultural norms that do not incentivize women to become independent). This kind of relationship dynamic carries an enormous burden for both men and women.

However, it is indispensable to highlight that, when thinking about men's bodies in public space, in social class relations, in providing for the livelihood of their families, we must consider social markers of difference, since, as has been discussed, not all men move through public spaces with the same security. Furthermore, different types of employment are directly related to structural inequalities. Therefore, experiences of work and circulating in public space marked by inequality, from a socio-historical point of view, differently impact the lives of white women and non-white women, for example.

Fostering identification with other possibilities of exercising one's gender performativity, including other standards of "being man", might have a direct impact in interrupting cycles violence and oppression. Studies on masculinity over the last decade show the price and burden of "being a real man" who has to prove himself, be the breadwinner in order to not be seen as a failure, weak, or irresponsible. Thus, many men involve themselves in several activities in order to deal with the social rules imposed on them. But this kind of behavior

may actually lead them to exhaustion, frustration, and mental and physical health problems.

According to Promundo's The Man Box research project, almost 70% of men have heard about what it means to be a "real man" and what attitudes a "real man" should have since childhood. Being the sole person responsible for the family's livelihood is part of that "male box" that determines what it is to be a "real man".

In context like present-day Brazil, which includes very high levels of unemployment, especially among the poorest sector of the population, men are at risk of accepting extremely exploitative or risky activities in order to guarantee their families' livelihoods, often out of the guilt associated with being the sole provider.

An extremely important place to work on the transformation of codes of conduct of hegemonic masculinity—aiming to undo that "man box"—is in school. In the school environment norms of social interaction can be reinforced or questioned, making real the possibilities of producing and building alternative models of masculinity.

In groups, in order to reaffirm what it means to "be a real man", boys recurs

to behaviors and attitudes "within" the norm. Hegemonic masculinity becomes a means of identification and integration within the group. To avoid situations that make them shy or humiliated, boys end up reproducing the violence, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and arrogant posture they associate with power, and they often have few or no spaces to express the other emotions they feel.

When thinking about school, it is important to reflect on how bodies are treated in this environment. For example, it is

common and acceptable for boys to be dirty and messy, to fight among themselves, to harass girls and to behave in a “more brutish” way. The educational focus of schools reinforces pedagogical processes from other social environments, as well as within schools themselves, that teach boys how to be masculine from very early age often through punishment if they do not correspond to the norm. Boys that do not conform often face teasing, joking around, and other forms of verbal and even physical violence, being called things like “sissy” or “faggot.”

What’s more, a ‘macho’ image is a burden to maintain that forces boys to become emotionally closed. Despite their bodies being constantly subjected to various forms of violence, many boys feel lonely, solitary, and never able to find a space where they can talk about themselves, where they can talk about what they think and feel. There are some cases in which they don’t even know how to name their feelings, in which they can’t express in words what happens to them due to the hardening of their bodies and subjectivities imposed by that “man box”. In the end, that burden dehumanizes boys and men. Always maintaining a posture of power, competitiveness, and control, not only limits how they express their life experiences but also damages their physical and mental health, in addition to limiting the expression of life.



“BEING A MAN”: CAREGIVER

Encouraging boys and men to think critically about their subjectivities and question the rigidity of the “man box” is a method to try to build and restore their humanity. Debates have especially focused on rethinking fatherhood and masculine care as potential themes towards the construction of other more humane masculinities.

Cultural practices have taught boys from a young age that society will criticize them for demonstrating affect and emotion. Men do not receive affection and tenderness from their parents since they are not considered manly.

National and international research shows that the idea of care, like that of violence, can be transmitted inter-generationally. That’s why men who decide to be the opposite of their absent and unaffectionate fathers highlight the necessity of breaking the inter-generational transmission of cycles of violence within families in order to open up the possibility of constructing healthy relationships.

The social construction that delegates to women the care and well-being of children fosters the notion that the role of caregiver doesn’t apply to men. Men are not seen by society as responsible for (or capable of) child rearing, education and care.

It is important to identify some points of reflection on the construction of alternative masculinities:

- ★ Do boys watch men exercising care?
- ★ If it is through collective life that we humanize ourselves, that we construct ourselves as subjects, what reference of care have boys had since childhood?

To more deeply reflect on this topic, we must also remember to take into account markers of racial difference and the reality of violence:



★ How many children will end up losing their fathers because of the genocide of the black population?

★ How many children had their fathers murdered due to their race and class and grew up without a father figure?

And we must also think about sexuality:

★ How many children cannot be adopted by homoparental families because of prejudice?

★ How many children are subjected to prejudice in school and other social spaces precisely because they have two fathers?

These are just some possible paths of reflection; regardless, it remains crucial to build spaces of conversing, listening, welcoming and learning in order to make an ethical, political and ideological commitment to the non-universalization of what it means to “be a man”, producing fissures and cracks in the rigidity of that “man box” so that plural masculinities can be seen in a possible and equitable society.

SEXUALITY

We live in a society full of imposed norms, rules and social behaviors that we are expected to follow. Our understanding of sexuality is also affected by those norms, with heterosexuality being the universalized expression of sexuality, socially imposed as the acceptable, standard and validated sexuality, in other words, as the one that must be followed for everybody. In this sense, as young boys and girls are socialized and learn about sexuality, they encounter heterosexual parameters as the only possible expression.

Here, the relationship between sexuality and masculinity is deeply relevant, since hegemonic culture insist that men's sexual performance constitutes part of what it means "to be a real man". For men, talking about their sexuality—their doubts, questions and difficulties—is taboo. Within hegemonic masculinity, for example, what matters is the total number of women partners that a man had and/or has ever had during a night and/or how spectacular his performance was.

It is important to highlight that "good" or "correct" ideals of sexual performance are often constructed by a hegemonic standard in which only men are responsible for what happens during sex, reducing the whole moment of the sex act—an exchange among at least two persons—to male performance centered exclusively on penile penetration as the representation of socially demanded virility and masculinity.

Of the many forms of media and communication that uphold the centrality of sexual performance in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, the pornography industry remains a main propagator of these cultural sexist patterns and is still one of boys and teenagers' primary

introductions to sexual life. In order to "demonstrate their virility and manliness", these teenagers and young men turn to pornography "to learn" practices and movements for their sexual performances, reproducing models imposed by the sexist culture of hegemonic media. In addition, often boys' sexual initiation takes place through the hiring of sex workers. When coupled with pornography, the hegemonic sexual education of male youth 'replaces' what could be a sexual education based on listening, sharing responsibilities, and on welcoming doubts and uncertainties.

With regard to sexual performance, we must also consider the relationship between racialized bodies and sexuality, particularly the hegemonic construction of the black male body. Both black men's and black women's bodies are hypersexualized, though in different ways. Black men are expected both to have the best performance - which means they are able to maintain an erection for a long time and to be extremely virile during the sexual act - and to have huge genitalia, well above the imagined average size.

The body in its totality—the senses, the uncountable ways of having pleasure—is discarded so that sexuality conforms to heterosexual sexual performance. Due to the abundance of misinformation about women's bodies as objects that provide but do not feel pleasure, women's pleasure is often secondary or completely ignored.

Sexual exchange, the exploration of many points of the body, sex without penetration and even sexual acts that do not result in orgasm are unthinkable within the limits of hetero-normative sexual performance. It lacks explorations of bodies, senses, pleasures, exchange, and intimacy. The whole focus is on masculine penetration

and orgasm, which considerably reduces the possibility of having a sexual relationship that is healthy for both genders. It is important to pay attention to the impact of consuming pornography and how boys are stimulated to do so from a very young age because it often serves as a model of “sexual education” that centers masculine control and ownership.

Moreover, the taboos created by hegemonic sexuality often cause men to not know and explore their own bodies. In one of the live courses offered by the Global GRACE Brasil project, many men mentioned that they do not even touch their own penis. They do not look at, observe the details of, nor do they know a part of their own body. The only contact permitted is during moments of urination, masturbation and sex. Besides these moments, touching their own body too is “not well seen” and not incentivized by family, schools, or policies. An example of a public health campaign that is trying to change men’s relationships with their bodies is Instituto Lado a Lado pela Vida’s (LAL—Side by Side for Life Institute), ‘*Lave o Dito Cujo*’, which seeks to inform men how to correctly wash their own penises, since this lack of contact and knowledge has led many men to develop penis cancer due to poor hygiene.

There is also a discourse of “power” behind men’s lack of contact with and care for their own bodies. In general, men seek medical assistance only after their health has already deteriorated too much. Men commonly respond to illness with phrases like “this is nothing” or “I can handle it”, which ultimately results in them postponing care for themselves, taking their bodies to its limits. This idea of “power” that has to be performed by men comes from the notion that men do not need to be cared

for as that would be a sign of weakness, since “real men can withstand anything”.

What happens when *care* is conflated with *protection*, and protection with *control*?

And what dangers does this idea of protection bring?

Lots of men are socialized in a way that leads them to understand care as equivalent to protection and control. Often, men conflate protecting their partner, children, and family with control over their lives. They understand protecting these people to mean “exercising care”. Coupled with this idea of control that gains weight from men’s role as breadwinners, protection can be a burden to men as well as a danger to those who live in households “run” by men with this worldview.

This notion of protection might lead to a man’s aggressive behavior since he understands people around him as his properties. If he has to protect, to provide, “to care”, to supply financial necessities, to deal with dangerous situations because “he has to protect” those other people, he can also assume behavior that abuses his power when exercising that control.

In these cases, he understands his wife/girlfriend and/or children as his property, or husband/boyfriend as his property in homo-affective relationships thus reproducing the same logic of hetero-normativity. Believing, even in a subjective way, that another person is his property means that the man is dehumanizing both himself and the other person. He runs the risk—and often this is due to the standards of sexism—of obligating other people to act according to his desire.

When a man sees his partner as a property, he hopes that she complies with the social roles designated for women, such as being solely responsible for housework

and childcare, being available for sexual relations whenever the husband wants and behaving according to his wishes.

This misunderstanding between “protection”, “control” and “care” can lead to extreme cases of violence when the other people fail to meet the man’s rigid expectations. Since a man understands the other as his property, he believes in his right to resort to physical, verbal or psychological violence as a form of punishment and to restore his control over the group. In other words, the use of violence, in its myriad forms, is one of the mechanisms men use to conflate control and care, thus contributing to the construction of gender norms that foster toxic, violent and hegemonic masculinities.

All of these elements and facets of sexuality must be debated and other parameters of possible healthy masculinity constructed and fostered in order to diminish the negative effects of toxic masculinity. Sexuality is central to these conversations.

TRANSEXUALITY

It is important that we reflect on how hegemonic masculinity affects bodies that dissent from gender norms. Transgender men experience a number of social impositions linked to what it means to “be a man”. Considering not only how trans identities are eradicated from our society, with no legitimacy or guaranteed rights, but also how those bodies are violated daily, it is necessary to think about the effects of the social burden of gender performance.

Transsexuality is a contemporary matter in a society that decides what is right and wrong and what it means “to be a real man” and “to be a real woman”. Cisgenderism is the basis of this demand for binary genders; for a traditionalist and prejudiced

majority, the very concept of transexuality does not exist and is simply deemed a feminist invention that aims to indoctrinate children and teenagers into a gender of “who they are not”.

This hegemonic discourse is based on a biological comprehension of bodies, according to which biology alone defines the features, conduct, likes, and behaviors of each of the two genders, denying the ways in which social dynamics actively contribute to the process of subjectification of the body. In other words, all historical and social influences that make us individuals are disregarded, taking biology as immutable and determining for each person’s life. In the face of this logic, transgender people go through a violent process of invisibilization that delegitimizes their lives and pushes them to the margins of society.

In order to gain minimal recognition (if such a thing is possible), many transgender men end up appealing to gender norms, adopting the practices of toxic masculinity as a way to try to be social accepted. They appeal to normative masculinity’s codes of behavior, performing as violent, unfeeling, strong, virile and macho.

Trans identity is not legitimate in our society, and Brazil is the country that kills the most transgender people in the world (AN-TRA, 2020). Therefore, how could a trans man survive (at a minimum) without adopting a normative performance of masculinity?

Obviously, it is possible for individuals to blur gender norms and to bypass the social impositions that befall our bodies, but what is the cost of resisting inside an ultraconservative society? With his identity questioned, violated, and delegitimized how could a transgender man, who must reaffirm that he is a man to everybody and at all times, wear “feminine” clothing? What is the price

of not undergoing hormone therapy or sexual reassignment surgery?

The violence of having his identity questioned daily would increase, since that man would not be performing hegemonic masculinity. For this reason, we believe in the importance of constructing and circulating alternative models of masculinities as a path towards the acceptance of all forms of being.

CONSTRUCTING OTHER MASCULINITIES: ARTS, GENDER AND POTENCIES FROM THE PERIPHERY

How does art collaborate in the construction of other masculinities?

Debates about and the questioning of gender norms and constructs, as well as debates about masculinities, have taken on a more academic tone over the last decades. Such academic ways of producing knowledge about everyday issues continue to be deeply devoid of creative dialogue and profoundly rooted in heteronormative modes of education. The creative and artistic modes of pedagogy, which exist organically in every social sphere across cultures, represent an essential tool for guaranteeing reception of debates about gender performance.





As a mechanism of social transformation, art, in its multiple languages, acts to produce a counter-hegemonic narrative in the face of hegemonic knowledge production that dictates standard behaviors and attitudes. **Politically engaged artistic practices reveal numerous narrative paths capable of producing a theoretical-practical field with more possibilities through processes of experimentation, projection and collective construction.**

To talk about gender and sexuality is also to talk about the body and subjectivity; it is also, above all, to go against occidental dichotomous thought, which is responsible for separating the mind from the body and establishing a hierarchy between them that considers the mind a detached site responsible for intellectual production. By advancing a view that recognizes the body and mind as indistinguishable, we create the possibility to read, to hear and to interpret what that body has to say about forces and themes that affect our lives.

In this sense, it is impossible to ignore the debates about the body and its creative and artistic productions and its importance as a mechanism to reflect on these fossilized, ideas such as what it means “to be man” or “to be woman”.

In discussing art, it is imperative to point out that we do not start from the Eurocentric view that detached and still detaches artistic practices from social power relations. Such a conceptualization employs colonial references to define what constitutes, or not, an **“artistic work”** through museums and the canonization of certain artists, creating a singular universalizing discourse that devalues artistic productions emerging from **diverse cultural** contexts. Even though art can function as a creative and free form of reflection on and expression of

the body and subjectivity, as transgression par excellence, it has also been captured by normative discourses and can contribute to power asymmetries in social relations.

Politically, we are committed to affirming and recognizing the artistic production of a plurality of people's creative processes from different racial, cultural and social background, without folklorizing or exoticizing this cultural production, in order to oppose hegemonic conceptions of art. **This is the first step towards recognizing the power present in artistic discourses and making visible the social and cultural role they play.**

In this booklet, we selected marginal and peripheral artistic practices in order to imagine innumerable possible ways to broaden debates on social themes and the production of truly representative discourses by artistic practices that are able to impact, to move, to produce reflections, to disturb, to transform and to complement political struggles and activist demands, creatively expanding agendas through the freedom of artistic practice, resulting in a new conceptual fusion: **artivism.**

Artivism is a conceptual neologism that has yet to gain complete consensus or acceptance in the social sciences or arts studies. **By uniting artistic production and social matters, the concept addresses the classic and polemic relationship between art and politics and inspires the potential possibilities of art as militant resistance and subversion action.** In this sense, art as an agent of social transformation produces artist practices that exist as cause of and demand of social change as well as counter-hegemonic artistic ruptures.

The art we reference is crucial to this process of dismantling and questioning social norms and conventions by revealing

how much we as a society still need to learn how to live with difference. Without a doubt, artistic practices bring to light the existential necessity of plurality as part of both our lives and world view.

For this reason, we also understand artistic practices as productions in daily life that reveal in an almost instinctive way connections with multiple ancestral identities and origins translated into songs, dances, and literatures, that is, into bodies and, thus, into gestures and cultural practices. For the most attentive eyes, it renders visible ways of recovering the memory of resistance of socially and systematically oppressed and minoritized groups.

The relationship between power and artistic/cultural production is intrinsically connected to artistic expressions that, as a principle, seek to produce a certain social group's artistic practices. This relationship continuously exposes forms of social organization and, consequently, the forms of domination and unequal power. For this reason, the **"functions of art"** within a society can be understood in various ways, in addition to making clear how designating what art is legitimate and what is not perpetuates hegemonic worldviews. Within an unequal political context, all of these issues are relevant. For this reason, such questions demand a more conscientious view of the artistic production of groups who do not occupy spaces of power within society and use their **artistic production to claim**, to denounce and/or to present an alternative cultural-historical context.

Artistic production that deal with themes such as genders and sexualities, for example, can bring many layers and specific nuances to everyday discourses that enhance the importance of those themes for society, thereby disputing narratives and

presenting plural world views. In this sense, due to its capacity to question hegemonic constructions of what is “normal” and “natural”, artistic practice is a potential element of transformation towards denaturalizing oppressive social relations and weakening rigid gender norms through creative and authentic ways of using the social codes that we have learned throughout our lives.

Art has the power of producing unease: even when we think we already know something about a specific topic, it moves us and provides concrete ways of learning so that other narratives can be possible.

★ Why think of men in only one way?

★ Why associate certain behaviors, characteristics and ideas with men? Why think about being a woman in an universal way?

★ What makes somebody a man?

★ What makes less man, more men?

★ What is normal when thinking about “sexuality”?

Artistic production and artwork can prompt cracks in institutionalized ideas, presenting alternative models and pluralizing the answers to the questions above. In its diversity, multiplicity and breadth, ethically committed art can address these questions in multiple languages and modes of expression in order to construct a new world and materially render a society possible for everyone. In this search, we envisioned the collective production of an artistic show to demonstrate the practice (praxis) of the theorization of art’s potency for social transformation.



“

[...]art as an agent of social transformation produces artist practices that exists as cause of and demand of social change as well as counter-hegemonic artistic ruptures.

”



2020 - 2021

MASCULINIDADES EM DIÁLOGO

Artistas

 Abimael Salinas

 Ana Bia Novais

 Davi Pontes

 Loo Stavale

 Morani

 Patfudyda

 Paulo Vinicius

 Pedro de Moraes Barros

 Rafael Amorim

 Rafael Simba

 Simonne Silva Alves

 Taisa Vitóri

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ESCOLA LIVRE DE ARTES

 2020 - 2021

MASCULINIDADES EM DIÁLOGO

THE ARTISTIC SHOW NA MANHA AND LIVED ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE AS AN EDUCATIONAL, POLITICAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS

As previously discussed, the multiple languages and expressions of art, such as dance, music, and literature, carry with them a powerful source of possibilities for social transformation. Thus, understanding and realizing existing cultural and artistic practices within specific territories is a very

concrete strategy of collective production and social transformation.

One of the Global Grace Project's activities was to collaboratively produce a dance show with members of Cia. Passinho Carioca (Passinho Carioca Company), a dance collective that for the last five years has been developing classes and shows dedicated to showcasing Brazilian funk music and the dance *passinho*, both artistic languages born in Rio's informal favela communities. Cia. Passinho Carioca produces cultural encounters at Arena Dicró, a public cultural space located in Complexo da Penha, Rio

de Janeiro, a complex of favelas in Rio's neglected North Zone.

Through the artistic residency, the project sought to train participants in social issues and convert that training into a laboratory of creation. By fostering experiences, workshops and discussions among the interdisciplinary team, the project demonstrated the power and necessity of artistic production as a fundamental element of intervention and construction of new references to think about gender, masculinities and sexuality themes.

Below, we offer a detailed report of this experience, which advocates for the political importance of sharing experiences and results of this project as an alternative to hegemonic and universalizing narratives of knowledge construction. Also, for how these lived experiences offer representative models that are potentially applicable in other contexts.

THE ARTISTIC RESIDENCY - BETTING ON THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN GLOBALGRACE, MULHERES AO VENTO AND PASSINHO CARIOCA

We first bet on the success of the "Na Manha" artistic residency due its collective nature. GlobalGrace Brasil is itself comprised of an interdisciplinary team that grew out of a partnership between the NGOs Instituto Promundo, Instituto Maria e João Aleixo and Observatório de Favelas and the PUC-Rio university affiliated Instituto de Relações Internacionais. Similarly, the Arena Carioca Dicró is publicly funded and co-managed by Observatório de Favelas and Rio de Janeiro's Municipal Department of Culture, based at Penha, in Rio's North Zone. We believed this collective structure would be especially conducive for an artistic residency that might foster dialogues on questions of gender and masculinities guided by reflections and practices about paths of expression in art, especially dance.



In order to make this bet pay off, we invited the director and six members of Cia Passinho Carioca to join the project, along with Coletivo Mulheres ao Vento (Women in the Wind Collective), a dance project based in the nearby Maré complex of favelas formed exclusively of women and which has developed a systematic methodology for discussing social issues like **gender, the body and sexuality through artistic production**. The residency's creation laboratories were led by the artists Andreza Jorge and Simonne Alves.

Passinho warm-up - Our methodological journey

The Residency began with the selection of the participants: six young dancers from Cia. Passinho Carioca were invited to take part in the process, three cisgender women and three cisgender men, the majority black.

The participants earned a monthly paid research stipend and committed to actively participate in all of the project's stages, with diligence, interest, and a willfulness to contribute. **For us, this is a fundamental part of the methodology: attributing and guaranteeing a monetary value to the time commitment of the artists from periphery**. In the face of many layers of structural oppressions, artists from favelas and peripheries must turn to jobs that are unrelated to their artistic practice and to other sources of income to sustain their livelihood, pushing them towards the big "funnel" that limits and naturalizes the fact that artistic work is possible only for those with access to spaces due to their wealth and social condition.

The first round featured a training intervention related to social issues, with educational workshops, discussion circles and debates about the project's themes. The methodology of each workshop emerged from the expertise of our partner organizations,

especially Instituto Promundo, which specializes in participatory activities for trainings on issues of gender, masculinity and sexuality. In this sense, Following this methodology, we carried out four face-to-face meetings in the beginning of 2020 with educators invited to facilitate specific topics.

Discussion Circles: our training meetings

Meeting 1

Theme: Intersectional methodologies and artistic practices: constructing alternative paths of representation

This meeting's principal goal was to introduce participants to alternative ways of viewing the world that denaturalize the gender roles assigned to men and women.

We employed Instituto Promundo's Program H technique, **"What is this thing called gender?"**, to provoke reflections on those gender roles and produce a discussion of new references of masculinities

The exercise asks participants to contemplate what it means to be a man or woman, the social constructions related to these roles and these constructions consequences in an individual's life as boxes with hardened standards of behavior and normalized attitudes.

We imagined that upon being born we are all putted inside "big boxes" that condition us on how to act and how to be, as if those categories were inherent to our biological birth sex.

The box metaphor piqued participants' attention and opened a space that encouraged them talk about moments when they felt "trapped inside those boxes" and how it affected or still affects their lives. Then, we introduced them to intersectional theory and prompted them to think about the layers that those social boxes acquire when

structural oppressions like race, class, and territory are added.

After discussing gender and intersectionality, we talked about art and artistic production as a powerful tool for deconstructing those boxes.

Importantly, the box metaphor remained part of their collective imaginary throughout the training and residency and was even reflected in the creation of their dance show.

It was a very inspiring and welcoming first meeting of listening to shared experiences.

Meeting 2

Theme: Sexualities, sexual diversity and violence

This meeting sought to generate discussions about sexual diversity and the concept of heteronormativity by thinking through the documentary film “Bichas” and the participant’s own experiences of sexuality. We also considered ways of understanding the limits and choices that are socially imposed on us as men and women and how those impositions force us to be what we do not like or assume an identity that is not our own.

Generally, when we considered sexual orientations, the debates grew long and it became apparent that there were innumerable entrenched prejudices that lead people to avoid talking about anything related to gender and sexuality. Even when we mentioned advances that have made these discussions more widespread, statistics remind us that the LGBTIQ+ community and black people, continues to be the target of structural violence, with shocking numbers of murders motivated by homophobia and racism.

People who do not fit within the standards of cis-heteronormativity and whiteness are more likely to be victimized by

violence and socially excluded due to the intersection between these social markers of structural oppression.

As a group, we talked about the psychological violence to which people who are seen as “deviating” from normativity are subjected, as well as about how these aggressive processes put us in vulnerable positions.

Because the body is public, it is exposed and frequently interrogated, even if these interrogations are disguised as “jokes”, invading “non-hetero” people’s intimacy and ultimately dehumanizing them. Sexist and oppressive tropes are profoundly present in every social sphere, including dance. One of the highlights of the workshop discussion was when we understood that if oppression and violence are the result of social constructs, then it is also possible to deconstruct them.

We left feeling very hopeful.



Meeting 3

Theme: Paternity and care

Paternity is a very sensitive and complex topic, especially because a large proportion of youth from urban peripheries grows up without even knowing a father figure. For this reason, we focused the workshop on contemplating the values and obligations socially imposed on men and how relationships of care allow us to rethink the category of masculinity.

Why talk about care and the ways in which care is related to gender?

The act of caring has for millennia been and continues to be an act socially assigned to women. From a very young age, girls are encouraged to engage in activities that involve care, affection, delicacy, and sweetness.

Typically, this is justified by the biological fact that women get pregnant and give

birth; thus, social norms of gender attribute the idea of care exclusively to women, resulting in a logic of inequality when it comes to the responsibilities of rearing children.

Within this asymmetrical construction of care and responsibility for a child's life, the father figure is naturalized as someone who "helps" and not as someone who equally shares in care-giving activities and responsibilities; we view men as having the option of merely helping, or not.

The social function destined for men, which is also rigid and normative, is that of "the man of the house", who must be responsible for working outside home and providing the family's livelihood. Both man and woman have very strict roles in relation to paternity and maternity.





Whether they are a couple or not, both are subjected to structural sexism. In fact, we faced many challenges in our discussions about paternity and care due to a lack of positive models. This may be why we dedicated considerable time to thinking about how we would like fathers to treat us.

The workshop facilitator carefully led an exercise in which she asked how we would have liked our fathers to treat us. After that, we talked about the naturalization of power dynamics within the family and how they may trigger other problems like domestic violence, considering as background discussions over family relations and those that naturalize power relations.

We were then invited to participate in another dynamic from the H manual called “Persons and Things”, designed to corporally and subjectively investigate how we exercise power over others by making us think about our roles and how our attitudes can change according to the position of power we occupy. We were divided into pairs in which one would be the “thing” (with neither autonomy nor power) and the other would be the “person” (with both autonomy and power over themselves and the thing). We were then instructed to move or be moved in our pairs in a number of ways, including dancing throughout the space. Something we realized during this activity was how we ourselves often confused relations of care with relations of power. After completing various movements and tasks as the person or the thing, we then switched roles. Often, those who started as the thing reproduced the same dynamic they had experienced.

After the activity, the facilitator proposed a discussion of the experience and how our perspectives had changed in light of the previous conversations on care and gender

roles. We then wrote two letters, one addressed to those who take care of us and another to those who we will take care of. We underscored the urgent importance of rethinking these social roles in order to better align our discourse and theoretical understandings with our practical actions towards transformation.

Meeting 4

Theme: Black Masculinities and Racial Pacts

This meeting, led by Luciano Ramos, aimed to debate the growing challenges that black men face throughout their lives and discuss possibilities for them to be and to live. Luciano started the workshop by presenting some important books related to structural racism and black masculinities: 'A elite do atraso', by Jessé Souza; 'Favelas do rio de Janeiro', by Rafael Soares Gonçalves; 'Escravidão', by Laurentino Gomes; 'Na minha pele', by Lázaro Ramos; 'Diálogos contemporâneos sobre homens negros e masculinidades', by Henrique Restier; and 'Black skin, white masks', by Frantz Fanon.

By sharing his own life story and several examples of everyday racist violence he has experienced, Luciano was encouraging the participants to think about their own experiences, problematizing the ways in which race intersects with ideas and possibilities of how masculinity is experienced.

Discussing masculinity in the singular is not possible, because masculinities are plural. Because white and black men have different lived experiences, it's necessary to discuss the ways in which gender, race and class interrelate with one to another. Fanon tells us that "the black man isn't a man"; that is, he is historically removed from the place of "humanity". Due to the social imaginary constructed by whiteness through

colonization, the black man is seen as irrational and brutish, closer to the animal than the human.

Throughout the discussion, Luciano proposed that we think of black men through 2 main axes:

1 - Sexism: Every black man is sexist because he is socialized by strict norms of gender. This is why it is necessary to think of the educational process from an intersectional perspective, since the break with sexism can result in the loss of the only way black man exercises power.



In addition, it is fundamental to promote the deconstruction of the hypersexualization of the black male body, which centers black male potential around the idea of phallogentric and phallogentric virility.

2 - Racism: The negation of suffering. “I am black, but so-and-so is blacker than I am”. Denying who one is by highlighting another’s suffering as a way to diminish their own pain.

★What are the specific elements of black masculinities?

★What are the specific elements of white masculinities?

★What are the common elements of all masculinities?

Recognizing the systemic and institutional racism that surrounds us represents a first step in understanding how black men are oppressed and denied the possibility of experiencing “being a man” in plural, diverse and healthy ways.

DANCE AND CREATION: OUR ARTISTIC LABORATORIES

Once the workshops ended, we began to produce the dance recital, working in what we called “artistic laboratories” led by Simone Alves and Andreza Jorge. The meetings were structured around pillars for the group’s artistic development, yet the artists and directors also asked themselves how, in such a short period of time, they would be able to establish intimacy and confidence within the group in order to comfortably partake in a collective artistic production.

How could we construct a space where our narratives could materialize on the stage and where we could feel free from judgment? This desire grew out of our long debates to think “outside the boxes” and to re-position ourselves within a rigid and normative society. It was necessary for us as a

group to understand that while we were shaped by sexist and racist social structures, it is also possible for us to imagine processes of reeducation that deconstruct these socio-cultural thoughts and practices.

It is important to underscore that the participants of the artistic residency are deeply embedded in public space, with streets, parks, squares, and cultural arenas serving as territories of existence. Their specific lived experiences in peripheries, in spaces considered on the margins, in favelas, and in the hills become a primary source of inspiration and counter-hegemonic creation.

The universe of professional dance, like artistic careers in Brazil in general, is extremely unequal for those who have to split their artistic life with other activities in order to guarantee their basic livelihood because investments in the arts rarely consider structural social inequalities. The artist from periphery’s training starts the moment they wake up and challenge their reality, gravitating towards ingenuity to make the little time that they have work in their favor. These artists incorporate moments to look inside themselves, moments to vent and connect to their emotions, and moments to dance and to improve their artistic practice into their challenging routines.

Artists from favelas and peripheries, who are predominately black, have to be even more creative and inventive to dare to live off art professionally. When they reinvent themselves within and against structural inequalities, they bring a unique perspective not only to their art but also to how they face the world around them and their dreams for the future. All these factors added together are embodied in dancing subjectivities and are expressed in popularized rhythms such as funk carioca.

This peripheral ingenuity is the chosen starting point for the artists' collective knowledge production, through collaborative thought and multiple cultural and ancestral references. The collective dynamic of the residency fostered a unique process that allowed the artists to create new perspectives out of the intersection of each artist's prior knowledge and artistic process. This, in turn, allowed them to individually and collectively rethink and re-claim their own existence and the revolutionary act itself of dedicating their careers as dancers to a counter-hegemonic artistic language like passinho.

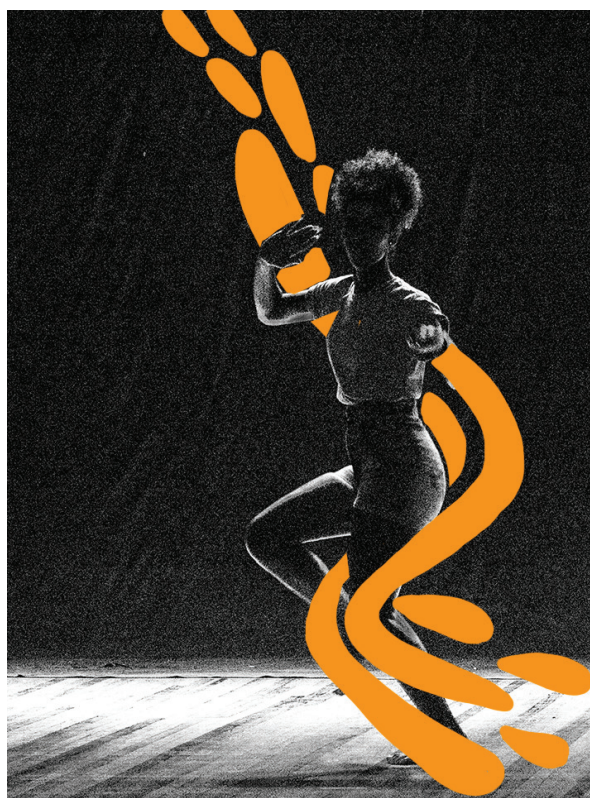
Passinho rejects the ways in which racist and sexist social structures attempt to render marginalized bodies vulnerable. Brazilian society denies the social and corporal rights of people from the periphery, suburbs, and favelas, prohibiting them from freely walking around the city without being followed or perceived as suspicious, negating their rights to access quality culture and education, and withholding their right to public security policies that do not put their lives in risk. This art arises as a scream of resistance, as movement and dance among large numbers of

youth, and must be thought of as a cultural good that enhances the protagonism of the favela as the keeper and promoter of diverse and plural stories.

With this in mind, the meetings of the artistic laboratory united dance techniques, cultural production, script writing, theatrical performance, poetry, music and educational corporal games with themes that both permeate the dancers' experiences and form the basis for important social discussions that seek to create strategies and actions of social transformation.

WAYS OF DANCE - OUR MEETINGS BETWEEN BODY, TERRITORY, CULTURE, COLLECTIVITY, SPACE AND TIME.

We took our own lived experiences as inspiration in the collective production of a powerful show that would speak to young men and women around the world about masculinities, gender and ways of life by showcasing plural ways of interpreting and reinventing key concepts and their meanings.



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BODY

It is said that when we acquire a sense of our bodies we leave behind the “primitive”. Many things are said about our bodies and about what and how they are able to know, including that we do not have the right nor the freedom to choose what we do with them. **Therefore, acquiring a sense of our bodies means understanding that we are subject to regulations, duties and judgments and that our bodies are always under constant surveillance.**

When we refer to the body, it's always through the lens of possession; we say, for example, “my body”, but not “I-body” as a way to translate that relation of inherent existence. Curiously, because we are encouraged to comprehend our relationship to our own bodies through possession and power, it becomes natural for us to always treat things and people through the same lens. In order to think and enact other conceptualizations of the body, we need a collective, rather than individual, way of relating to our bodies. **Thus, we need to understand our bodies as the expression of everything that makes us who we are, in all their minute details. It is individuality that produces the collectivity.**

Each body is endowed with unique and important knowledge and sharing these experiences, narratives, movements and paths, without hierarchizing them, allows for even more individual commitment and learning in favor of the power of collective diversity. The body is our first means of contact with the world, subjectively through senses and sensations, and objectively, through relationships and learning processes. Considering our body as collective, we also **pluralize our knowledge of it and share responsibilities, territory, culture, and affections**; each body is a point of connection within its community.



TERRITORY AND CULTURE

A place to be and to belong, to feel and to be part of the whole.

Each favela and peripheral territory is a whole world, as large as its cultural, religious, corporal, regional and ethnic diversity. Nonetheless, Brazilian society, through its Westernizing and hegemonic way of reading the world, excludes that which is considered different, marginal, other. By producing an idea of the “other”, it imposes a standard that excludes and silences the different. This othering undergirds structural inequalities in Brazil such that peripheral territories, characterized by their powerful and creative diversity, are marginalized and denied basic human rights.

✳️ How does the favela still manage to breathe the art and culture?

There are many possible answers to this question, but the primary feature of favela life that inspires us is the feeling of belonging and collective solidarity that propels local residents to transform and reconstruct their lives and communities, fighting for dignity and creating bridges in order to fill the gaps left by an absent state.

Local residents’ associations, collectives, cooperatives, and NGOs are all forms of community organization that allow whole generations to survive. Inserting peripheries in political and social debates about culture and dance, resignifying our understanding of “margin” and “center”, and establishing “passinho” as a symbol of expressiveness and discourse capable of reformulating new realities are all concrete examples of the kinds of transformations that shift structures.

In this creative process, we departed from the potential of each artist as a subject/mirror of their community, embodying their place, their territory, in order to

think about the importance of a plurality of bodies and gestures. Keep in mind that, even though we talk about the periphery in the singular, we fight against essentialization and praise the diversity of meanings that peripheral spaces can manifest. Each favela is different, with its distinct marks and features. When deepening this view, we understand the cultural importance of recreation and sociability that the young participants of the residency ascribe to baile funk—funk music parties that reflect the local favela where they are held. Each experience they brought to the residency about their experiences at bailes funk contained musical and artistic references very particular to where they dance and practice their corporal and artistic creations.

COLLECTIVITY

✳️ Why was collectivity one of the main categories considered during the artistic residency?

The entire pedagogical approach used to guide the artistic laboratories started from a cosmogonic and educational worldview based on Afro-Brazilian cultural practices. This approach allowed us to guide processes under the premise of constructing a collective body with the participants. Exalting community within the creative power of each body-individual, we sought to break with power relations present in hegemonic Manichaeian ideas, which excel at building antagonistic binaries, such as mind and body, masculine and feminine. Every action to crack those engendered norms is a significant advance in favor of an equal society. Politically, we commit ourselves to talking about dance and culture and presenting decolonial and counter-hegemonic proposals to produce and to share knowledge.

The more universalized life experiences become, the greater the dilution of the

strength and beauty present in diversity and the more intentional the disputes, where each individual only glimpses a singular plenitude. **Our strategy for creation and construction was to take community as the key category for the solidification and dissemination of plural and inclusive concepts and discourses within our creative laboratories.** **In this sense,** collectivity serves to give a sense and direction to how we confront naturalized structural social problems through actions that support innovative ideas that stimulate self-confidence and make possible the freedom to be who we are.

The “fora da caixinha” (out of the box) educational workshop guided and created by the dancer Ayesca Souza attempted to foster this sense of collectivity within the group. Ayesca conducted the workshop during the creation process of the residency through the sensitive, collective and open involvement of the entire group. Thus, the scenic corporal reactions and movements that emerged gave strength to the artistic laboratory and to Ayesca’s experience as performer-creator, so much so that it became a scene in the final show.

SPACE

The creation methodology sought to open an intimate and welcome space for free experimentation and to allow us to address our subjectivities. Here, we consider space as a place or region that can be understood both geographically and subjectively.

The artistic residency started with the construction of political individuals that exalt the experiences and stories of each dancer, revealing their processes of resistance and survival and placing them at the center of their own narratives. We needed to quickly establish the proper space for this meeting of narratives, because the

unsettling ideas we debated during the conversation circles became more and more intense. How could we bring those unsettlingly ideas into a safe space that stimulated the dance-work experience?

We bet on the power of the coming together of all these fundamental principles to foster an artistic creation that results in a collective based on respect, on affection and, above all, on the power of educational constructions that extol representative and decolonial models as concrete ways for social transformation.

The methodological choice of inviting two artistic directors who are black women from the periphery to guide this process comes from the idea that new references have to be created and put in practice within spaces of visibility and voice. **Our personal construction starts from a collective construction directly linked to the young participants’ experiences, which, in turn, are connected to the aesthetic, sonic and bibliographic references that inspired our artistic creation.**

How to construct artistic productions that are politically committed to social transformation and the construction of new masculinities?

In presenting diverse references of masculinities and rendering social relations more complex through a discussion of **structural markers of oppression**, we sought to create a safe and referential space for young people to feel that they belonged and were empowered by their cultural and **ancestral knowledge.**

In the space created for the residency, we knew that we were part of a body and that nobody is alone. By opening this space, we fostered emancipatory discourses and practices that recognized that all of our life experiences, be they good or bad, form

and transform us. Through this process of stimulation and discussion, we encouraged the participants to reflect on those experiences and to even rethink future behaviors and attitudes.

The moments we met each other to experience these dialogues and knowledge at the intersection between theory and practice were unique. Each person present was a link that strengthened ideas, a fundamental link in the creation process, because the collective knowledge we constructed grew out of that meeting.

TIME

During the process, we worked through the category of “time”, especially as it relates to our understanding of our own trajectories as fundamental elements of the people we have become and are now. Trajectories structure our time and provide us with experiences; these micro-organizations form us into individuals, make us think of ourselves as part of a group, of a nation, and make us conscious of the duration of these processes.

Therefore, time is understood as an exercise in wisdom, as a possibility of knowledge, as the continuation of “surviving” translated into the word “ancestrality”. Time can unite us both in the most particular relationships, through the process of knowing one’s own history and ancestors, and also offers the possibility of connecting us to other people’s histories and to a collective ancestrality, through the sharing of multiple narratives. But how to balance the urgencies of this individual time and that of collective experiences?

During the process of residency, each individual was understood as a representation of time that could not be defined by and distilled into one singular possibility and narrative. Because our comprehension of

time was a meeting among the current and ancestral, our time was parallel and asynchronous, and full of possibilities.

It is important to highlight that this understanding of time came to directly bear on the group’s process due to the restrictive measures we had to adapt to because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic forced us to reformulate and better understand the dimension of time, especially with regards to the categories of space and distance, since enduring the pandemic reorganized the entire world’s very relationship with the passage of time.

LABORATORY MEETINGS

1- Arriving

Date: March 6th

This first meeting of the **artistic laboratory** of the artistic residency grew out of and was inspired by the four conversation circles of the training meetings and by the pillars that structure the group *Mulheres ao Vento*, which facilitated the **laboratories of creation**. What did those experiences mean to this specific process of creation?

-Being concerned with debates about gender and race, about black representation and the influence of Afro-Brazilian culture on the formation of subjects conscious of their social roles.

-Criticizing the ways in which sexism and racism are naturalized within several layers of society, specially within cultural and corporal practices like dances.

-Potentializing the discourse of dancing bodies from periphery, comprehending each being as a protagonist and, at the same time, exalting the importance of all of them for the success of this process.

All these positions formed part of the collective proposal that began in the training meetings as crucial stakes for the artistic residency and the realization of such a subjective artistic work. The process aimed to honor these commitments: creating and producing a show about the desires and thoughts related to masculinities and gender, race and territory of young black people from favelas.

We chose Afro-Brazilian sonic influences for the laboratories' workshops due to their representative rhythm and musicality, and because of how they relate to contemporary Afro-Brazilian sounds present in funk and other rhythms with black origins.

Corporal studies, our laboratories of movement awareness, were conceived progressively, from head to toe or from toe to head, enhancing the participants' sense of completeness. We encouraged the dancers to create original movements that fill the gaps in songs by bringing meaning and sensations to each moment, be it in the beat, the lyrics, the instruments, the rhythm or tempo. It was an invitation to dance, using their experiences and dance influences in a freer way: dance for the dance, for the sensation of dancing, culminating in movements through the space.

For those of us watching the laboratory's first workshop, it already looked fully choreographed, because, even unintentionally, everybody was relating to each other and to the space, as well as to the objective of warming up their bodies and their awareness of the movements. In this first laboratory of creation, we referenced plural ways of seeing the world, of moving and thinking of the body in movement, starting with our own knowledge. There was no right or wrong because the purpose was

to enhance involvement and strengthen the collective.

From that first activity, it was possible to visualize each dancer's own characteristics. Through these characteristics the facilitator fostered productive interrelations between the participants.

We asked the participants to distribute themselves throughout the space and each time a number was called it corresponded to a specific movement and action: For example: 1- run, 2 - jump, 3 - freeze, 4 - spin, 5 - free dance. They needed to walk throughout the space without touching each other until they heard a command.

With this activity, we established a lively and relaxed atmosphere. To end the activity, the final number we called commanded them to "freeze" and we then asked them to be still and concentrate on their breath. Then we asked them to relax their bodies, walk back to their places and to make pairs in preparation for another exercise: The mirror.

In this activity, one participant leads the movements of another and later must follow. The movements of the pairs were influenced by the rhythm and interrelation they had established. After experiencing the movements of the mirror for some time, we asked them to change pairs. Then we established a new rule: chose a person with whom they had not had any intimacy yet during the residency. To conclude, these final pairs prepared a sequence of movements based on the mirror game that they would present to the group. We established an order for the pairs to present from a specific place on the stage. As soon as the music ended, the pairs could either exit the stage or freeze in a pose.

This experience allowed us to improvise choreography together in a single

performance format. We arranged that, if someone finished earlier, they would have to adapt and keep the improvisation going until we finished together; that was the only rule.

We talked about what they felt during the class, about the exercises, and asked them to bring choreographed proposals that dialogue with something they liked to do, or with something they would like to do for this proposal. This activity was the starting point for the next meeting.

2 - The conception of "Swagger" ("Na manha")

Date: March 13th

Throughout these meetings, some words stood out frequently, including "stereotypes", "little normative boxes" and "swagger". The passinho dancers in particular used this last word to refer to a style of dancing, an attitude, and a gait. We can find this idea of "swagger" in the culture of urban dances in general.

We were very intrigued by the possible meanings present in this expression, especially with the possibility of using it as an affirmation of something "of one's own", that is, of one's identity, one's manner of expressing oneself. However, we often heard the participants assign gender to the concept of "swagger", distinguishing between a masculine and feminine swagger. So the question was: what really characterizes one's own way of dancing?

In fact, we understand that each person has their own "swagger", and this "swagger" speaks for itself. Because it is the manifestation of one's existence, it is one's way of being in this world, one's way of reacting to everything. Therefore, "swagger" holds a multitude of meanings directly linked to one's trajectory and to

one's relationships with time, space, territory, culture, collectivity and the body.

Existing and challenging society in order to survive and enduring the triple workday of studying, working and creating impact every dancer in singular ways and, as a consequence, how they dance. We started from a process of possible deconstruction, discussing paths of struggle through art and lived experiences.

During this process, we tried to nourish ourselves with knowledge that could support our convictions and to give names to what we know and say. We also rekindled debates from the training process and encouraged others to do the same.

The body was the medium of communication we chose to think through all these subjects. Through both funk and passinho, we materialized and claimed ancestral movements related to memory and trajectories to dialogue with society.

As part of the creative laboratory, participants brought their proposals to the creative process in order to produce the collective work. We held short conversation about each dancer's proposals, and Ayesca held a workshop on body awareness, with the goal of thinking about the "little normative boxes".

The body awareness activity was a good way to warm up for the laboratory. Through the movements, we were led to think like a "man", following a progression that started with moving the head, shoulders, arms, waist, hip, knee and feet and then with subjective triggers like thinking like a man working, or a strong man walking. Next, we did the same movements thinking like a "woman", trying to understand the things that we ourselves reproduced due to upbringings that naturalized stereotypes.

Through dance, we were led to deconstruct standards of behaviors engendered in

our being. In the end, the facilitator asked us to think like a “person”, without mentioning any gender, and we observed what changed in our movements. We did movements like a “person” without caring about whether someone would assign the actions to a specific gender or whether we would be judged for doing certain movements. In this context, thinking like a “person” was a revolutionary act of liberation from bondage.

The dancer Daniel Rocha (Daniel Ritmado) brought a poem he had written inspired by gender relations predetermined by sex, taking into considerations the colors assigned to boys and girls. For example: when a girl is born, she is destined to wear pink clothes and to play with dolls. The same does not happen to boys, who are associated with blue and presented with soccer balls and little toy cars. Daniel’s concerns were in direct dialogue with Ayesca Souza’s idea about normative boxes. Daniel’s poem arose from the conversation and frequently referenced of his own life experience.

The dancers Mayra de Freitas (May Idd) and Richard Santos (RD Ritmado) presented stereotypes as an invitation to think about whether a dancer’s “swagger” has a gender. They developed choreography in which they exchanged their “swaggers” and in the end mixed the established conceptualizations of of masculine and feminine “swagger”, showing that if something had been constructed, it can also be deconstructed.

Nayara Costa’s (Nega Nay) proposal centered her own life experiences as a black woman from the periphery who chose passinho as her corporal language, as her dance. The proposal explored her relationship with the stage and her search for her own movements while also showcasing her reactions to an audio recording inspired by the verbal oppression and discrimination she had experienced

during her life, such as “What’ up with that hair?!” “Look at that hair!” “What’s up with those clothes?!” “In my day things were really different.” “I did not raise you to do that!”

To accompany and combat that audio, she chose choreographic paths, alternating dynamic movements that culminated in a moment of liberation from those profound grievances through the dance.

Nayara Costa offered a portrait of many young people who frequently have to decide how to survive and have few mechanisms to ressignify their trajectories, but who nevertheless find ways to free themselves from imprisoning atmospheres and backward thoughts, fighting to be able to choose for themselves.

Finally, the dancer Walcir Silva (Walcir Choque (Shock)) presented a proposal on phrases he often heard when he started dancing. These phrases implied “right and wrong” ways to dance and that “you have to do things the right way” following established standards.

Although we were doing the same choreography, each one would do it in a different way, because “swagger” is exactly what distinguishes one dancer from another. There isn’t necessarily a “right and wrong”, it only has to be one’s own and incorporated into one’s style of dancing.

From there, we thought of possible areas to explore in the future drawing from these discussions and decided on an order for proposed performances. In the next meeting, we rehearsed the sequence without pauses, as if it were a recital, in order to test whether it would be interesting and align with our vision for the show, which at that point had already been dubbed “Swagger”. Using the dancers proposed scenes, we collectively created the first script version for the show.

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS HELD IN THE RESIDENCY

Activity 1: through the mirror

Goal: To stimulate self-knowledge of the body and movement; to promote interaction among the group.

Suggested age group: All ages

Duration time: 2 hr

Materials required: One large room/space

Instructions:

Divide the group into pairs. In the beginning, it is important to let them choose their pairs. Ask each pair to decide who is going to be the first one to do the movements and who is going to be the “mirror”. The participant who will be the “mirror” will have to copy every movement done by their partner. Motivate the participants to do free movements, performed slowly and in different planes (from standing to on the floor). Invert the roles between the pairs. Ask the pairs to use the three planes: upright, crouching, and low to the ground or even on the floor.

After the two participants have done the mirror role, new pairs are made, but, this time, the instructions must be clear: create pairs with someone you do not know very well. Repeat the controls.

Questions for discussion:

How did I feel being someone else’s mirror?

Did I choose movements with the other person’s capacity to carry them out in mind?

Did I chose movements that can be followed?

Did I feel comfortable with myself moving while being observed and copied?

Did I feel comfortable copying the movements?

Reflection:

This activity is used to strengthen group bonds as well as individual and collective confidence. It stimulates the participants’ commitment to creative movements that are established through eye contact and the relational experience between leading and being led. Though the mirror activity might make us feel very uncomfortable and challenged in the beginning because it requires a level of trust and surrendering of self-control, the lively dynamism, musical queues and facilitator’s guidance eventually ease that initial discomfort. Because it fosters strong bonds between participants and thus strengthens group unity, we found that this made a great activity for the early meetings of the new group.



Activity 2: A story, a hug

Goal: To host and create an atmosphere of confidence; to know the participants' stories.

Age group suggested: Over 8 years old (due to the focus on writing, it is necessary to pay attention to the specificities of the target group and to the participants' literacy level. Possible adaptations include drawing and spoken-word poetry, for example.)

Duration time: 2 hr

Materials required: Sheets of paper, colored pens/pencils

Instructions:

Ask the participants to write a story on a sheet of paper about a moment in their lives when they were prohibited from doing something because of their gender.

Ask them to add phrases they heard about how a man should be or act. Encourage them to think about the moments when they felt pressured to act a certain way, even if they didn't want to, in order to their prove virility.

Questions for discussion:

How do we deal with these impactful events?

How do we feel when we have no agency over our choices? What is it like to be a man in our society? To be a woman? Are we able to freely choose our actions and attitudes?

Do I feel pressure to act in a certain way when I'm in a group?

Reflection:

This activity can produce bonds of empathy within the group and construct spaces of confidence.

Since participants feel free to express personal experiences to the group, the activity offers them an opportunity to solidify

an agreement of non-judgment and to develop empathetic and welcoming listening. It also creates an environment of exchange among the participants, often serving as a unique space for speaking and protagonism for silenced stories.

The activity opens fissures to question naturalized gender norms that frequently generate frustrations and misunderstandings. During our lives, we are taught not to recognize this distress as a social construct and therefore something that is possible to deconstruct. It's an excellent opportunity to dissolve rigid values in a conscious and welcoming way.

It is important that the facilitator be sensitive and understand that each participant will react differently to sharing their experiences, that there is no standard formula and that though some experiences may not be relevant to one person they may be to another. This is a very important hook in this activity: to demonstrate that, although we start from similar experiences, they might have different "weights" for each individual. During these reflections, it is important to pay attention to the participants whose stories are marked by structural oppressions and to question these systems with data and research.

The activity's main goal is to foster an environment of exchange and collective welcoming, to identify similarities and proximities among the participants and to cultivate their openness to issues brought up by others. This activity is fundamental to establishing a creative and respectful atmosphere.

Activity 3: The Body that thinks *

Goal: To encourage reflections on social roles and gender issues.

Age group suggested: All ages

Duration time: 2hr

Materials required: Large room/ space

Instructions:

Introduce the activity's rules to the group. All participants will have to follow the facilitator's instructions.

No speaking during the activity.

Do not copy a partner's movements.

The facilitator gives the first command: walk through the space, spread out and find your own spot.

Once everyone has found their spots, the facilitator will ask participants to perform some movements related to normative gender roles. (support sheet)

After the facilitator's last command, everyone will be invited to observe the other participants.

Then, everyone will be invited to sit in a circle to talk about the activity.

**It is important to remember that the facilitator's instructions must be given at intervals, giving participants enough time to develop their movements. Sometimes it will be necessary to speak more slowly.

Questions for discussion:

Drawing from the facilitator's commands, which highlight normative gender roles through daily activities, invite participants to reflect on the following questions:

How did it feel to perform the commanded movements?

What movements did you most like, those for men or those for women? What movements were the most difficult?

Were there any differences between the movements?

Which movements were for "the ungendered person"? How did you feel about them?

What do the first movements that came to your mind remind you of?

Reflection:

This activity is very important to reflect on deeply naturalized gender norms within our social imagination. When we associate women with movements of effort and work, often these are movements related to care activities, for example. In the case of men's movements, this power is always demonstrated through muscles and gestures related to violent actions. Through this activity, we can start a debate about how these rigid concepts about being woman may be damaging for social development. By proposing to think and act as a "person", without referring to a specific gender, or even to a specific sex, participants are provoked to contemplate the previous movements. Usually, there is a visible discomfort and uncertainty over what movement to do. This unease serves as a good hook to finish the activity with a group conversation circle in which the participants listen to and consider the "whys" of that difficulty and other participants' hesitation when thinking about the movements of a "person" and what they understood and interpreted as 'person'. It is an excellent activity to introduce gender issues within dance, artistic and cultural groups.

***This activity was made in collaboration with one of the participants of the artistic residency that resulted in the creation of "Swagger" ("Na Manha"). This workshop was carried out by the dancer Ayesca Mayara and was adapted for the show, becoming one of the scenes.**

Support Sheet

Questions for Body that Thinks Activity

Ask participants to walk around the space and to choose a place to stand.

*Think like a woman

*Now, think like a woman using your head, your shoulders, your arms, your hands, your waist, your hip and your legs.

*Think like a strong woman; think using every part of your body: head, hip, limbs.

*Think like a weak woman; think again using every part of your body. (It is important to repeat each body part in order to stimulate single movements of the specific parts)

*Think of a woman working; think of this body at work. What are the movements of this body like? What are the movements of its arms and legs?

*Think of a woman having fun. What are the movements of this body like now? What are the movements of its arms, legs, head and hips like?

*Walk around the space again and choose another place.

*Repeat the questions REPLACING the word WOMAN with the word MAN.

*Walk around the space again, take a breath and choose another place.

*Repeat the questions REPLACING the word MAN with the word PERSON.

Tips: You can add characteristics of intensity to your movement instructions, such as slow or fast.

Movements done quickly tend to be more spontaneous and act as a warm up for the group; movements done slowly produce greater concentration and increase participants' corporal perception and awareness.



Changes
on the
path

HOW TO ADAPT AND KEEP GOING?

The year 2020 was marked by the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects all around the world, which exacerbated social inequalities and exposed in varying degrees the necessity of rethinking future paths and courses for society.

In March, during the week of the 17th, we were surprised by emergency measures to contain the spreading of Covid-19, an infectious disease that causes severe respiratory problems. Stores, malls, theaters, cinemas, parks, schools and universities suddenly closed.

Every Brazilian citizen had to immediately follow the restrictive social distancing measures put into place by their respective municipal and regional governments in order to safeguard the well-being of people in at risk groups—people over the age of 60 years old, people with chronic illnesses, smokers, and pregnant people—due to the virus’s potential for severe symptoms and possibly death. But, since this was an unknown virus, any information caused doubts and uncertainty.

HOW DID THE PANDEMIC AFFECT OUR ARTISTIC RESIDENCY?

We had only conducted two meetings of the artistic laboratory phase when the pandemic. The show was originally planned to take place in April at the Dicro Carioca Arena. **No one involved knew the full scope of what was going on when an official decree from Rio de Janeiro City Hall closed Dicro Carioca Arena and other non-essential businesses indefinitely.**

The project decided to pause the laboratory in order to rethink strategies and take care of everyone’s health, because the

most vulnerable low-income population would also be the most adversely affected due to unequal social structures. **In this context, how could we support the participants of the residency and their relatives? What would it be like to survive in this context full of uncertainties and challenges? How could we maintain our physical and mental health and still produce art?**

We needed to reformulate paradigms of time and space and to exercise even more listening and empathy. After two months we established alternative forms of care and support for Cia. Passinho Carioca and its dancers and we resumed activities remotely, confronting the challenges of transforming our face-to-face relationships into online relationships. We were insecure and apprehensive about how long we could maintain the same creative power from the beginning of the workshops.

Entering the “technological world” required a reformulation of our senses. We adapted the methodology to this new reality by proposing to continue the laboratory remotely, moving discussions onto social media and holding meetings through video conferencing platforms.

In the first meetings, we listened to the participants’ concerns about the pandemic. Many of them had to find “alternative jobs” to complement their household income, which had plummeted due to the pandemic. Others reported mental health issues stemming from uncertainties and fears.

Collective work starts with sensitive listening and, especially, with actions for equality. We addressed the participants’ concerns as best we could and arranged weekly online meetings in order to continue producing the show.

Rehearsals moved online, with training for individual performances, training

for the dancers who had some lines in the show, and discussions about the show's aesthetics, wardrobe, set, script and scene order. All decisions were made collectively.

Once we officially found out that it would be impossible to present our show at a theater, the solution came almost unanimously: let's do it in video format! Let's transform our show into a video, a dance video that will be able to reach people in every part of the world and communicate what we want and think about the future through our lived experiences and our bodies. Let's envision a collective future in which men and boys can express themselves in diverse ways and encourage the construction of positive masculinities around our communities.

"SWAGGER" SHOW, OUR SHARED EXPERIENCES

The decision to produce our show in video format was a perceptive alternative to not interrupt such an enriching process with such transformative artistic potential capable of producing identification in multiple groups, especially young black people from urban peripheries. All the staff involved worked to carry out the adaptation consistently and carefully.

The script was written and constructed in the workshops and shared with the rest of the team. Then we hired an audiovisual production company. Remote meetings were held in order to logistically organize the recordings, following health protocols. There were two recording days with a reduced production staff working at Dicró Arena and pre-arranged individual sessions for the dancers to interpret their scenes.

On recording days, each dancer had a moment to train with the show's director before recording the scene. During these

days, it was very important to observe that the confident relationships constructed during the workshops of the project were even stronger and more present. They delivered their best physical, corporal and artistic performances, affirming how much they felt like a fundamental part of the whole process, with their choices and aesthetic gambles respected and inserted in the show.

POLITICS AND AESTHETICS, OUR BODIES AND GAMBLER

The artistic political-aesthetic wager of the show arose from the joining of ideas and thoughts generated in the training meetings of the artistic residency.

The scenic proposals carry elements that represent the participants' daily lives and their choices of self-representation. Everything was collectively constructed under the premise of producing a visual presentation that cohered with the whole creative process. This collective vision is evident in the outfits, props, stage settings, soundtrack and corporal performances.

Costumes are understood as fundamental for narratives, not as something apart. They are responsible for translating the time and space into which we are immersed, contextualizing the experience. With this in mind, we chose jeans as a symbolic representation of culture from the peripheries, especially of the aesthetics of carioca funk and street dances like passinho and hip hop. One costume consisted of jean pants, shorts, or Bermudas with a basic t-shirt to portray the urban style of these art forms and to dialogue with the show's central question: "What is your swagger?". We also used a costume called "black base"—comfortable patternless clothes considered to be the "ideal clothes for dance classes"—for the "Thinking Outside the Little

Box” scene. Besides reproducing a “dance class on stage”, we chose the black base to highlight the uncovered parts of the body against the black background of the scene’s setting. Other scenes used specific costumes that demonstrated movement and color and established a connection with other setting and prop choices.

Colored ribbons, which at some moments appeared as part of the costumes and at others as props or part of the setting, not only played a fundamental role in stitching together the entire script, but also had multiple meanings, representing the timeline of normativity—standards that must be linearly followed by everyone. However and at the same time, by using several colors the ribbons also represented plural paths full of possibilities. While they might be interpreted as something that standardizes and constrains, they can also represent diversity and union.

Having options and representative paths is a powerful way to construct autonomy and dream of possible worlds. As bell hooks points out, “oppression means lack of options”. In this sense, the ribbons represent options and ways to escape an oppressed condition.

The inspiration for the soundtrack and music came from the participants’ musical experiences, from references we used during the laboratories and mainly from Cia. do Passinho’s own history. DJ Seduty, Cia. do Passinho’s collaborator, produced an original song exclusively for the show.

An important part of the project’s methodology was to recognize the potentialities of the territory. That’s why we invited Rodrigo Maré, a musician from the Maré complex of favelas, to compose the rest of the soundtrack, wagering that he would have the sensibility and ability to translate

our message into music. It was impressive how well the soundtrack meshed with the script and how well the dancers’ movements filled the camera lens, with life and resistance exploding on the screen in vivid colors and lights.

The cameras danced with the performers, and the editors played an essential role in translating and communicating this relationship and an atmosphere of connection and work to the audience. Those living, dancing young people, girls and boys, producing theories with their bodies, revealing ways to construct a better world.

We agreed to include a Brazilian Signal Language (LIBRAS) interpreter in the video to make the video even more accessible and plural.

“SWAGGER” SYNOPSIS

The show invites us to think about diversity as presented in debates about identity and black culture and about the potentialities present in knowledge generated through the body’s life trajectory. But its focus is the daily lives of young people who choose dance as their way to communicate with the world; not any dance - Passinho. “Swagger” proposes a conversation between what one feels and what one expresses, laying claiming to the possibility of everyone having their own form of expression, without judgment; it is a proposal for collective creation and social deconstruction that does not ignore its subjects, their diverse bodies, their most particular characteristics, their identity, their way of being in the world. After all, everyone has their own swagger.

Dancers:

Walcir Silva (Walcir Choque (Shock)), Daniel Rocha (Daniel Ritmado

(Rhythmic)), Nayara Costa (Nega Nay), Richard Santos (RD Ritmado), Mayra de Farias (May Idd) e Ayesca Souza.

DRAMATURGY OF THE SCENES, OUR VIEWS IN DETAIL

Scene 1: Surviving

Interpreter-creator: Nayara Costa

The scene follows the path the interpreter had to go through during the construction of her own identity, looking for her own voice and freedom to be in the world. How her pains and desires were often neglected during her life. Her choice as a black woman to embrace passinho and funk as her mediums of expression, of self-care, of personal growth and of surviving against innumerable social and familiar oppressions. Is it possible to go against the system and statistics? The scene is, at the very least, disquieting.

Passinho dance was her way of resignifying her own existence, without ignoring passinho's underlying ancestrality as collectively constructed thought and movement. It was necessary for her to discover and accept that everyone is the owner of themselves, of their bodies, and that everyone has their own identity and the dance can resignify their existence.

In the scene, the roles of narrator, protagonist, writer, singer and dancer intertwine, rendering her the interpreter of her own history, including all the complexities that had brought her to the present, her way of seeing the world, and of the knowledge she constructed through her trajectory, through her process.

Everyone has a universe of knowledge, and everyone expresses themselves through this universe. It would be unthinkable that

there would be only one single way to do anything. That would be too hegemonic, Eurocentric, violent and against the incredible autonomy of such plural and creative bodies. Would you be able to dance me, to interpret me?

Scene 2: Outside the little box

Interpreter-creator: Ayesca Mayara Souza

Through her movements, the interpreter invites us to interact and follow her lead offering the audience and other interpreters an experience of corp-oral and self awareness as they externalize their prejudices.

Following her lead, we are invited to think through movement about the body and diverse masculinities. Now we have a body, and this body is who we are, it is how we look and how we are seen, it is how we relate to each other. And if rigid gender norms are socially constructed, it is also possible to deconstruct of all these imprisoning aspects. The question of gender is directly attached to predetermined and "socially accepted" stereotypes, but what if we didn't have to care about fitting these beliefs? What actually characterizes belonging to one gender or the other when we talk about movement, self-care and the body, especially in dance?

What changes in our way of moving, thinking and acting?

Through this proposal we understand ourselves as individuals who are constantly deconstructing naturalized stigmas.

Scene 3: Inside little boxes

Interpreter-creator: Daniel Ritmado

The interpreter enters the scene reciting a poem about social boxes; he invites us to think about the predominant social factors in his daily life as a black cisgender man and

about the structures that imprison, stigmatize and force him to fit into the “right” boxes, like having to perform socially predetermined norms of masculinity.

His poem questions ideas instilled in our social and cultural practices that seem innocent and straightforward (such as designating blue as masculine and pink as feminine) but are actually quite impactful in our lives and even come to threaten those who go against them. As a black man, passinho dancer and a person from a favela, Daniel wants to live by his own choices.

Scene 4: Stereotypes

Interpreter-creator: Mayra de Farias and Richard Ritmado

Two bodies. Two points of view. Could they play equivalent social roles?

This scene builds on the dualistic way we continue to see the world and that binds us to certain normative standards of gender. Through the dancers’ intense bodily energy, the piece invites us to explore the paths that each of the interpreters must take to create a dance for a “men” or for a “woman”

according to their respective observations and sensations.

Inverting these predetermined roles contributes to breaking away from aesthetic standards both within dance, at the micro level, and society in general, at the macro level.

How would our body be able to translate such standards without stereotyping them? After all, what characterizes a feminine or masculine movement? Whoever interprets movements defines their meanings and here we are elevating this debate beyond images, beyond stereotypes. What dictates the movement is the movement itself, with emphasis on who performs it, on who interprets it, on

who delivers and bares themselves entirely in the scene.

Each body translates movements in its own way. This is what we specifically mean when we are talking about “swagger”, how each person-body has their own.

Scene 5: What’s your “Swagger”?

Interpreter-creator: Walcir Choque

The interpreter presents some experiences of prejudice he has suffered as a passinho dancer. The scene centers to image of the black body at the baile and the plurality of dances highlighted within this environment. This is the place to pour everything out, to re-encounter old friends, to dance in a group and/or alone, to give one’s best—though this “best” is conditioned by conventions that aim to standardize movements and bodies.

There are challenges to achieving perfection in dance, in the movements and steps; it requires tremendous amounts of dedication and training. Thus, dancers repeatedly question themselves: Is there really a correct movement?

Is there an imagined standard of passinho that must be achieved? Something I still haven’t accomplished?

Nobody should have this power of judgment over individual ways of expression. Each body has an experience, each body resignifies its paths of learning. The new comes from the possibility of each body talking about itself and about how it relates to dance.

Aren’t these the characteristics that express us?

Isn’t that be our “swagger”?

**RELEASING “SWAGGER”,
OUR DEBUT**

When the dance video was finished, the moment to present our work to the world had arrived. The premiere was scheduled for September 18th and the show ran for two days, with each live broadcast occurring at a fixed time for each exclusive audience, followed by a conversation circle with the dancers and the project team, and a closing baile funk.

After the exhibition, with the dancers, their friends, their relatives and the project team full of emotion, we held a discussion with the dancers about their experience participating in the residency. They highlighted their active participation, their pride in having been part of the process, the importance of being together during a time of so much uncertainty and, above all, how this was the first time they had had an artistic experience directed by women artists from favelas.

In their personal testimonies, the concept of representation materialized and made us think about the power of occupying these places, and how confidence was an important result of this process. After chatting and reading the comments from the audience, we identified paths to continue the fruits of this work.

PATHS FOLLOWED, OUR WAY TO CONTINUE

The entire residency process was centered on the collective capacity to rebuild and revisit our identity constructions through culture and cultural practices. Above all, it valued attentively listening oppressed people's desires to transform unequal social structures. Adapting the show and its rebirth as a dance-video illustrates ancestral practices of sustaining life and personifies the desire of both continuing to exist and claiming life.

We exist through what we communicate, through our bodies translated in dance

and movement, specially within the context of a country historically forged by colonial cruelty and founded on the annihilation of racialized bodies and subjectives. We survive.

And we survive especially through our capacity to resignify our worldview in the face of oppressive structures. Afro-Brazilian dances tell us silenced histories. Amerindian religious practices of the body disclose hidden knowledge. Collective worldviews enable us to understand human beings in all their diversity and reveal paths to construct better days.

Breaking with the dichotomous view of the world is continuous work and the artistic residency bet on this rupture. We urgently need to recognize the cultural and knowledge production of young people who have to break through the barrier of invisibility in order to keep themselves alive, of young people who must always alert others to the permanent emergencies in which they live. All of society has a responsibility to protect and honor black boys—who survive within a genocidal system that makes them the primary targets of violence, the majority of the incarcerated, and the majority of those living both on the streets and in shelters—and celebrate their work, their artistic production, and promote spaces of learning that visibilize positive models of masculinity that are able of changing their futures.

Below you will find Profiles of some Brazilian groups that were involved in the GlobalGrace project that question and put into tension gender norms in their work and art

PROFILE "MULHERES DE PEDRA"

Mulheres de Pedra (Women of Stone) is a collective committed to black women's protagonism in art, cooking, land use, solidarity economies and both personal and collective

care. It aims to expand spaces for the expression and affirmation of identities and histories. The collective celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2020 and for the last 10 years it has been comprised predominately of black and LGBTQIA+ identities that deliver a powerful ethical and aesthetic investigation based on care. Their mission is to value black women's protagonism in the construction of another world, where relations are made through art, education, solidarity economies and cultural diversity and to foster local development while respecting the environment, and socio-cultural and human rights.

PROFILE "OBORÓ - MASCULINIDADES NEGRAS"

On the margin of a society in which they are far from being a priority, black men try to prevail in their lives under the cruel shadow that surrounds them. The "Oboró - Masculinidades Negras" (Oboró- Black Masculinities) show depicts the reality of these men, their difficulties, challenges and struggles.

In Yorubá, Oboró is a term used to name masculine orixás. Directed by Rodrigo França and written by Adalberto Neto, the play presents conflicts in the characters' lives and each character presents features of one of the orixas: Exu, Ogum, Oxóssi, Omolu, Xangô, Oxumaré, Osanyin, Logun Edé, Ibeji e Oxalá. Cast members include Cridemar Aquino, Danrley Ferreira, Drayson Menezes, Ernesto Xavier, Gabriel Gama, João Mabial, Jonathan Fontella, Luciano Vidigal, Marcelo Dias, Orlando Caldeira, Paulo Guidelly, Reinaldo Júnior, Sidney Santiago Kuanza and Wanderley Gomes.

The play engages with complex problems like the hypersexualization of black bodies, the pursuit of perfection in exchange for a place in the sun and the risks of inhabiting black skin. Nine vignettes, permeated by

music and dance, trace the parallel realities of these men as they navigate through a hostile society.

PROFILE "MULHERES AO VENTO"

The show "Obinrin-Ventos na Maré" (Obinrin-Winds in Maré) grew out of an intense process of both creation and theoretical-practical research on Afro-brazilian dance and culture. Produced during Projeto Mulheres ao Vento na Maré classes, the show is inspired by the myths of Oya- the queen of storms and wind—together with the project participants' narratives. The encounter between these stories results in tales of contestation and survival in the face of a society that denies black women's desires, inquiries and dreams. Could these women be Oyá herself? Or everything she inspires in us? The act of being able to be and travel everywhere, like the wind, is, at a minimum delightful, even liberating. Regardless, it was certainly an inspiration for the whole conception of the show.

The actresses have the opportunity to dialogue with the audience through their bodies, highlighting the claims of distinct women—adults, teens, mothers, students, housewives, elderly women, poor women, and women from the peripheries. Through the question of "where is a woman's place?", they find the possibility of following their own paths, being able to be themselves and the owners of their dreams.

The show's soundtrack is performed by an all-woman band, who sing and play instruments, constantly transforming the scenario, both forcefully and lightly, through Afro-Brazilian popular culture.

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<https://promundo.org.br/recursos/isso-aqui-nao-e-vida-pra-voce-masculinidades-e-nao-violencia-no-rio-de-janeiro-brasil/>

Masculinidade Negra – Por que falar sobre isso?

Disponível em: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRLdxKwhCRo&feature=emb_title

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GLOSSARY

Ancestrality: Used to refer to ancestors or predecessors, focusing symbolically and subjectively on what one inherits from previous generations (especially from a subjective, spiritual and affective point of view). In many contexts, the term is used with an aura of respect and as a way to honor and remember our ancestors through actions that rescue a group's collective, cultural and social memory.

Artivism: A portmanteau of art and activism that represents a social justice oriented political position within artistic practices, particularly within the visual arts. Artivism includes strategies and actions focused on joining political and social agendas and programs to both artistic production and content and discourses creation.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to both people of the same and different sexes. See: sexual orientation.

Bullying: A form of continuous violence between colleagues/peers from the same class, school or group of people with shared characteristics and/or interests (for example, the same age; studying or living in the same neighborhood) that might involve different aggressive behaviors and does not always involve direct confrontation between victim and aggressor.

If you are a victim of this kind of violence, you can find support in school by reporting what happened to teachers, schools' staff and psychologists and, if necessary, to the school principal.

Cisgender: Refers to people who identify with the gender assigned to them

at birth. For example, if a person was designated a girl at birth and continues to identify as a woman throughout her life, she is a cisgender woman.

Inequality: Refers to a circumstance that privileges something or someone in relation to others.

Gender inequality: Unequal treatment of people based on their gender. Some examples are hierarchical rights, status and dignity between women and men, whether on level of cultural symbols, social representations, laws or facts, that lead to discrimination through unequal treatment. Gender inequality is not synonym with gender difference. See: difference.

Racial inequality: Every and any systematic and persistent socio-economic disparity based on race or non-white skin color, with mechanism that change over time. This kind of inequality is structural and present not only in access to goods, services, and opportunities but also in how relationships are established. See also: racial or ethnic discrimination.

Social inequality - Refers to social processes that prejudice or limit the status of certain groups or classes, resulting in disproportionate negative outcomes in income, education, wealth, professions, health and other measures of well-being.

Difference: Feature that distinguishes one being or group from another, whether in general or by some specific trait. Differences can be perceived through the senses and/or symbolically. It is also important to highlight that difference in social contexts can promote and legitimize inequalities.

Discrimination: Discriminate means “to make a distinction”. The most common meaning of discrimination is sociological discrimination, which is discrimination based on an individual or group characteristic: social, racial, political, religious, sexual, and age, among others forms of discrimination.

Racial discrimination: Concrete or symbolic social distinction of individuals based on skin color and phenotype characteristics; actions that sustain structural racism present in historically unequal and oppressive social organizations between races and ethnicities.

Femininity: Refers to features and behaviors related to or appropriate for women according to a given culture. Femininity for men, like masculinity for women, is usually considered negative since it goes against traditional roles.

Feminism: Emerged from analyses and finding about the concrete subordination (economic, political, and social) experienced by women globally. Feminism/s does/do not have a singular definition. Instead, they have changed over times, reflecting transformations in social contexts and in women’s circumstance and status, as well as their own comprehension of themselves. As different movements, feminisms care about equality, justice and the elimination of all kinds of oppression experienced by women with a focus on “race”, colonialism, disability and sexuality since the 1970s and 80s. Black feminist Barbara Smith defines feminism as “the political theory and practice that fights for all women’s liberation: racialized women, workers, poor women, women with disabilities, lesbians and elderly women

as well as white, heterosexual and economically privileged ones.” (1998: 96).

Funk Carioca: musical genre originally from Rio de Janeiro State’s favelas that later spread throughout Brazil. Since the 1970s, it has defined the Baile Funk (Funk Party), and although it emerged in the popular spaces of favelas out of the residents’ daily livelihood, it now boasts international fame and prestige within the music industry.

It is important to highlight that funk music and bailes are still criminalized and considered illegal in certain contexts due to structurally racist and classist negative stereotypes about favela and periphery residents.

Gender: Refers to behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, roles and expectations that a certain society during a certain historical period considers appropriate for men and women. It is learned through family, friends, religious and cultural institutions, mass media, and through every relation between individuals. Masculine, feminine and transgender are gender categories. Gender intersects with identity markers like race, class, age, nationality, sexual orientation etc.

Gender expression: Behaviors, dressing codes, ways of presenting oneself, physical characteristics, preferences and attitudes associated with either masculinity or femininity. An androgynous person expresses themselves in ambivalent way, combining physical features, whether male or female, or in a manner that does not allow others to easily identify their gender.

Gender identity: a person’s psychological identification with being a man, a woman, both or other. It might

coincide with the sex someone was assigned at birth or not. Cisgender or cis are people who self-identify with the gender associated with the sex that was assigned to them at birth, while transgender or trans are people who do not identify with the sex assigned to them at birth.

It is not related to sexual orientation. The term queer refers to people who do not find themselves in the gender binary; they might identify with both genders or neither. For example, in countries like Malta, a neutral gender is legally recognized, while in Nepal, India, New Zealand and Australia a third gender is recognized.

Gender equality: Means that any person, no matter which gender they identify with, has the same status, that is, they can share the same opportunities and conditions to exercise their rights and human potential, to contribute to society in any area (economic, political, social and cultural) and to also benefit from it.

Hegemony: Is a concept developed and used by Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci in order to describe processes of domination through different communication media (media, artistic production, scientific production) within social structures. In this sense, to fight against structurally dominant and widespread media is, according to Gramsci's thought, counter-hegemony.

Heterosexual: People (cis or trans) who feel sexually or affectively attracted to people of a different sex. See: sexual orientation.

Homophobia: Hate, aversion or discrimination against homosexual people and, consequently, against homosexuality. It can

also include subtle, silent and insidious forms of prejudice and discrimination against homosexual people. The term homophobia can refer to gay men and women, but in the case of lesbian women the term lesbophobia is also used to make visible this specific form of hate.

Homosexual: A person (cis or trans) who feels sexually or affectively attracted to people from the same sex. The lesbian movement prefers to use the term lesbian in order to achieve more visibility for this group and its specificities. See: sexual orientation.

Intersectionality: A concept/practice coined by black academic and feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989:55), that employs the metaphor of the intersection (or crossing) to call attention to the ways in which inequalities intersect- such as gender, age, race, social class, sexual orientation, origin, disability- making people particularly vulnerable to discrimination and violence due to the ways oppressions are inter-related, not independent.

Lesbians: Women (cis or trans) who have affective or sexual relations with other women (cis or trans).

Lesbophobia: violence and prejudice directed against lesbians as a result from their sexuality.

LGBTQIA+: An initialism for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, queer, intersexuals and asexuals. Other formulations include: LGBT+, LGBT, LGBTI, LGBTQI, LGBTQI+.

Machismo: The behavior, opinions and attitudes of a person who refuses equal rights and obligations between genders, favoring and praising the masculine over the feminine. That is, it is the mistaken idea that men are “superior” to women.

Masculinities: An invitation to plural ways to be a man and express oneself in the world. This term is used in opposition to the word’s singular form, “masculinity”, which often refers to the idea of a masculine performance based on oppressive and normative models of “being a man”. This singular notion of masculinity is often deemed “toxic masculinity” and is undergirded structurally by our patriarchal and sexist society. In contrast, the plural “masculinities” refers to alternative models of expressing oneself as a man within society, criticizing rigid and historically oppressive models and proposing positive behaviors for being a man. In this case, the term might include addendums like “positive masculinities”, “caregiver masculinities.”

Oppression: Negative effects experienced by people who are in a subordinate position within society or within a social group.

Rights and Sexual health: Universal human rights based on freedom, dignity and equality between all human beings. They aim to guarantee all people rights to: experience sexuality with no fear, shame, fault, false beliefs and other obstacles to the free expression of their desires; experience their sexuality regardless of marital status, age or physical condition; choose sexual partners without discrimination and with the freedom to express their sexual orientation; practice their sexuality

without fear of violence, discrimination and coercion and with full respect for the other’s corporal integrity; practice sexuality independently from penetration; and to insist on safe sexual practices in order to prevent both undesirable pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease, including HIV (Instituto Promundo, 2014, p.49)

Social gender roles -The roles that are socially designated masculine or feminine. Social gender roles influence the way people think of themselves in relation to genders within relationships with other people and are important aspect of one’s representation of oneself and identity. They lead women and men to have preferences and perceptions that are in accordance with social expectations. (CITE, 2003:60).

Passinho do funk: The dance style that emerged from bailes funk, with repertoire of specific techniques and movements that define its artistic and corporal expression as a dance language. With its roots in the streets, it is an urban dance that has gained visibility within the cultural industry in recent years, being featured in big national and international festivals, shows, and events, including as a cultural representation of Brazil.

Prejudice: Drawing negative conclusions about someone without knowing anything about them based on generalized characteristics ascribed to the social group(s) to which they (are thought to) belong, often leading to exclusion from certain space.

Racism: The act of discriminating against someone based on their “race” or skin color, ultimately in order to weaken

or nullify their human rights. It is a form of exercising oppressive power. Racism consists in the idea that some “races” are inferior to others, attributing social, cultural, political, and psychological deficiencies to “race” and then justifying social differences due to alleged biological differences.

Sex: Refers to the combination of biological, psychological and anatomical features that determines if an individual is a man, woman or intersex. It is assumed that this group of features is equivalent to chromosomal sex or genital sex, and corresponds to expected reproductive capabilities. Several factors contribute to biological sex: chromosomes (XY, XX or other combinations), genitals (external reproductive structures), gonads (the presence of ovaries or testicles), hormones (testosterone, estrogen), etc. The biological sex assigned to someone does not always correspond to the person’s gender identity.

Sexuality: The expression of our feelings, thoughts and desires, which is an integral part of each individual’s life, one’s identity throughout every stage of life, and one’s sense of physical and psychological balance. (APF, s.d.61)

Sexual orientation: Refers to the gender(s) to which a person feels sexual and affective attraction, independently of their own gender identity. Sexual orientations include “asexuality”, “heterosexuality”, “bisexuality”, “homosexuality”, and “pansexuality,” among others (Think Olga. 201759). Heterosexual people feel especially attracted to people of the other sex while homosexual people feel especially attracted to people of the same sex. Bisexual people feel attracted to people from both sexes, and

pansexual refers to people who feel attracted to people from different sexes and genders (including trans and intersexual). Asexual people don’t feel any sexual attraction.

Social construction: A sociological concept that contends that norms, meanings, values, social symbols and rules are socially defined by individual and collective social practices. Social constructs changes continuously, since society constantly redefines and renegotiates norms and meanings.

Socialization: Is the process by which human beings learn and internalize the socio-cultural elements of their environment, learning to adapt themselves to the social environments in which they live in order to avoid social sanctions when rejecting the imposition of certain social norms.

Stereotypes: Insulting generalizations that distort reality. See also: gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes: General and socially valued representations about what women and men must be (gender features) and do (gender roles). (CITE, 200352). One example is to always represent women as wives and mothers, ignoring that they also work and they do not always get married and/or want to have children. Another example is to always represent men as breadwinners and as incapable of taking care of children. One final example is to represent gays as effeminate and lesbians as masculine.

Structural or institutional racism: Refers to situations in which a “dominant race” uses policies and laws to maintain social inequalities based on race.

South Africa's *apartheid* regime, slavery and Jim Crow laws in the US, and slavery and the eugenics movements in Brazil are examples of structural racism. Historically, racism has served to justify genocides, crimes against humanity, different ways of dominating people.

Trans: Term that refers to transexual, transgender and people whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, including people who do not fit into a binary comprehension of gender and consider themselves both or neither gender, a third gender or neutral.

Transphobia: Hate, aversion or discrimination of a transgender person.

Transgender: An umbrella term that includes anyone who, for any reason, does not identify oneself with the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transsexual: Medical term created in 1850 in order to refer to people who want their biological sex to correspond to their gender identity, changing their bodies through hormones and/or surgeries. Transsexual refers to individuals who do not identify with the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Frequently, these people describe feelings of gender dysphoria and undergo some form of transition to alleviate that dysphoria. (REA, s.d.63).

Urban dances: An umbrella term for any dance style that emerged in public spaces such as streets, carnival parades, parks, outdoor spaces, raves and clubs.

Violence - "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual,

against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." (OMS, 2002:65)

Violence against women: any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (Assembleia Geral da ONU, 1993: 166).

Gender violence: Umbrella term for any damage perpetrated against people's desired gender identity, which negatively impacts their physical and psychological health, development and identity and that result from the unequal power differential between genders based on distinctions and expectations related to men and women. It does not only affect women and girls, even though they are significantly affected in every society. Men and boys are equally victims of this kind of violence. For example, homosexuality, within many communities, is considered an aberration according to what is expected of men's behavior. The violence can be physical, sexual, psychological or economic and perpetrators can be relatives, community members and figures who act in the name of religious, cultural, state or intra-state institutions (Conselho da Europa: 200767). Gender violence towards lesbians, homosexual and trans people is often neglected when gender violence is discussed (Bloom, 2008: 1468)



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