

Encounters Beyond Text art transforming lives

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 people's
palace
projects

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Foreword

by Gringo Cardia, Director Spectaculu

Art, creativity, technology and thinking - experiences that mix these elements are fundamental for young people if we are going to stimulate them to express themselves and to make themselves be heard. Responding to that urge is what education calls on us to do in the 21st Century.

People's Palace Projects brought innovation and the appeal of the new to the young people from peripheral communities that come to our school at Spectaculu. Gary Stewart and Paul Heritage proposed new ways of communicating, enabling young people to create critical and aesthetic thinking through free emotion and the spontaneity of an art form associated with rational technology.

The students understood that behind any machine however powerful, there is always the creative mind of a person. They understood that this makes the difference, that THEY are the difference.

The installation at the top of the hillside of Providência showed the capacity of these young people to create a large-scale production appropriate to the scale of the local audience that could also make a signification intervention into the city of Rio de Janeiro. And then they went beyond those streets, crossed oceans and went to England. The three young people that spent a month in London, brought back and shared with the other students at the school the experience and knowledge of how their art can awaken consciousness and stimulate feelings in people from other cultures.

Encounters always placed the young person in the central role as artist and author. It instigated a process that provoked questions for young people to discuss from a personal artistic point of view. Yet again People's Palace Projects brought a collaborative project that respected the experience of young people working with important artists in different artistic languages.

Such unique opportunities make this project a bridge that brings the young person to a more sophisticated investigation of art and culture.

Spectaculu was privileged to be able to experiment with this artistic language and show in our own way that art, culture and education don't change the world - they change people and it is those people who transform the world.
www.spectaculu.org.br / www.gringocardia.com.br

Encounters:

Experiments in Interactive Digital Installations

Paul Heritage

Friday 27 November 2010

■ 15 young people prepare to mount towering projection screens around a yellow house perched above the hillside community of Providência in the centre of Rio de Janeiro. As students at Spectaculo - a Factory of Spectacle that provides arts education and training for young people from peripheral communities across Rio - they come from communities similar to the one where they are now setting up their interactive digital installation. The house they are transforming waits at the top of steep stairs reached by a narrow, winding access road hidden behind the city bus station. The yellow house is squeezed between an improvised bar and a small square in front of a church where a simple wooden cross rules over the constant zig-zag of football games. Despite the stairway's breathtaking incline, it is a passageway in constant movement as neighbours descending cross with those returning to the compact sprawl of tiny houses that have a unique panoramic view of Rio crowned within the Bay of Guanabara. The 15 students carry their digital vision of the city up those stairs with the heavy wooden beams they plan to nail around and above the yellow house. Slowly they construct the screens that will share their dreams with whoever gathers on Saturday night in the square beside the bar in front of the church at the top of the stairway in Providência.

■ 800 military personnel prepare to mount the following day's invasion of the improvised communities known as the Complexo do Alemão on the periphery of Rio de Janeiro. As members of the Parachute Infantry Brigade these soldiers are from an elite unit of the Brazilian army, brought in at the request of Rio's Governor to re-enforce the police for a special operation to combat a series of attacks launched by the drug traffickers. Today marked the first occasion that military tanks have been used in the fight against the drug gangs when the military and police moved into the favela of Vila Cruzeiro. Direct conflict was minimal as the drug traffickers staged an escape made all the more dramatic by its live broadcast on national television from a camera hovering above. Rio de Janeiro is on a state of alert for the anticipated wave of violence to be unleashed by the gangs tomorrow. While the Governor's family is given re-enforced special protection in anticipation of a planned attack, the rest of the city anticipates a bloodbath that could overflow in any part, at any time.

When night falls in Providência that Friday, the residents await the next day with a keen sense of the 113 years their community has occupied that Morro or hillside.

Providência has a special role in the history that has led Rio de Janeiro to invade itself in November 2010. The hillside was first inhabited in the 1890's by soldiers returning from the civil war against the Canudos in which the Brazilian army violently invaded and repressed a community that had arisen in opposition to the regulatory State. The soldiers were promised land in return for victory, and on being denied this promise occupied a central Rio hillside at a time when the capital's urban reform programme was displacing poor communities into marginal and peripheral spaces. The choice of site was providential as they made their houses from trees on the hill, which reminded them of the favela trees in the State of Bahia where they had fought the war with the Canudos. Hence Providência became the name of their community on the Morro da Favela/Hillside of the Favela. Subsequently favela - the name of a tree in Bahia - was used for all the marginal, improvised communities that grew up both inside and outside the city.

By 1910, Providência was renowned as being the most violent place in Rio de Janeiro and over the next hundred years more than a thousand favelas would grow across the city creating territories outside the formal urban fabric that became ripe for exploitation by organised crime. By 2010, the Brazilian state was once again clinched into a war with a part of its own population that regarded itself as outside of the law. The division of the city into formal and informal territories was become increasingly untenable. The State of Rio de Janeiro began to 'invade' the city itself, and a process of so-called 'pacification' by a specially trained police force began, backed up by an acceleration of related social projects. By November 2010, Providência had become one of a handful of favelas to have been 'pacified', making it possible for some to contemplate making art while others gathered to prepare for war.

Encounters: Experiments in Interactive Digital Installations (cont)

Saturday 28 November 2010

"D-Day in the War against the Drug Traffickers"

(Front page headline, O Globo newspaper)

07.59: 2,600 heavily armed police and soldiers invade the Complexo do Alemão, reputed to be the headquarters of the Comando Vermelho, one of Rio's principal drug gangs. The symbolic and overt reference to Normandy landings in World War II by Rio's leading newspaper, opens a weekend that is in all but name a state of emergency for the city. By the end of Sunday, the authorities can celebrate victory with the raising of the national and state flags in the 'conquered' lands.

In the afternoon of the same day, 50 invited guests gather in Rio's abandoned port neighbourhood, where Spectaculo - the Factory of Spectacles - has been based for the last ten years. The academics and activists, friends and family that have gathered at the school have braved not only the unforgiving summer heat but the unknown fears of crossing the city on a day that promises violent reversals and reprisals. The *Encounters* project begins, not with an installation in Providência as had been planned, but with a retreat back to the school where the workshops with the young people have taken place over the previous three weeks. The original plans for the installation are totally abandoned. But what seems at first to be an inevitable but reluctant reaction to the dangers of proceeding with a cultural event in the middle of a war zone, gradually reveals itself as an affirmative means to act where all action apart from violence has seemingly been negated.

The young people begin to mix and to play the shifting images and sounds they have made from their various 'encounters' over the past three weeks: encounters with the community of Providência, with new technologies, with new ideas and writings, with a research team from the UK and with each other. Instead of the open-air screens they had hoped to build around the yellow house on the hill, they are now showing their work within their own school, an imaginative and resistant space created within the ruined shell of an old warehouse. The installation is made live at the point of its reception. As the young students construct, conflict and converge pictures, colours, words and sounds, they gain a certain power over now. Like most modern warfare today's battles will be fought out as much in the media as on the narrow streets of the favelas. The newspapers and television will reduce everything that happens over these complex days to the simplicity of winners and losers. Good will stand victorious over evil as the sheriff triumphs over the bandit. Connections and consequences will be denied or hidden. Here at Spectaculo a girl swings and twists as helicopters clatter to invade, carnival explodes with the dust clouds of the Twin Towers falling, orange conquers blue, a child's hopeful eye makes us witness anew the revelation of words that will not stand still, of worlds that will not hold.



Photos courtesy of Severino Silva, one of Brazil's top crime photographers, working on the frontline of Rio's violent drug conflict. This is a selection of some of the pictures he has taken for the newspaper O Dia. For more details about Severino and his work please visit www.severinosilva.com

Encounters never failed as much again as it did on 28th November 2010, but everything we understand now about creating and staging the installation came from that first 'failure'. We failed to stage it in the space for which it had been designed, but we discovered the importance of the place of the young artists themselves in the meaning of the artwork. There has been a synthetic beauty and a feast of ideas generated by the workshops with the young people in each iteration of the project in Rio de Janeiro, London, Salisbury and Gateshead. The digital tools made available to the participants have enabled them to create sequences that are variously charged by aesthetic and political imperatives. But beyond its power to seduce both artist and audience, the technology stimulates shared authorship and generates an autonomy both for those who make the original work and for those who chose to re-make it during the interactive sequencing of the installation. Thus the agency and identity of the artist and their place in the staging of the installation becomes a part of the meaning of the performance. The original 'failed' staging of the piece revealed the importance of the artist as player. That first afternoon in Rio we watched not only the images on the screen but the relationships forming between those images and the young artists who were now manipulating them for us, with us. Their power to create and shift images contrasted starkly to the civic disempowerment of the day. No subsequent staging has ever seemed slight or inconsequential, because that first very

private sharing showed that significance can and must be created in the singular moment that is always multiplied. We do not need to borrow power or meaning from an external frame that determines how one cultural act is more important than another. The live, shared experience that is stimulated by the way in which art is made and re-made through the staging of the *Encounters* installation keeps the moment of meaning constantly active and present.

Encounters has been staged seven times between November 2010 and October 2011.

- Spectaculu School (27 November 2010). Created by students from the school in their own space in the old port area of Rio de Janeiro
- Fundação Progreso (12 December 2010). The installation was mounted again as part of an end-of-year event by the school at a venue in the centre of Rio de Janeiro.
- Morro da Providência (27 March 2011). The installation was successfully staged back in the original site in Rio de Janeiro
- Queen Mary, University of London (13 April 2011). A new installation was created during a six-week series of workshops with young people from East London who were looking at international issues of art and censorship. Three students from Spectaculu joined for the final week and the installation was created from work produced in London and Rio de Janeiro.

- Salisbury International Festival (1 June 2011). A new installation created by two young artists using images they created from the local environment, and staged with previous material created in Rio de Janeiro and London.
- 198 Contemporary Arts and Learning (30 September 2011). An installation created by young people in South London with a group of young photographers from Syria, Iraq and Palestine. Exploring how London functions as a culturally diverse city and looking at its history of migration especially in relation to their lives.
- The Lawnmowers Theatre Company (14 October 2011). A new installation created in Gateshead by members of this theatre company run by and for people with learning disabilities .

Each time Gary Stewart started the workshops from the same set of instructions, taught the same skills and allowed the same sense of freefall in the workshops as students discovered, rather than were taught, how to make work using digital art technologies. Although they worked in small, self-defined and selected groups, in all instances the student-artists developed ways to cross their various stages of knowledge, development and sophistication with the equipment and programmes. Showing and sharing their work almost daily, they achieved enough distance from each other to produce distinct creations but the project as a whole grew from the crossings, samplings, borrowings and exchanges that characterised the workshop environment. The emphasis was on finding

ways of 'doing' amongst the group and the possibility that the students could teach their master, if Gary himself had not yet 'found' that particular route through the technology. This prepared the students for live performances where 'mistakes', 'crashes', 'pauses' and the genuine 'unknown' were a part of the experience for audience and artist alike. Terrifying for a producer, enlivening for the performer, baffling for the audience but ultimately liberating for everyone as the technological framing of the artistic event became ever less inhibiting and always more playful. The performances had their own sense of anarchy, with the human and the digital in playful dispute.

In every instance, the installation was paraded as low tech despite its high tech credentials. The screens were always make-shift, the operating modules always on display, the audience were given the simplest means to interface with the images, discovering their own powers of control and command. At all times the original artists were the conduits of significance. Meaning was made by strategies that constantly reminded us not just of the presence of the artists, but who they were, where they came from, and how they inter-reacted with the technologies, with each other and with the audience.

Encounters began with a non-installation: a failure to connect image and location, meaning and site, artist and audience. We could not be there, could not be present, could not signify, could not mean. From those disconnections this project began to understand itself.



Notes on the catalogue

Gary Stewart and I began this journey with a question to ourselves: if we were to create a live, interactive installation to illustrate and investigate how young people transform their worlds through the arts, what would it look, feel and sound like? It is the same question that we have put to all the young artists that have participated in this project so far. Each of them was already making art that was in some way transformative. Over the process of the workshops we brought them into contact with thinkers and ideas about social and personal transformation, but always we emphasised the importance of giving the young artists the tools to create a means not just of showing how they can transform their worlds, but the opportunity to make those transformations active.

The texts that are included here reflect the diverse range of people that have engaged with the project or whose work we have drawn on for inspiration. In some way each of the texts or fragments deals with the idea of art and transformation. Some of the pieces are fully-formed essays written specially for this publication, others are extracts from interviews we conducted along the way. They include the voices of academics, policy makers, artists, activists and young people themselves. Most of them reflect on the Brazilian context because throughout this project we have looked to Brazil and its current transformations as a means of learning more about what we are doing in the UK.

The catalogue includes three short academic essays, each of them reflecting different encounters which were staged between young people and 'public thinkers':

- Liv Sovik, Professor of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, visited Spectaculu to meet and talk with the young artists as they were preparing the installation. Dr Sovik wrote a specially commissioned piece to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the school, which we include here to show the context for Spectaculu and its students.

- Eneida Leal Cunha, Professor of Literature at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, visited the installation in Providência and invited three of the young artists to present their work to a group of scholars and activists at a Fullbright Seminar on Human Rights and Communication organised by UNESCO. We include here the lecture that Dr Cunha gave to accompany the audio-visual presentation by the young artists.
- Luiz Eduardo Soares, Professor of Social Anthropology and former Federal Secretary of Public Security, gave a lecture entitled The Drama of Violence. We used Soares' writings in the preparatory workshops with the students at Spectaculu in June 2010 and invited him to prepare a lecture which could be VJ-ed live by one of the students using images prepared by the group. Here we publish the notes Luiz Eduardo Soares prepared for the lecture which he gave on 24th July 2010 at the Purcell Room, Southbank Centre London as part of Festival Brazil. Plinio Pedro provided a visual dialogue with the lecture through the live presentation of image sequences prepared by the students at Spectaculu, adding another layer of meanings to the ones presented by Luiz Eduardo Soares. Plinio came into visibility at the Southbank Centre in London as the live and present VJ to a lecture on the social invisibility of young people from Brazil's marginal communities.

The texts presented here are a series of reflections by people who make art happen in a range of backgrounds and contexts but each with a passion for the ways in which young artists transform their world: Celso Altayde, Baba Isreal, Bad Taste Cru, Binho, Rappin' Hood, Philip Osment, Cicely Berry, and Regina Casé. Each of them has been in a different way a part of the myriad of encounters that form this project, of which the meeting with Brazil is so central.

The young people themselves are heard and seen in different ways throughout the catalogue. Their voices are heard through the interviews conducted by Poppy Spowage, a postgraduate student at Queen Mary, University of London where the project was based. Poppy is the same age as most of the

young people, asking the same sort of questions about art and the world as the young artists who participated in the project, but in the formal academic context of a Masters degree programme. Her voice, as well as the young students, is heard in her summary of their oral evaluations given to camera during the project.

There is one other young artist represented wordlessly here in this catalogue: Rato Diniz. Born and brought up in the complex of Rio favelas known as Maré, he trained as a photographer at the Observatory of the Favelas, an independent research and educational organisation. Rato himself is part of the cultural processes that are the subject of this project. His photographs of our work in Providência offer the personal vision of a young man who can celebrate and critique the living culture that makes his work so vibrant.

The links between and beyond the texts and the photographs in this catalogue are neither random nor deliberate. You are invited to make your own connections. There is a website that accompanies the project where you will find more audio-visual material and a space to make your own contribution to this enquiry: www.encountersbeyondtext.com

Paul Heritage is Professor of Drama and Performance at Queen Mary, University of London and founding Director of People's Palace Projects. For over 15 years he has created a series of projects, programmes and productions that focus on building knowledge and understanding about transformational arts practices. With People's Palace Projects, he created theatre-based human rights projects in the Brazilian prison system from São Paulo through to Rondônia, working closely with the Ministry of Justice. People's Palace Projects brings inspirational Brazilian arts practices to audiences across the UK, and has created new Brazilian partnerships for a range of cultural institutions including the Barbican, Contact Theatre, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres, Royal Shakespeare Company, Sage Gateshead, Southbank Centre, Young Vic, etc. Heritage has directed Shakespeare's plays with celebrated casts in some of Rio de Janeiro's most distinguished theatres as well as on the borderlands of conflict in the favelas of Vigário Geral, Parada de Lucas, Rocinha, etc. In 2004 Heritage was made a Knight of the Order of the Rio Branco by the Brazilian government in recognition of his services to Anglo-Brazilian cultural relations. Author of a number of publications about Brazil, he had a studio theatre named after him in the maximum-security prison of Brasília. For further information see www.peoplespalace.org.uk



First encounters: Gary Stewart and Paul Heritage with students and staff from Spectaculu: November 2011



Media Alchemists

Gary Stewart

Encounters: experiments in interactive digital installations could not have happened if not for the adoption of a seemingly innocuous piece of software which is the central technological and conceptual architecture for the project's authorship, production, reception and interaction. Without belittling the role, cultural significance and importance of technologies such as digital cameras, video camcorders, mobile phones, computers, projectors, surround sound etc., the essential piece of the project jigsaw was VJ software which enabled 'video jockeying'. 'VJing' is a form of live visual performance where disparate elements of images, video, sound, text, meanings, interpretation, structure and rhythm are concretised in an environment or space. VJing enables the performer to place themselves at the constantly changing intersections of how they and the audience respond to stimuli and situate and place themselves culturally and socially in the ensuing audio visual dialogue that takes place. With no set or fixed structure set in advance VJing enables a completely variable and non-linear structure to flow which is controlled through live selection, mixing, modification and generative reproduction. While offering the possibilities of infinite

change the process is bound and determined by the initial capture and selection of media and then subsequent organisation and filters that are used as a way to control and navigate the performance. How the software enables the VJ to riff with the audience is an essential part of what makes it so powerful when used as a catalyst for improvisation. Whilst there is a clear flow of control you cannot 'undo' something if an action is carried out. The VJ is creating, reacting and making in the moment and in response to the stimulus of the immediate environment and inner feelings be that a favela in Rio or a festival in Salisbury as a young person forming their own sense, impressions and perspective of the world and their relationship to it. It is this improvisational mixing that is at the heart of the live performance. There are multiple interpretations which coexist at the same time waiting patiently in a temporary alternative world to be played out and the VJ plays their part in creating this illusion with the audience. Literally crafting an as of yet unforeseen future. It's a process of audio visual seduction and an invitation to the audience to willingly enter a trance like state. When and for how long the audience choose to enter this alternative space of possibilities is not

determined by one overarching narrative but rather an infinite number of ever changing sub narratives. With so many possibilities and everything happening live in real time the VJ is concerned less with literal or primary meaning and more with communicating abstract meaning or intention. Constantly taking the temperature from the audience, responding, creating and conveying a mood. This is a space where powerful meaning and associations can be made manifest and as quickly dissipate and become intangible again. This dynamic visceral kinetic relationship is an important and significant part of the emotional connection and engagement that takes place and is in constant flux between the VJ and audience. The VJ is required to maintain the logic of visual rhythm and momentum. Even with built in automation ordering some of the processes in the software, once the performance has been initiated it is not possible to let it simply 'run'. The VJ has to continue to conduct and curate the narrative, and the dynamic of rhythm and technique in the mix becomes the narrative of the performance with this constant anticipation itself creating drama and tension.

And what of the content that *Encounters* performs and presents? Community and location are intimately connected in constructing the narrative for the installation and are what gives the work its power and significance. The fundamental architecture of VJ software is as a recombinant, re-contextualising and reassembling content in new ways and the premise and very act of VJing enables the manipulation of collective media memory by bending the trajectory of not just the past into the present and the creation of new imagined futures but also the crossing between the geographic, cultural and conceptual spaces of Brazil and the UK. With the ubiquity of digital media combined with the power and ease of media sampling at your disposal you can be quite literally thinking globally but acting locally, creating new meanings, configurations and cultural references. To this end the primary focus is first and foremost assembling the media database that can be available for consideration. Content is first reduced to objects which are organised, structured and categorised before receiving alternative meanings and having their latent potentiality realised as they take on a life of their own. It is in effect an explicit, publicly shared dynamic representation of how the research process has been undertaken. It is an investigation into how content behaves and the ways in which with every recall of a memory, it changes. This extended and expanded memory space is conveyed to the viewer in a way that references our experiences of cinema, music and physical performance but it also has its own unique and distinct grammar with a syntax based on transitions, movements, sonics, atmospheres and layers. Perhaps as a direct consequence of the software used the relationship between layers and composition for both the visual and sonic has become an important part of VJing, mixing together in varying degrees multiple images and controlling the amount of transparency to vary the visibility of certain areas analogous to musical composition. The content's meaning is connected more to its physical and cultural surroundings than it is to the limited projector space enclosing the images. It is less about the surface and more to do with the ability to juxtapose images with sophisticated control.



VJs get to explore and wield the power of montage, which we have seen to have such historical importance in the world of cinema and which has now become such a familiar and significant part of immersion installations in galleries, museums and the growing interest in public art and spaces. It relies on how an unlimited combination of relatively simple elements are capable of expressing a broad range of human emotion, sensations and feelings. This work is part of the search to create new dynamics and relationships between images, spaces, performers and participants and in doing so examine and explore storytelling as a collective experience.

Gary Stewart is a London based artist developing socially engaged research based projects that bridge the worlds of academia, technology, participation, architecture, sound and art with local people and communities. Working with and between informal public spaces and established cultural institutions, galleries and museums. Inspired by the Fluxus art movement and its "do it yourself" aesthetic and value for simplicity over complexity and an interest in how communities share knowledge and adapt to changing environments, his work seeks through capturing stories and uncovering people's experiences to enable people to be actively engaged in thinking about the value of their knowledge and role in civic society.



An Encounter with Possibility...

Poppy Spowage

When asked how *Encounters* had changed his world, Zia, a London participant, answered, 'just doing. Being allowed to do stuff. The freedom to do what we want.' In *Encounters* freedom was not simply a theme to explore, but also an 'act' to experience. 'Freedom' was not something that the participants were expecting, had predicted, or necessarily experienced in other activities in their lives. Ryan, a young artist from Salisbury exclaimed: 'I was surprised when we first arrived and it was like "this is your guys' project, you do what you want" – WOW.'

Gary Stewart provides each group with research skills, technological expertise and introduces them to his area of work; but the content and the shape of the installation are developed throughout the process with the young artists who work in small groups. This collaborative working model produces a particular aesthetic – an eclectic mix of film and images, juxtaposed soundscapes and contrasting themes – which provoke a bizarre, complex and beautiful experience for both participants and audiences in its various locations. All the groups – using interviews, film, photographs and historical documents – create original media which reflects their

worlds: 'that was the best part, going out from Spectaculu and flying the flag for our project.' Plinio, a Brazilian participant, described how he found having the freedom and autonomy to create the piece that they wanted the most engaging part of *Encounters*.

The participants had freedom of content, freedom with the technology and freedom during performance when the collated digital material was 'played' live. Phabio, a Brazilian participant, described *Encounters* as 'a project where anything could happen, we edited videos to perform live [...] you need to know what you're doing, it's serious. It's a very big responsibility.' The term 'play' was used by the participants in most of the interviews, and reflects an important element of the *Encounters* project. I was struck by the seriousness attached to 'play' in my many conversations with the young artists. In *Performance Studies* (2006), Richard Schechner describes how 'play is very hard to pin down or define. It is a mood, an activity, a spontaneous eruption. Sometimes it is rule bound, sometimes very free [...] play can subvert the powers that be' (p.89). In *Encounters*, 'play' also points to pressing a button, moving an image, playing an electronic piece of music. 'Play' is constantly in flux, being renegotiated and discovered in every act. Play

in *Encounters* is also political: an act of freedom that challenges the typical, oppositional, relationships between artist/participant, artists/audience, knowing/watching.

In an interview about her experience of *Encounters*, Thammyris, a Brazilian participant, exclaimed, 'through the project I got to know a new way of making art. It transformed art as I knew it.' When asked how this 'new way of making art' had changed his world, Phelipe, a Brazilian participant, asserted:

To be honest life continued in the same way, but in terms of thoughts, it has changed the way I look at things. I see things differently now, looking at the world. I felt like a different person, I was there as well as the others, but I was there too, it was important. It changed me, yes. It made me feel like a different person who was capable and it made me believe that I can do things.

In *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009) Jacques Rancière, a political philosopher, argues that 'emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting' (p.13). The spectator/participant also acts, 'she observes, selects, compares, interprets. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way' (*ibid*). For Phelipe *Encounters* provided an opportunity to 'act', and in that 'act' he felt able to make a worthy contribution to something bigger than himself. He was part of a group, but his individual presence as part of that group was important: 'I was there as well as the others, but I was there too, it was important.'

This experience of freedom was something that the young artists also wanted to offer to their audiences. Thammyris explained that 'you can't control the space that exists between you, your art, and the spectator. I am not going to go to the spectator and tell them what I wanted to convey. Each one will understand it in their own way and in their own manner.' The audience participated in the performance not only by re-fashioning the material, but also fashioning the content when they were offered the opportunity to 'play' with the technology. Plinio explained that 'our concern was to make something that anyone could use, anyone could press a button and see that it changes something – this button does that, this one does this.' Ryan and Jacob from Salisbury explained that watching the audience 'play' the installation 'felt good.' They described *Encounters* as a project led by 'feeling': explaining that the offering to the audience was an opportunity to play, to feel and to freely experiment: 'we haven't got any labels on what everything does, it's basically just finding out for yourself.'

As with the audience, these acts of freedom manifest with the participants in different ways, in the project's various contexts. For some, *Encounters* offers the freedom to experiment with technology; for others, it provides the space to explore issues pertinent to their lives. I am a post-graduate researcher of Theatre and Performance at Queen Mary, University of London and have worked closely documenting, observing and working with *Encounters*. *Encounters* participants are exploring, experimenting, playing, and bringing large philosophical concepts – such as freedom, possibility and democracy – into being. Shaira, one of the London participants, explained that she is a young person 'who



has been at home raising a baby for two years, so I really needed something like this.' She continued by explaining that other peoples'

parents will teach them to go and find activity courses like this, so it's really nice that you guys have taken people out of Tower Hamlets who wouldn't have known otherwise [...] it's no one's fault, it's just some people have English speaking parents who went to university, who might be middle class and stuff, and it's normal surroundings for them.

Encounters gave Shaira access to skills, equipment and opportunity that she felt had not been available. Shaira used images of food to create colourful images and film for her installation and was nervous about her topic not being as 'political' as some of the groups' work. On the day of the performance when I asked her to describe her installation Shaira spoke confidently, 'my own project is about freedom of ideas and it is based around

food [...] my theme is personally political to me – food is a human, everyday right, it's a window into other peoples' cultures.' *Encounters* offered Shaira an opportunity. Shaira played, experimented and created a unique piece of work. During her process, Shaira realised she had something to say – to do – which was as 'political' as everyone else.

Notions of 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'possibility' lie at the heart of much current research in the field of theatre and performance. The young artists, such as Shaira, have something new, unnoticed and inspiring to offer to this conversation. The freedom to act, experience and 'play' is an overwhelming feeling akin to first time experiences. Imagine being handed a paintbrush for the first time, the first time you hit a piano key, the first time you are taken to the cinema. It is this broadening of options that changes ways of looking at the world, as freedom and possibility come together. The performers took these options and offered fresh ways of looking and changing their world.

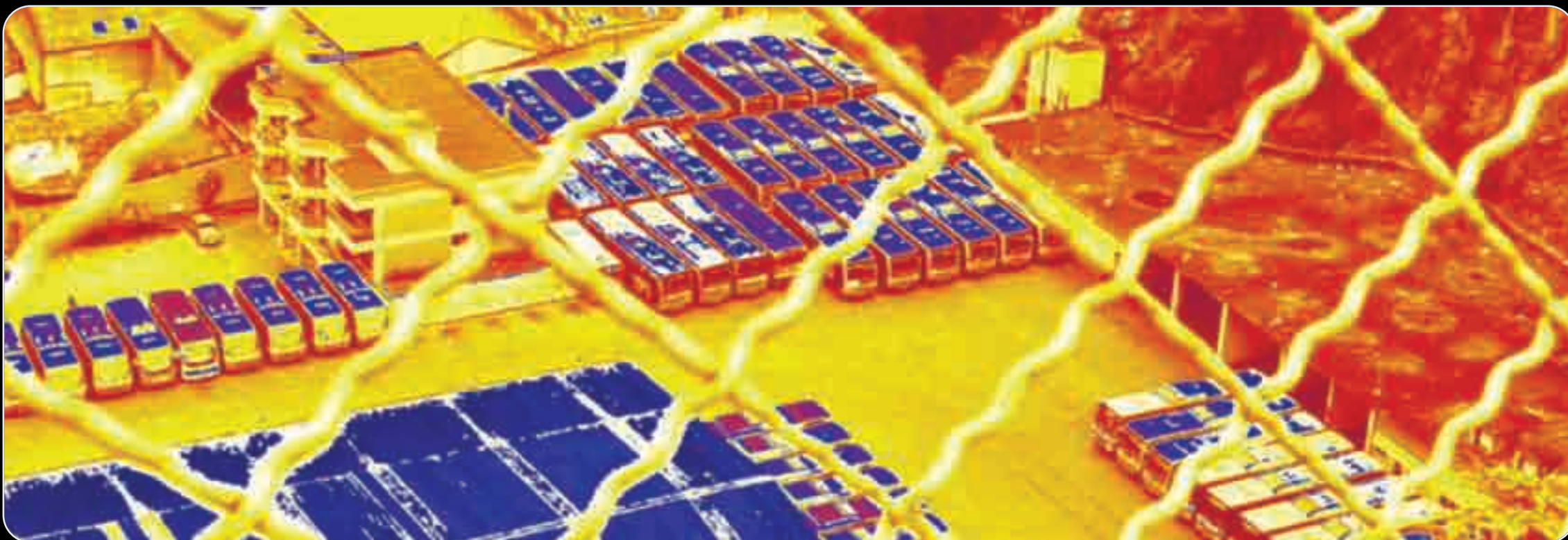
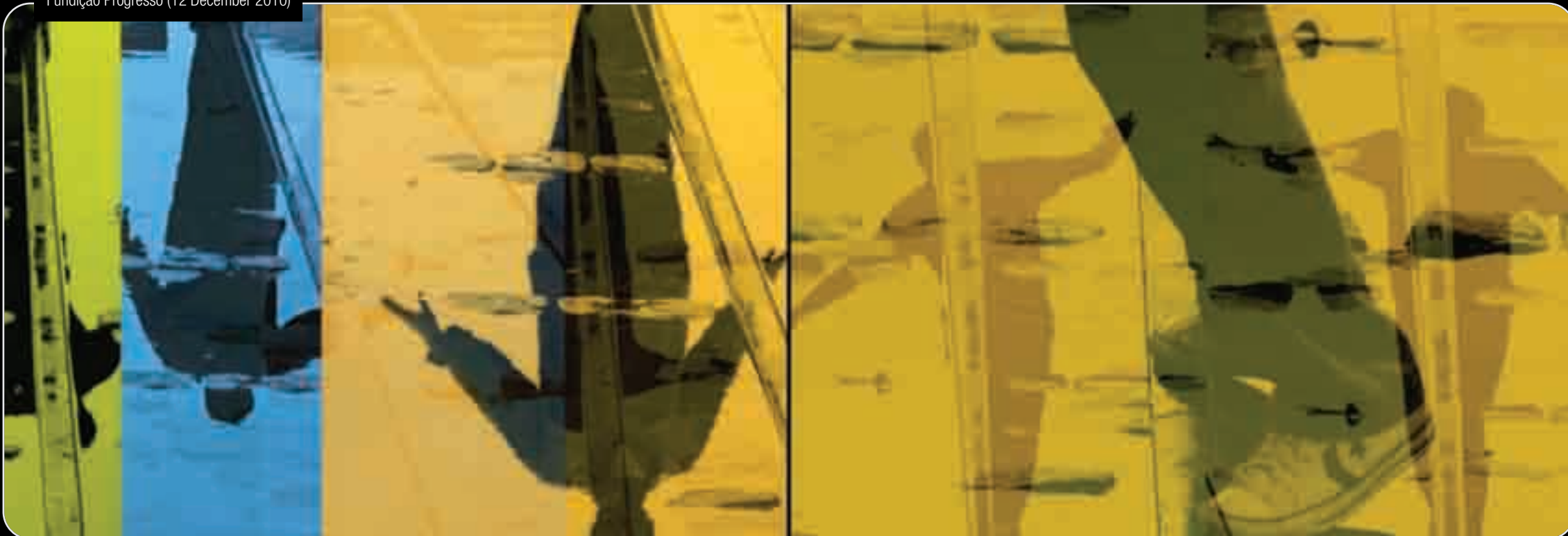


Poppy Spowage has recently completed a Masters degree in Theatre and Performance at Queen Mary, University of London and is Project Manager and Administrator at People's Palace Projects. Poppy is interested in the social, political and aesthetic infrastructures that support socially-engaged performance. The *Encounters* project and its participants have provided invaluable insights into how young people can change their worlds through art.











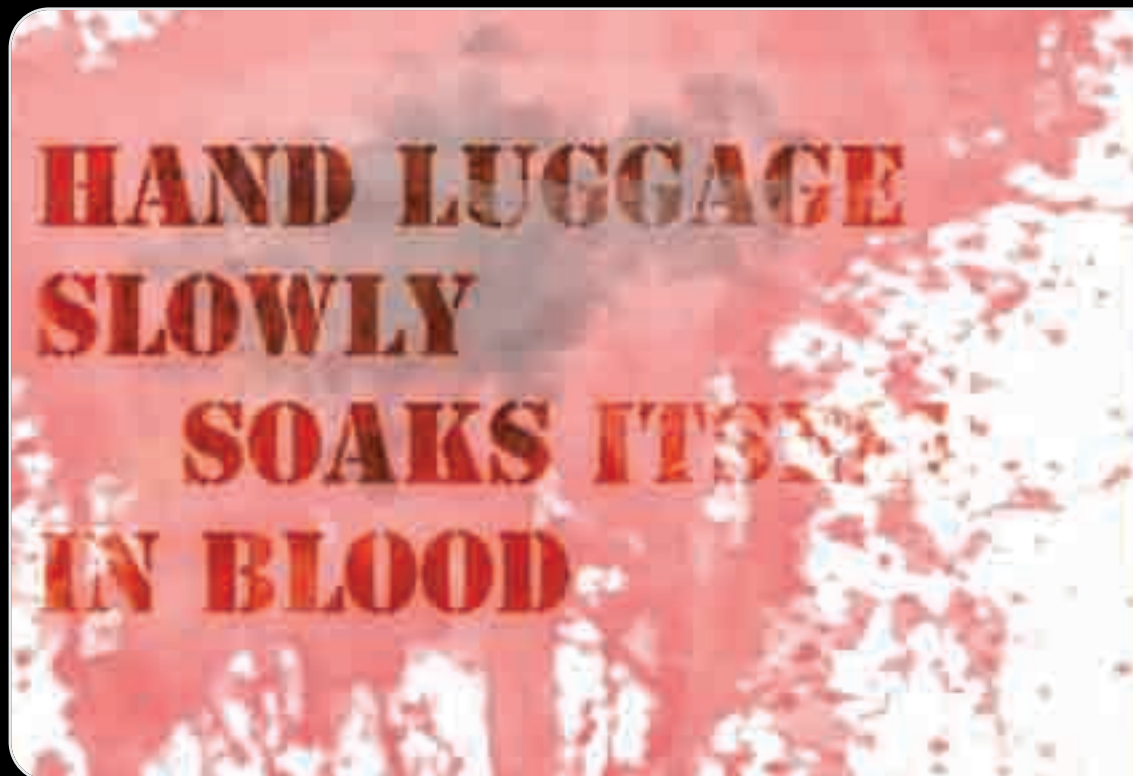
CONTROL

PATIENCE

PROTEST

SILENCE





Social Invisibility: the Drama of Violence in Brazil

Luiz Eduardo Soares

notes for a talk at the Purcell Room, Southbank Centre, London 24th July 2010

Luiz Eduardo Soares is former Federal Secretary of Public Security (2003) and Coordinator of Security, Justice and Citizenship of the State of Rio de Janeiro (1999/2000). From 2007 to 2009, he was Municipal Secretary of the Valorization of Life and Prevention of Violence for the city of Nova Iguaçu [Rio de Janeiro]. In 2000, he was Guest Researcher at the Vera Institute of Justice in New York and at Columbia University. He has published over 20 books, including academic studies, novels and commentaries on public policy. He is co-author of two books on Rio's police force, the basis for the award winning films *Elite Squad* and *Elite Squad 2* [dir. José Padilha]. Luiz Eduardo Soares is currently Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro and Coordinator of a course on Public Security at the University Estácio de Sá, Rio de Janeiro.

A poor boy walks invisibly down a street in one of Brazil's large cities. This boy, who is almost invariably black, is imperceptible as he treads the dirty sidewalk, a sidewalk that is often the place where he lives, driven away from home by domestic violence, forgotten by the authorities, ignored by the community, deprived of his citizenship. Bereft of prospects or hope, with no emotional or symbolic links with the social order, nothing to make him identify with the ruling culture, the boy remains invisible as he wanders around the streets. His invisibility may be the product of public indifference to his presence – which is never purely physical, but also social – or of the social stigmata projected on him, which erode whatever personal traits may single him out as a human being. The stigmata brand the body of the victim of discrimination with the mark of prejudice, which corresponds to the projection of those who share the prejudice, thus annihilating the individuality of the person observed.

As he walks down the streets, the boy bears on his shoulders the usual problems of adolescence, plus the sufferings of poverty in the context of the tremendous inequality of Brazilian society. We all know that adolescence is a relatively recent historical and cultural creation, but we also know how challenging it can be, from the psychological perspective, with all the ambiguities, demands, promises and frustrations it implies. When a poor teenager lives behind the dark veil of social invisibility, his physical body carries a crushed spirit, from which all conditions that might contribute to self-esteem have been subtracted.

When a drug dealer gives him a gun, this invisible boy is given much more than a tool that will allow him to obtain material advantages, economic gains and access to the world of consumer goods: he is given a passport to social existence, because with the gun he will be able to produce in each one of us, at each street corner, a particular feeling: fear, which may be negative but is a feeling nevertheless. By arousing a feeling in another person, the boy achieves presence, visibility and social existence. In this way the gun gives the invisible boy the minimal conditions for the construction of self-esteem,

of acknowledgment, of identity. We human beings can only exist through the mediation of the generous gaze of the other, which recognizes us as such, giving us back our own image invested with humanity – that is, qualified and dignified. Thanks to the gun, this wandering boy can set in motion an interaction that is a prerequisite for his subjective reconstruction, which makes possible the project of self-invention, an aesthetic project. This is a perverse dialectic, in which the boy asserts his protagonism and structures himself as a subject by accepting a tragic commitment to a chain of relationships and practices that most likely will doom him to a cruel and early death, before the age of 25. In addition, because fear is a negative feeling, his self-assertion will necessarily contain the full weight of the guilt brought about by the magnitude of the resentment and negative critical judgments aroused by the violent act for which he becomes responsible. This is a sort of Faustian pact, in which the boy gives up his soul, his future, his fate, in exchange for a moment of glory, an ephemeral experience of the hypertrophy of protagonism in which the everyday relations of indifference are inverted: the haughty condescension of the other is transformed into humiliating inferiority, fear and obedience to the boy's armed authority.

In this way, a gun in the hands of our young character is much more than a tool used in strategies of economic survival. There is another kind of hunger, prior to physical hunger, deeper, more radical and more demanding than physical hunger: the hunger for existence, the driving need to be acknowledged, valued, accepted. That is why, in the scene of violence, the symbolic, emotional, psychological and intersubjective gains are at least as important as the economic gains.

When a boy has access to a gun in Brazil, very often he also has access to the company of groups of small-scale dealers in drugs and guns that operate in favelas and lower-class suburbs. This has an additional value to young people: the gratification of belonging, which is all the more intense when group cohesion runs high. On the other hand,

cohesion is directly proportional to the degree of antagonism experienced by the group in its relations with other groups on the collective plain. This is the segmental logic that we anthropologists are familiar with, particularly on the basis of works by Evans-Pritchard and Lévi-Strauss, and that had been previously formulated by sociologists since Simmel. That is why it is so important for boys and girls to experiment the comforting feelings of belonging by joining segmental groups, in which this experience of belonging is the more intense the more violent is the confrontation between rival groups. Drug gangs play out, with tragic results, the unconscious rules of social life, in the absence of constructive alternatives that might sublimate violence by symbolizing and transferring it to other languages, such as that of sports, for instance.

Since Brazilian city governments have no police forces but only Civil Guards, usually limited to protecting public property, the only way they can cope with criminal violence is by adopting preventive policies not involving police power, though always in association with the state police forces (military and civilian). But with a bit of creativity this limitation can be turned into a virtue. It will be necessary to create alternative attractions for young people, activities that can compete with the illegal trade and that offer at least the same advantages. In other words, in order to compete with the seductive power of crime, to win the hearts and minds of every boy and every girl, the city government must provide such material benefits as jobs and income, and such symbolical and emotional benefits as positive evaluation, sheltering and belonging, giving young people visibility and self-respect, which in turn requires a sort of customization of public policies, focusing its target population as individual members of a specific group and not as an amorphous mass. To assert the worth of each young person, it is necessary to implement public policies that create opportunities for the exercise of their virtues, their creative and expressive potential. But this is not enough. It is also necessary to create the conditions

for these expressed virtues to be identified and acknowledged, and this requires dialogic intra- and intergroup structures.

The major challenge is how to generate jobs and income and at the same time capture the imagination of young people, speaking their specific cultural languages. Youths from lower-class suburbs and favelas do not want to join the labor market as menial workers. They do not want to shine our shoes, fix our cars or paint the walls in our houses. They do not want to be failures like their parents. They do not want to repeat the failures of the previous generation. Poor young people want the same things our own children want: access to the Internet, high-tech products, art, music, movies, theater, television, the media, culture, sports. They want to express their own critical and creative potential; they want opportunities for personal self-assertion; they want a chance to attain recognition and self-worth, escaping the deadening pall of discriminatory social invisibility. To a certain degree, narcissism is a healthy, constructive feeling, a precondition for the self-construction of the subject as a cooperative social being willing to play the peaceful game of sociability. For this reason, new public policies with the purpose of attracting young people and pulling them away from illegal traffic must be attuned to the desires and fantasies that are expressed in the cultural languages of youth, and must combine job and income policies, educational and training strategies, with the lure of topics and practices from the sphere of art, music, culture and the media.

On the municipal plain there is much that can be done, even outside the sphere of police action. The sort of intervention that can effectively prevent violence and crime is action aiming to change the conditions that directly encourage the practices that must be eliminated, rather than action aimed at structural changes, which can have an impact on criminal dynamics only in a distant future. Not that such structural changes should not be effected, of course. They are necessary and urgent, on a large scale, for their intrinsic qualities, because they will transform the conditions that breed violence and in this way will make Brazil a better country. But long-run

action is not sufficient, and cannot replace topic interventions, in the form of inductive social policies focused on the immediate causes of violence. Here's an example: in many cases there are specific territories where criminal practices are concentrated, where they tend to be repeated following patterns that make it possible to anticipate and to prevent crime. This is a widely recognized phenomenon, accepted by criminologists around the world. So even before socioeconomic structures are reformed, highly focused topic initiatives, acting efficiently on circumstances immediately associated with crime, may yield excellent results. We must block the dynamics that are the immediate causes of criminal phenomena, and this requires diagnoses that are sensitive to the complexity of social contexts and that must be complemented by qualified planning and systematic evaluation, so that the entire process of public intervention is permanently monitored, even when it takes place in partnership with initiatives that come from civil society.

The most dramatic problem in Brazil in the area of public safety is the veritable genocide to which young people are being submitted, particularly poor males, particularly black ones.

What is most amazing and paradoxical about this genocide is its autophagic nature: it is mostly poor youths (aged 18 to 24 or 29, depending on the criteria used) who kill poor youths. They appear on both sides of this fratricidal process, as victims and as perpetrators. The magnitude of the problem is such that its consequences are already noticeable in the country's demographic structure: there is a deficit of young males in the Brazilian population that is comparable only to that found in countries at war.

The dynamics that brings about so many early and violent deaths can be grasped only if a number of factors are taken into account: (a) deficient sheltering by the family, the community and the school; (b) lack of prospects of full social integration; (c) omission of state institutions in impoverished urban regions; (d) the establishment of an

illicit trade in guns and drugs in lower-class suburbs and favelas, which recruits youths for its illegal activities; (e) the rise of an ample variety of criminal practices in consequence of the availability of guns brought about by this illicit trade. Together, these factors affect entire segments of lower-class youth, so that certain groups – no more than a minority, to be sure – are attracted by the siren song of crime and join the gang. All too often this association leads a significant number of young people to a life of crime and a violent early death.

As we have seen, the material and symbolic-emotional advantages offered by the drug trade make up, to a certain extent and with perverse consequences, for the lack of self-esteem, the social invisibility (brought about by stigmata or indifference), the lack of strong links of identification with the community, the school or the family, the lack of any gratification provided by leisure or sports, and the dim prospects of full participation in the market, in a society that seems to value only status as asserted through conspicuous consumption.

Poor young people recruited by local units of the gun and drug trade, working as retail dealers: this is the center of one of the major Brazilian national tragedies, the core of the autophagic and genocidal process. The crimes brought about by this trade are not simply the murders resulting from rivalries between different groups involved in the illegal retail trade. Armed robbery, robbery resulting in death, kidnapping of all kinds, robbery in homes, banks and buses, the stealing of cars and of cargo – all of these practices are encouraged and often made possible by the availability of guns, bought and sold by and for drug dealers. The drug trade co-opts an entire standing army for the criminal industry and brings about an intensified level of criminal activity so as to use up the idle capacity of the weaponry. In this illegal market, just as in the formal economy, the perverse productivity of crime tends to grow until it reaches full use of the installed productive capacity – that is, the existing guns – and of the available workforce – mostly young people recruited into the retail branch of the drug trade.

The rationality of the criminal market, when it is structured on the basis of the traffic in guns, induces the growth of the intensity and the variety of criminal activities, and this means not only that the number of crimes grows but also that crimes tend to grow more violent, because more guns are in use. Of course, this logic operates only under a specific set of determining circumstances. It depends on the rate of impunity, or the risk rates under which the traffic in guns and drugs takes place and the various forms of crime are perpetrated, just as it is a function of the existing repertoire of legal and illegal alternatives – that is, the relative advantages and drawbacks of the various strategies of survival, personal assertion, economic accumulation, exercise of power and access to consumer goods. The promiscuous relations between the police forces and criminal organizations make up another variable that plays a decisive role. It should be observed that the high number of guns in circulation does more than just induce crime; it is also one reason why minor conflicts end up tragically: barroom quarrels, fuelled by drink, may be settled by lethal crimes simply because a gun is available.

For the entrepreneurs of the crime market, it is then desirable that there should be increasingly large numbers of young people who have no hopes of attaining full citizenship, because these young people are for them a disposable workforce, willing to perform illegal acts, and the more numerous these youths are, the cheaper their price, and as the cost of criminal acts increases, so do the prospective profits.

The most obvious and dramatic settings of crime are the urban spaces that have been abandoned by the authorities, where the retail market of illegal traffic occurs, as well as the conflicts between rival groups. But it is not in these spaces that the scripts are written; the real protagonists of crime, the ultimate culprits, are to be found elsewhere. These are the wholesale dealers in guns and drugs; they live in fashionable neighborhoods, speak foreign languages, have access to privileged

information, and rely on sophisticated means of communication, management and money laundering. They are white-collar criminals, who are not victims of poverty but rather feed on it, like vultures. Gunshots and blood spilling attract all the attention of the public and mobilize the police, but the early chapters of the story, where the decisive moves take place, are invisible and are rarely observed by the police. In this sphere, the promiscuous relations between criminal organizations and police institutions have even graver consequences than local agreements between policepersons and retail traffickers, which are extremely dangerous and degrading by themselves.

The situation seems bad enough as I have described it so far: young people dying in a criminal dynamic that recruits them, submits them to constant warfare and uses them in a wide variety of criminal activities, while the big bosses of the wholesale operations go unpunished. But the phenomenon is even more complex and more serious. It oversteps the boundaries of crime and reaches into the sphere of politics, with major social implications. What is happening today in Brazil, in many urban areas marked by poverty and neglected by public authorities, is an outrage against democracy, a testimony to the incompleteness of the democratic transition that gave us the 1988 Constitution. Some local communities are submitted to a double tyranny, exerted by armed traffickers and corrupt policemen (who amount to a minority, but a significant one, of the police forces). These shadowy rulers alienate communities from the sphere of the rule of law. Under such a double despotism, the elementary freedoms are suppressed – the right to come and go, freedom of expression, participation and organization. Today there are entire communities, in some large Brazilian cities, living under a regime of terror and helplessness, imposed by the arrogant codes of traffickers and corrupt policemen (often working in tandem), while society as a whole seems to tolerate the existence of such horrors and even begins to take it for granted. The banalization of violence is the preamble to barbarity.

Social Invisibility: the Drama of Violence in Brazil

Luis Eduardo Soares



From Dispossession to Self- Possession... Then What?

Liv Sovik

Liv Sovik is Professor at the School of Communication of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. She holds a doctorate in Communication Sciences from the University of São Paulo and was a visiting fellow at Goldsmiths College, University of London in 2007-8. Liv writes on issues raised by Brazilian identity discourses in a global context. Her recent book, *Aqui Ninguém é Branco* [Here no one is white], released in 2010, analyses representations of race relations, especially the role of whiteness, through the prism of Brazilian popular music.

11th March 2011

In the 1990s, when the democratization of Brazil was going full steam, there were cries on the national scene of “never again!”, this time from the peripheries of big cities. While the phrase recalls the denouncements of torture of political prisoners in the 1970s and 1980s, in the 1990s the cries were an answer to police violence against the poor. In Rio de Janeiro, the mass murders of children at Candelária, on July 23rd, 1993, and of 21 people, chosen apparently at random, in the Vigário Geral slum, on August 29, led to the foundation of the Casa da Paz, Viva Rio and AfroReggae, the same year. If these mass murders caused horror, what calls our attention in retrospect is the fact that 1993 was not the only year, there were precedents. On October 2, 1992, one hundred and eleven prisoners were killed in their cells by policemen at the Carandiru jail and on July 26, 1990, eleven young people from Acari were disappeared at the hands of the police. A low-intensity civil war had taken root in the favelas and peripheries and, among the various reactions to it was the creation of cultural projects whose target audience was poor black youth. The phoenix of culture rose from the ashes of violence and the denial of rights.

Today, there are many such projects and their history should include both predecessors, like Nós do Morro, founded in 1986, and successors, like CUFA – Central Única das Favelas, Spectaculu and many other initiatives that became Pontos de Cultura, receiving funding from the Ministry of Culture. These projects are one facet of the transformation of carioca and national public space over the last 20 years. But what do these projects mean now? What do they say to society as a whole and to people not involved in them?

First, they are part of a new form of political action that relies less on social mobilisation and pressure on government, preferring to open avenues to the recognition of the poor in the media and break down barriers of class and racial discrimination. Favela dwellers

from Vidigal perform Shakespeare in London, Olodum plays in Central Park, MV Bill makes the documentary film *Falcão*, broadcast on the traditional Sunday television show *Fantástico* and takes part in the youth-targeted telenovela *Malhação*, AfroReggae's drumming projects help educate the police in Minas Gerais on human rights and the prime time telenovela on the main television channel in Brazil, TV Globo, has a black romantic lead.

These achievements are the result, in part, of the timeworn relationship of art and life, (self) representation and the capacity for action. Or, as the Nós do Morro website says about its activities, the possibility of “changing realities through fiction”. The large amount of enthusiastic testimony by participants, staff and leaders of these projects makes sense. Saying “Yes we can” may not be sufficient, but it is a precondition for changing social relations, recognizing capacities and feeling the freedom to act. Experimenting with new narratives of self and of one's own capability is fundamental to opening up a space in the world, stepping into the scene. The new versions of human beauty enthrall observers and contribute to the growing presence, on the media's stage, of people that had been understood as peripheral.

The projects are subject to plenty of criticism too. They do not contribute to sorting out issues of structural unemployment and, when they receive corporate money, they seem to free large companies of their social responsibility. Moreover, even when young artists are very good, they do not find a way to make a living as adults in their chosen activity: singing, dancing, acting, playing drums. The sustainability of the projects is precarious: their structure depends on donations, short-term funding or on someone with know-how, whose leadership is both indispensable and potentially authoritarian. Other criticisms are that many projects are a lot of talk and not much action, they spin their wheels as they stage a “social inclusion” with no teeth. And there are those who warn that when a project closes down, the situation in the local community worsens, as the hope

that dies with the project is a factor of depoliticization: it is harder for people to mobilize after such a disappointment. There will eventually be some answers to these criticisms, given that education and knowledge not material assets and their fruits are difficult to recognize at the moment when they first appear. In any case, it must be recognized that cultural projects and the wider process of which they are a part have made a place for the "artist from the periphery" on the national media scene.

So, we could say that these projects have limited potential for social transformation, in ways that have already been sketched in terms of their social location and dynamics. But how should we understand what they say? Sometimes a comforting message for the middle and upper classes is built into the discourses "from the periphery". For example, the very well known refrain of "Rap da Felicidade" (MC Cidinho e Doca) is music to the ears of anyone from the upper echelons of society who is anxious to keep things the way they are.

Eu só quero é ser feliz	I just want to be happy
Andar tranqüilamente	To walk in peace
Na favela onde eu nasci	In the favela where I was born
É...	Yeah...
E poder me orgulhar	And be able to be proud
E ter a consciência	And be aware
que o pobre tem o seu lugar.	That a poor man has a place.

Self-esteem is praised, as long as it is far away and in the first person singular. We want dignified, decent poor individuals, who know their places. This and other interpretations of these young people's discourses, made on the basis of different interests, are contradictory but they do not cancel each

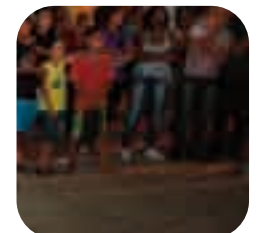
other out. They lead to a new starting point. What are they showing us? If the cultural project scene is mature, with models, formats and sources of finance, if these projects have a tradition of unleashing young people's creative force, if they persist over decades, they have something to say to society.

They don't merely put bad consciences to rest by showing happy faces on those who carry the weight of a hierarchical society, nor can they be discounted because some of them caricature, domesticate and reify those who are young, poor and black. The cultural projects, as they mix people and cultural repertoires that were once separate, also point towards a new possibility. When they work well, they show that people who are professionally and materially fulfilled can work on a common purpose with young people whose material needs and social positions are obstacles to that same fulfillment. The enthusiasm and perception of change by all of these participants means that the discourses can be identical, while there is no denial of the social inequality that motivates them. The projects answer the question, if we have our humanity in common, what can we do together?

Brazilian culture is known for its gracefulness, capacity for invention and its affect. Cultural projects reinforce this reputation and point to its continuity. They are, at the same time, the result of a decision by some people that death should never again prevail over life. Between the blades of these scissors, between the vitality and the lack of prospects of most young Brazilians, what is new? The projects, in this mature phase, show us that not only do poor youth need to found a new art of living and new narratives of relationship to the world. The capacity of these young people to create new meaning for their lives calls those of us who have become accommodated to answer the question, now what?

From Dispossession to Self- Possession... Then What?

Liv Sovik



Violence and Culture: Contiguities

Eneida Leal Cunha

Eneida Leal Cunha graduated in Portuguese Literature and obtained a Masters degree in Literary Theory from the Federal University of Bahia. In 1993 she obtained a Doctor's degree in Portuguese Language and Literatures from the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, where she is currently Professor of Contemporary Literature and Culture. Eneida's research focuses on the identity issues that emerge in historical and contemporary literature and cultural production in Brazil and other sites of Lusophone culture.

In March this year I was invited for a Sunday evening performance at Morro da Providência. It consisted of an artwork made by the students from Spectaculu Escola de Arte e Tecnologia, under the supervision of British visual artist Gary Stewart, in a project led and coordinated by Paul Heritage, Artistic Director of People's Palace Projects and Professor at the Drama Department at Queen Mary, University of London.

In a small square at the top of the hill, a house was taken over by the Spectaculu students with interactive visual projections and a soundtrack that mixed music, voices and sounds from the community. At the front, two improvised screens were there for the projection of the main multimedia installation. Before anything could start, it was necessary to locate someone within the community who could climb a lamppost in front of the house and turn off the public lighting that jeopardised the sharpness of the installation. At the exit, all guests were invited to sit in front of a computer webcam in order to record their own impressions.

The value or significative potential of this event involving Morro da Providência, youngsters from underprivileged communities in Rio de Janeiro, cultural action, international articulation and state-of-the-art digital technology, could be termed what in literature we call a "splendour scene" - a scene capable of evoking or emanating a number of meanings, at the same time, shedding light and signifying power beyond its own materiality and immediacy.

Morro da Providência is an emblematic space within the city of Rio de Janeiro since its occupation, by former tenants of the *cortiço* [kind of tenement yard, popular in Brazil in the 19th Century] *Cabeça de Porco* [Pig's Head], demolished in 1893 as part of a plan of modernisation and cleaning up of the city; and by former combatants from the Canudos War, 1897, who coined its second designation, *Morro da Favela*. In its origin,

there is, therefore, a crossover of two powerful moments of connection between violence (of displacement, expulsion, and extermination) and the construction of the modern city and State in Brazil. Between the end of the 19th Century and the recent establishment of the *Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora* [Peacemaking Police Unit] in April 2010, Providência can be considered (or rather read) as a significant summary of the country's social, political, and cultural history, as well as its urban landscape.

In the first few years of the 20th Century the inhabitants of poor areas in Rio de Janeiro were already seen as perpetrators of criminality, and Morro da Providência considered the most dangerous place in what was still at the time Brazil's capital city. In a newspaper story in the *Correio da Manhã* in 1909, Morro da Providência is regarded as "the place where the bravest people in our land live, and for this very reason - for being the hiding place of people willing to kill for any reason, or even for no reason -, there is no respect either for the Penal Code or the Police who also, truth be told, do not go there except on days of infernal mischief in the neighbourhood...The favela (...) is the village of evil. At last, the police do not feel a need to be on the lookout at the favela as these people have neither rights nor obligations with regards to the law"¹

As reinforced by the newspaper article, the existence of sections of the population and of urban spaces that were off-limits to the protection of the law and State responsibility is a long story. But what is not properly articulated by the newspaper is that Providência and the surrounding docklands were always considered to be "violent and uncivilised" for being primarily a site of circulation and concentration of the black population, especially black or mixed-black youngsters.

¹ COSTA MATTOS, R., *Pelos Pobres! As campanhas pela construção de casas populares e o discurso sobre as favelas na Primeira República*. Rio de Janeiro: UFF, 2008. Tese de Doutorado. Available at: http://www.historia.uff.br/stricto/teses/Tese-2008_MATTOS_Romulo-Costa-S.pdf

Historian Walter Fraga Filho's study² of the city of Salvador (also a colonial-proslavery Brazilian city which functioned as an administrative post and port-based trading centre), is enlightening with regards to urban space issues in relation to the poorest and most 'libertine' population which was predominantly black and mixed-race. More than the description of beggary - which at the time was institutionalised and legitimised as an alternative form of self-support - what draws attention in Fraga's study is the information about *moleques* [street kids] and *vadios* [wasters or loafers]: black youngsters and their wanderings in the old urban landscapes.

Fraga examines the myriad of meanings that the term *vadiagem* evokes, classifying them in two axes: idleness and itinerancy. In the moral economy of slavery-forged work, the experience of being free or freed can perhaps be translated in the refusal of steady work, a form of placing oneself outside the network of domination woven by the manorial power. The ones regarded as *vadios* make a living out of occupations that have in common, beyond their lack of feudal bonds, the lack of temporal continuity of work. Thus, alongside a dearth of self-support alternatives to those who are impoverished poor and 'freed', a logic develops between steady work and perennial subordination to manorial oppression. 'Itinerancy', the act of wandering through villages and towns, violates the patriarchal order whereby every one must have their place, family, and lord or master. "Itinerant life gave to the poor free man a feeling of autonomy, regarded as inappropriate to the social power relations then in place."³

Institutional archives, as much as the press, registered the presence of youngsters and children on the streets in the 19th Century. Whether caused by parental death, abandonment or the refusal of family life, the streets offered an escape from servile conditions in multi-story housing or the

subordination to the "masters of craft", Housing and work aimed at poor and black youngsters kept absolute fidelity to the proslavery order: in the relation of ownership to a lord, in the bodily disciplining, in the non-funded exploitation of work. Survival on the streets produces organisation and defence strategies, through the formation of gangs — *quadrilhas* — of boys and of girls. Fraga recovers in police documentation endless records of imprisonment and conflicts focused on gangs of children. In the archives of Santa Casa de Misericórdia, he finds the records of their anonymous burials and death; in the newspapers, the protests of the manorial society against the disregard, mockery, insubordination and prodigality of the behaviour of street boys and girls throughout the 19th Century.

Although there is a substantial difference in the function and topography of the two cities, the space of *vadiagem* as traced by Fraga on a blueprint of 19th Century Salvador occupies a similar rectangular area between the docklands and the primordial boundaries in Rio de Janeiro. There is a great coincidence between this design and the region which includes both the Morro da Providência and the current headquarters of Spectaculo. The young people gathered around computers in Providência belong to a group of the population that still bears many resemblances to the 19th Century youths described by Fraga: they are between 15 and 21 years of age, often not in stable employment not only because of the lack of worthwhile jobs, but also by force of what anthropologist Livio Sansone sees as one of the "hard areas" in racial relations in Brazil — conventional labour market⁴. At a socio-economic level, many of these young people are in a situation or occupation that hardly differs from the situation and occupation of *moleques* and *vadios* at the end of the 19th Century. Their survival strategies remain, in great part, "magical or criminal", according to Sansone. But on the other hand these youngsters - predominantly black-mixed - are the centre

of a collection of identity-affirming images that at some point do attenuate — or even subvert — traditional hierarchies and cultural and aesthetical values. They have their own fashion, dance and slang, which is not enough to constitute the power of an indented, fully identified, or cohesive community. They share the imagery and cultural background that is common to impoverished margins of big cities. They try hard, against all odds, to survive the social order that is not in their favour and the police force are frequently briefed to exterminate them.

Between the 19th Century *moleques* and *vadios* and the recent event at Morro da Providência, a powerful reverse movement took place that incorporated the popular and non-white dimension of Brazil - at least on an aesthetic-cultural level. The same Morro da Providência was explicitly referred to by Oswald de Andrade in the Modernist Movement which professed itself in favour of making art shaped and influenced by Brazil. In the manifesto of the Pau-Brasil poetry one can read: "The saffron and ochre shackles on the favela greens, under the crystal blue, are aesthetical events"⁵. Between the decades of 1920 and 1940 the literate community would evoke, at least as a metaphor, the "millionaire contribution of all mistakes"; social thought would scrutinise colonial and proslavery history in order to re-signify, at a knowledge level, the value of race mixing; the emerging cultural industry and the national radio system would promote around the country sounds, lines and characters such as samba, the *malandro* [scoundrel] and the *mulata* [sexy mixed-race woman] that in very recent history had been persecuted by the police and disregarded by the "proper and good society".

All of these transformations or conquests briefly noted here - generally referred to as modernist and as the effects of social

modernisation - produced an extraordinary transformation in the cultural construction of the sense of Nation. They established and legitimised the narrative of Brazil as a mixed-race country and, more importantly, assumed the heritage of productive and powerful non-white cultural matrixes.

Almost a hundred years since this reverse operation that constructed another Brazil, we can still recognise a subtle but effective violence against subordinate social sectors. A steady and profitable imbalance remains in Brazilian society: on one side, a general cultural inclusion and on the other, persistent social-economical exclusion and racial discrimination. Let us go back to the Modernist words of order — "The saffron and ochre shackles on the favela greens, under the crystal blue, are aesthetical factors". Temporally distanced from this statement, we might be able to recognise how much this gaze from the Other (the Others) constitute distance, exteriority, fading of intensities that lay beyond the landscape. It is worth pointing out to those that do not inhabit the city of Rio de Janeiro, that the "splendour scene" that took place in the Morro da Providência and was the starting point for these remarks, is part of a process of transformation and escalation of urban conflicts, as well as a change in policy concerning politics and social mobilisation, all of which date from the last twenty years. Although there are significant differences between each of them, Spectaculo is part of a group of social organisations whose path and effects have been variously acknowledged. Initiatives, projects or organisations such as Nós do Morro, Casa da Paz, Viva Rio, AfroReggae, Central Única das Favelas-CUFA have as a backdrop of their emerging moment the rise of violence against youngsters, as exemplified by the Candelária and Vigário Geral massacres in 1993. As Liv Sovik concludes on page 46, "a low-intensity civil war had taken root in the favelas and

² FRAGA FILHO, W. Mendigos, moleques e vadios na Bahia do século XIX. São Paulo: Hucitec; Salvador: Edufba, 1996.

³ Op. Cit, p. 79.

⁴ SANSONE, L.. O Pelourinho dos jovens negro-mestiços de classe baixa da Grande Salvador. In: GOMES, Marco Aurélio A. Pelo Pelô; história, cultura e cidade. Salvador: EDUFBA, 1995.

⁵ ANDRADE, OSWALD, Manifesto Paul Brasil. In: Correio da Manhã, Rio de Janeiro, 18/03/1924.

peripheries and, among the various reactions to it was the creation of cultural projects whose target audience was poor black youth. The phoenix of culture rose from the ashes of violence and the denial of rights.”

Therefore we are now in another dimension of contiguity between violence and culture. A recent nationwide study (Map of Violence 2011) shows that from the decade of 1990 to the present, two in every three cases of murder have had black people as victims, most of them between the ages of 15 and 25. In 2008, 103% more black people died in comparison to white people. Ten years earlier, this difference was already there, but it has increased by up to 20%.⁶

In this context, one hopes that Sovik’s “phoenix of culture” brings new perspectives. The cultural area constitutes, according to Sansone’s categorisation, one of the great “soft areas” of racial relations in terms of the Brazilian labour market. Thousands of poor and black youngsters support themselves through activities within this area, albeit sometimes via informal or temporary work and subject to regional and seasonal variations. In this panorama, organisations such as Spectaculu have been focusing on teaching skills and inserting these young people into the cultural market, through partnerships, internships and cooperative systems. In many of these projects and organisations the youngsters are also made familiar with diverse art forms, conceive and produce songs, films, exhibitions, and plays through which they express their universe of experiences and expectations.

The impact or differential of the interactive visual exhibition *Encounters*, is in the paradoxical articulation between emancipation, art and technology that has been part of the agenda of western debates since the reflection

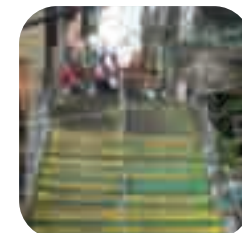
by Walter Benjamin in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936). Constructed with the aid of a specific software that allows a set-up of almost unlimited archives, the visual exhibition incorporates and displays a proliferation of audio or visual records, captured both in the live social environment as well as via the web. From this extensive material memory, the exhibition produces adverse and frequently adversary, sequences, synchronisms, contrasts, argumentations and textures that constitute specific forms of appropriation and production of the self and the world. That is the reason why the images exhibited in *Encounters* strongly evoke the enthusiasm for political and democratic liberation that Benjamin located in new technologies.

Encounters demonstrates a series of significant particularities or potentials. First of all, experience and creation surpass the constriction of the written or even spoken word so as to radicalize the audio-visual dimension. Second, this creation with no materiality cannot be expropriated, cannot be transformed into cultural merchandise, although the ability to produce it constitutes professional competence that can become extremely useful. Last, although it can be saved as file, the technology is conceived to be used as performance, as an act, as presence, as a one-off event – an aural dimension – that takes us back to the benjaminian reflection and requires a reconceptualisation of the links between art, experience, technology, contemporaneity and politics.

⁶ Data show that whilst murder of White people have dropped, ones of black people are still rising. From 2005 to 2008 there was a 22.7% decrease in the number of white people’s murders; amongst blacks the numbers have increased in 12.1%. The panorama is even worse amongst youngsters (between 15 and 24 years old). Amongst the whites, the number of murders dropped from 6.592 to 4.582 between 2002 and 2008, a 30% difference. At the same time, black youth murders went from 11.308 to 12.749 – a 13% increase. In the state of Paraíba, in 2008, 1.083% more black people died in comparison to whites. In Alagoas, in the same year, the difference was of 974.8%. In 11 states this rate surpasses 200%. The differences are only small in states where the black population is also smaller, as in Rio Grande do Sul, where the difference adds up to 12.5%, Santa Catarina with 14.7% and Acre with 4%.

Eneida Leal Cunha

Violence and Culture: Contiguities





Regina Casé

The encounters on this project began with young artists being trained at Spectaculu in Rio de Janeiro. Regina Casé explains why it is such a special place, and celebrates Spectaculu's decade of encounters between young people, art and the city of Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro developed its history, its houses, its beauty, its suffering, its joys and its injustices within the framework of its physical topography. Physical and social geography reflect each other: highs and lows, white sand and marshland, big rocks and big chasms, real and virtual. Those mountains that have so often isolated communities in ghettos perched on their hillsides seem to have pushed those people to the unlikeliest places, bringing about encounters that happen nowhere else but here.

Spectaculu, is situated in the port area of Rio de Janeiro. Besides changing the lives of young people through art, it has accomplished another very symbolic feat. As we know, for a long time Rio hasn't only been divided into favelas and rich neighbourhoods. There are many kinds of "rich neighbourhoods" and many kinds of "favelas". As most projects take place inside a specific favela community, controlled by a specific drug faction, those who have "permission" to participate in the activities are only the people who live in that particular area (or who belong to that particular faction). Spectaculu (whether intentionally or not) is situated in neutral territory, and has therefore over the last decade been able to bring together youngsters from 90 different communities. I'm sure that besides enriching the experience, that has also helped put conflicts in perspective, it has revealed similarities and has given everyone a sample of the creative potential and strength of those encounters.

Spectaculu has enabled the encounter between favelas. Just imagine when we manage also to promote the encounter between the favela and the rich neighbourhood, or better still, when we accomplish the real encounter of all favelas with all rich neighbourhoods.

Like the other Spectaculu students, I have learnt these lessons in the doing, and now I share Gringo's firm conviction that the port area of Rio de Janeiro has always had this vocation. The port is where all the primeval encounters responsible for the writing of our Brazilian histories took place: Indians with Indians, Indians with Europeans, Europeans with Africans that landed there, and so on until today...

Inspired by the young artists who come out of this school, we dream about more and more encounters happening in this place, but this time they are different. Encounters that contribute to the rewriting of our history, encounters which can correct the great injustices and encounters which - energised by the suffering and beauty of this city - turn Rio into the "ANTI GHETTO VANGUARD OF THE 21st CENTURY"

Like that, exactly like that...

Together, mixing it up...

Regina Casé

One of Brazil's leading and most popular actors with a thirty-year award-winning career in theatre, cinema and television, Regina Casé is one of the most recognisable faces on Brazilian television. In addition to her regular comedy and variety shows, she has presented a series of documentaries showing the rich cultural diversity of the unknown peripheries of Brazil. Godmother to AfroReggae since its earliest days, Regina Casé takes an active part in supporting arts organisations and young artists that come from the marginal communities across Brazil. She has been part of the story of Spectaculu since the beginning.

Cicely Berry, Royal Shakespeare Company

Cicely Berry has been visiting Rio de Janeiro for the past 15 years where she has developed a special relationship with Nós do Morro, a theatre company based in the favela of Vidigal.

I will never forget my first visit to Rio de Janeiro back in 1996, coming out of my ritzy hotel and being driven along the sea front - Ipanema Beach on my left, and on my right the most beautiful mansions safe behind their iron-grilled gates - and then suddenly turning right up the steep, rough winding road of the hillside, and seeing dozens of small shacks with the washing hanging out, where life is lived on the streets, and where trading goes on all the time, and where you feel the most tremendous zest for life. I was on my way to Vidigal to watch a play.

I had been invited by the British Council and Paul Heritage to work with a group of professional actors on Shakespeare's text. One day I was asked if I would like to see a performance up in one of the hills - I of course said yes - and so here I was on my way. I was taken into this small theatre to watch a performance of three 19th century Portuguese short stories by Machado de Assis performed by the group 'Nós do Morro' - 'Us from the Hillside'. A group of young people from the favela, and I was really knocked out because it was some of the most elegant work I have seen. I talked afterwards with Guti Fraga, who had started the group and he asked me if I would like to do a workshop with them - and this was the beginning of my relationship with the group. I have been back to work with them each year since, always on Shakespeare and always in their own language, Portuguese.

The experience made me remember a line from Thomas Kyd's 'Spanish Tragedy' - 'Where words prevail not, violence prevails' - a line which has become the touchstone of my work.

Nós do Morro was working in a tiny theatre, which had been the basement of a school, and was carved into the rocks of the hillside, with room for only fifty people in the audience, but with a prompt corner and proper dressing-rooms. Guti demands a totally professional commitment from the group, and the whole organisation has developed so there are now classes in all areas of theatre practice with strict discipline. Nós do Morro has earned its own place in Brazilian theatre, with regular funding from the Ministry of Culture and the national oil company Petrobras. They brought over a production of 'Two Gentlemen of Verona' to the RSC's Complete Works Festival in 2006 - to great acclaim.

The young company is committed to the work in a totally professional way and, as they have developed, many have got jobs outside Vidigal in television, cinema and theatre. But they frequently come back to Nos Do Morro.

So, can theatre change the lives of young people - what better proof can there be than this?

Cicely Berry, Royal Shakespeare Company

Cicely Berry, OBE has been Voice Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company since 1969. In addition to her collaboration with Nós do Morro, she has worked with theatre companies and actors in the USA, Australia, India, China, Russia and Croatia. Berry has worked extensively in schools and in prisons. Her books include 'Voice and the Actor' [1973], 'The Actor and the Text' [updated in 1993], 'Your Voice and How To Use It' [updated in 1994 to include interviews with Neil Kinnock, Helena Kennedy and Tariq Ali], and 'Text in Action' [2001],

Baba Israel, Contact Theatre

Contact Theatre in Manchester has a vision of a world where young people are empowered by creativity to become leaders in the arts and in their communities. Their Artistic Director Baba Israel - hip-hop and spoken word artist, theatre maker and educator - visited Spectaculu for the first time in 2010 and met the young artists on the *Encounters* project.

In navigating a complex world of inequality, social injustice, and growing progressive moments young people are a force of enthusiasm, optimism, energy, and innovative thinking. Young people when they are not respected, silenced, or oppressed are often a force of rebellion, apathy, and aggression. When that energy is nurtured, supported, and collaborated with – transformation occurs. Young people not only transform themselves but they transform their peers, their environments, and the generations above and below.

The linking ingredient has been an approach of collaboration and experiencing young people as the drivers of their own transformation. It has also been about connecting young people to adults who are committed to their own continued growth and transformation. When we see our systems, structures, and processes as evolving and fluid it gives room for new generations to reshape and remix our present.

Transformation can happen in resistance to injustice through protest and artistic intervention. It is also the alchemical process driven by curiosity, desire, and collective dreaming. In New York the repressive nature of standardized education, disconnected and often dangerous police, and the lack of social services can create an atmosphere of displacement and isolation in young people. It can also create spaces where young people come together with the support of collective groups, non-profits, and forward thinking

schools and community programs. These efforts are often nomadic struggling to find consistent space to root. This leads to what Hakim Bey called Temporary Autonomous Zones, transient spaces of free expression and exploration.

When I visited Rio, Brazil and connected with Spectaculu I found a space that shared such values. I clearly remember the focus of the young people that we met. That focus was felt in their welcome, their creative sharing, and the receptiveness as we shared our work. There was also a clear model of professional transformation complimenting their social and emotional development. This inspired me greatly and now takes shape in Contact's new vision document integrating our strong practice with a desire to ensure that young people not only grow as people and artists but also as sustainable practitioners.

Eyes open and drink in the world
Grasping, gulping, and digesting
Rough and sour
Sweet and dangerous
Fortifying and filtering the liquid of experience
Salt and minerals seep into skin
Sweat and muscle transforming bodies
The mind rewiring, adapting, stimulating
In spaces of conflict we transform
In spaces of connection we transform
A common tool and tongue of connection

Baba Israel

Baba Israel was born in Brooklyn, son of a Russian Jew and an Australian tai-chi practicing mystic. Baba is a hip hop MC , poet, and beatboxer who has toured across the United States, Europe, South America, Asia, and the South Pacific performing with artists such as Outkast, The Roots, Rahzel, Ron Carter, Afrika Bambaataa, Vernon Reid, and Bill Cosby. He is currently Artistic Director of Contact Theatre, Manchester

Philip Osment

British playwright and director Philip Osment explains how his own experiences as a young man growing up in South West England informed and transformed his subsequent experiences and choices as an artist.

It all begins with our own childhoods. Mine was spent on a farm in a remote rural area of England. I was lonely, bored and had a growing sense that my sexuality meant that I didn't fit in – I had a shameful secret which I would never be able to share. The isolation that I felt was both geographical and psychological. But then there was the school play: the sense of companionship, shared endeavour, achievement that came from those after-school rehearsals, which even the long ride home on late buses in the dark winter evenings could not dampen. And as I learnt my lines in my freezing bedroom or repeated them to myself in the muddy fields, the words of Shakespeare came alive for me in a tangible way. There was the joy of discovering that someone who lived four hundred years ago could express so beautifully my adolescent inner turmoil:

“But I have that within that passeth show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.”

And there were trips to the cinema and sometimes even to the theatre, there were visiting theatre companies who came to the school to perform such new works as Pinter's “The Dumb Waiter”: enigmatic, ambiguous and inspiring, with its combination of banality and menace. Experiences such as this gave me a vision of another world out there – a world of the imagination and of ideas.

I was lucky enough to escape my rural prison through education – I loved learning new languages and ended up studying French and German at Oxford University – but the sense of being different and not fitting in

followed me. I had a circle of friends who were loyal and close but there were some things I was not prepared to share even with them. In the rarefied atmosphere of Oxford, there were people who were flamboyantly homosexual who exuded a seeming confidence that I found threatening and – I hesitate to use the word – repellent. I came across them in the hothouse atmosphere of the Oxford University Dramatic Society where driven young people from privileged backgrounds and the odd ambitious grammar school boy vied for status and influence – they seemed to know already that they were future celebrities. I was far too diffident to flourish in such an environment.

A couple of years in London followed where I tried to follow my dream of becoming an actor, eventually gaining a postgraduate place at a drama school. There, I was in my element. I had told a few select friends that I was gay but it was an aspect of myself that had to be concealed – I felt that I would never be allowed to play Romeo if a director discovered my sexuality! At the same time I was beginning to understand that there were wider social and political implications to the whole issue – how could I fail to start to make connections between the plight of gay people and the position of women, black people, working class people? It was 1976 after all and the feminist and gay movements were gathering momentum.

But the connections I made remained theoretical until I left drama school in 1977. It was my plan to pursue a career as a jobbing

actor that would hopefully lead who knows where? To repertory theatre? To the RSC? To work in TV? To Hollywood? Then I saw an advert for actors for a new show by Gay Sweatshop – the first professional lesbian and gay theatre company in the UK. Something stronger than the desire for fame and stardom must have been driving me as I auditioned for a part in *AS TIME GOES BY*, a play about gay history focussing on the Oscar Wilde trials in Victorian London; the fate of gay people in post Weimar Berlin and their incarceration in Concentration Camps; and the start of the modern gay movement with the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969. This was theatre that the audience needed to see, it was telling a story that had been hidden from history, it showed a journey from shame and passive victimhood, to resistance and pride. Audiences across the UK and in Europe gave us standing ovations and the play sparked debate and controversy wherever it was performed. For many people – gay and heterosexual - the play challenged their perceptions of themselves and others, it gave them a sense that they were part of something bigger than themselves. This was transformative theatre.

My work with Gay Sweatshop meant that I had to publicly embrace my sexual identity, that I had to come out to my family. I entered into a long-term formative relationship with Noel Greig who was an inspiration and guide to many people in the alternative theatre movement. Who was my teacher, mentor, and lover. I count myself lucky to have met people who have imparted rigour, methodology,

Philip Osment (cont)

vision and a demand for absolute authenticity in my work. It hasn't necessarily made the journey an easy one because it is frustrating when other professionals and critics don't understand or value the process, but it has made it infinitely richer.

So I have a deeply-held belief that theatre can transform your life – because I know how it has transformed mine. It transforms the participant and it transforms the audience member.

As yet, I have not received the call from Stephen Spielberg and I have never been to Hollywood (although I did translate a play by Cervantes for the RSC a couple of years ago). I have had more than my fair share of success in mainstream theatre as an actor (early in my career) and later as a director and writer. But under the influence of Noel, I have followed where he led, to work as well with companies such as Red Ladder and Theatre Centre, companies that take theatre into youth clubs, schools, venues that have a commitment to theatre for young people. This work has been infinitely enriching for me as an artist because a well-made piece of theatre that is relevant to that audience has an impact that is tangible.

Recently I have become more and more interested in creating work with young emerging artists and have set up a company, PLAYING ON, to do just that. I became

involved with work at the National Youth Theatre where my colleague Jim Pope had set up a course for young people who have experience of homelessness, prison, probation, or who have dropped out of education. For the past three years I have worked with a group of young men from that course to create a piece of theatre about young fathers in prison which has just had a run of sell-out performances at the Roundhouse Theatre in London. I have watched our cast grow in skill and self esteem and become very impressive young men through engaging with the theatre process. They are wonderful role models: one of them wrote in the programme that he wants to open doors that were closed to him, and to leave those doors open for young people behind him. In our after-show discussion I have watched them inspire the young audiences with their articulacy and their authentic acting. And so the process of transformation continues. In one of these post show discussions I found myself telling the audience that the experience of working with this group has been one of the happiest of my life.

I don't know what that tortured adolescent on that farm in Devon would make of it all. He would very possibly have been terrified of those impressive young men and he may have felt he had nothing in common with them. The older me knows better. The older me has been transformed by theatre.

Philip Osment

Philip Osment was brought up in Devon and studied languages at Oxford University. Until 1989 he was artistic director of Gay Sweatshop, directing 'Poppies', 'Compromised Immunity' and his own play, 'This Island's Mine'. His three plays set in Devon, 'The Dearly Beloved', 'What I Did in the Holidays', and 'Flesh and Blood', were all nominated for Writer's Guild awards and 'The Dearly Beloved' won the award for best regional play in 1993. He has written translated and directed plays for diverse audiences, and regularly works as a writer's friend/dramaturg for a wide range of companies and organisations.

Paul Martin, Bad Taste Cru

In 2010, People's Palace Projects brought eight members of former UK Street Dance Champions Bad Taste Cru to run BBoy and breakdance workshops with the students from Spectaculu. Paul Martin traces the encounter between Irish streetdancers based in Newcastle with aspiring artists from marginal communities in Rio de Janeiro.

Each One Teach One

Our love of culture

I would consider our first real cultural experience was exposure to the culture of Hip Hop, a movement so far from our daily lives it was magical, inspirational, mysterious, and challenging.

Hip Hop was the only thing for us, we lived, breathed, slept it in our early years and still do.

It was the music, the dance, the art, the fashion, the ideologies, the whole package. We submerged ourselves in this culture. For Life.

In our crew we have a motto, which is an old Gaelic saying 'Ni heolas go haontios' – 'There is no knowledge without unity'.

We truly believe this is the key to our work and our understanding of how we can use our ideas and beliefs to help others. Hip Hop culture by default follows this motto.

Another philosophy we follow is the 'Each One, Teach One,' principle. This term was coined by the legendary bboy Poe One from Style Elements.

Armed with both of these and a sincere love for helping and teaching we have created our own style of pedagogy, and a very definite identity and belief of what hip hop is and can do for others.

Visit to Spectaculu 2010

There I felt that Art was alive, that culture was being created, that you could be who you wanted to be and that you would have the support to be able to create and be you.

Walking around the building, I honestly felt the love of creativity and the buzz of young people who felt safe and were driven to challenge themselves in this environment.

If Spectaculu had have been in Ireland when I was a teenager I would never have left the building.

To all the young people at Spectaculu, you are so lucky to have such a wonderful place, a sanctuary for creativity, a place where you can be you and you can learn together and to contribute to this beautiful world of art and culture we all share together.

No Knowledge Without Unity.

Each One, Teach One.

Bad Taste Cru

Bad Taste Cru are a professional BBoy (Breakdance) Cru / Dance Company based out of Dance City, the National Dance Agency for the North East. They are a multi-faceted dance company that not only battles at international competition level, but produces live theatre pieces that combine BBoying with contemporary dance, physical theatre, and explosive partner work. People's Palace Projects commissioned Bad Taste Cru and AfroReggae to create a performance based on their percussive instruments and bodies. 'Together Apart' premiered at the Juice Festival in Newcastle in November 2009, and subsequently toured to Brazil where it was seen at the Antidote Festival in São Paulo (Centro Cultural do Banco Itaú) and the Teatro João Caetano, Rio de Janeiro. Spectaculu provided the stage design for the performances.

Binho, AfroReggae

Binho [Herberson Alves] trained at Spectaculu, and currently works as a Project Agent at AfroReggae where he first experienced the impact of art in his own life and the lives of young people in his community. He reflects on the transformations that AfroReggae bring and his hopes for how such opportunities can transform the lives of others.

The potential for transformation that AfroReggae brought to my life was gigantic. AfroReggae offered me an education and a different way of thinking about the favelas.

I was born in the favela Parada de Lucas, in the north of Rio de Janeiro, without many expectations in life. At 14, I started an IT course at the AfroReggae centre. My family said that it was pointless for me to study IT because we didn't have a computer at home and that I should do a course that gave me an immediate work opportunity. Now I coordinate the training centres in Parada de Lucas, I even teach IT in prisons. I pass on everything I've learnt.

It's important to say a little bit about how AfroReggae arrived in Parada de Lucas in 2000. Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas are neighbouring favelas that have very different cultures. They're separated by a 500-metre-long border controlled by rival criminal factions. Parada de Lucas has a Northeastern culture, whereas Vigário Geral is Black or Afro-Brazilian. The majority of the population of Lucas were relocated from favelas in the centre of Rio that had been pulled down and destroyed. People believed AfroReggae was from Vigário Geral, so the setting up of a project centre in Lucas was a milestone. Being a student at that centre, I began to realize that people aren't innately violent. That's a culture they acquire: the culture of exclusion, of a person not liking another person, of prejudice against another territory, against another faction. AfroReggae showed it was impartial and overcame that barrier by setting up in Lucas an IT project which suited the local culture and businesses, different from the Vigário Geral project, which was known for the arts, dance and percussion.

AfroReggae raised my self-esteem at a time when I didn't know what to do with my life and it showed me the road to an education, through to a course on computer graphics that I did at Spectaculu and then later, to university. At Spectaculu, I started to have a routine, to wake up early, to take the bus to the city centre everyday. Favela residents don't leave their communities very often, they usually spend all their time in the favela. I know some extreme cases of 35 or 40-year-old people who have never gone to the beach or to a shopping centre. So I started to go to the city centre, to the cinema, to the theatre. I started to go out on my own, and I met other young people from all over Rio. There were over 100 students doing many different technical courses and workshops at Spectaculu. Above all, I learnt to walk alone and to follow things with a critical eye. Although my course lasted only one and half years, it was just like the university degree I did later.

Today, the people I met on the course are working with what they studied, they're photographers, video-makers, some of them are even teaching and winning awards. A favela has culture, it has art, it has people who will give their blood for something they believe in. I understood that the most valuable investments are made in work, in education and in people's self-esteem. Art is something that requires no explanation. Art is whatever you turn into art: it's about transforming reality. I'm AfroReggae all the time, no limits. It's something continuous that goes way beyond classrooms and workshops.

Grupo Cultural AfroReggae

One of the leading favela-based cultural and social organisations in Rio de Janeiro, with national and international recognition for their transformational arts practices, AfroReggae are well-known in the UK for their major performances at the Barbican, Southbank Centre and other venues. Since 1993, AfroReggae has been pursuing their fight for social transformation through art. Since 2006 People's Palace Projects has been producing Favela to the World, a series of performances, workshops, lectures and knowledge transfer activities that shares AfroReggae's ideas about the social technology of the arts with British artists, audiences and activists. This includes Cultural Warriors a three-year programme in youth cultural leadership, in association with Theatre Royal Stratford East, Sage Gateshead, Lawnmowers Independent Theatre Company, Contact Theatre Manchester and Playing On Theatre Company.

Celso Athayde, CUFA

Celso Athayde grew up in the streets and favelas of Rio de Janeiro. His exposure to hip hop music dramatically changed the way he understood the world around him, and in 1998 he created Central Unica das Favelas with the goal of inspiring political awareness among those who live in favelas and peripheral communities.

I can't tell how my life started to change. There were numerous paths and points of reference. I think some of my achievements happened by chance and others, most of them, out of sheer perseverance and insistence. The obsessive quest for transformation.

I think I began to transform part of my poverty into art the moment I started to believe that intervention not complaint was the best way to change my life and the lives of people around me. I started to turn every sentence I uttered or heard into tactics, into a way forward.

The favelas in Brazil are very much alike. They share the same feelings, difficulties and hope for better days. If the fear of wars between gangs or criminal factions hinders all kinds of improvements, art alone has enabled the most diverse types of interaction and encounters.

CUFA has never tried to get youngsters out of drug trafficking, but to give them alternatives, to take knowledge to them, to show them pathways. Personal decisions have always been respected. We obviously wish people wouldn't go into drug trafficking, but as long as there are users, drug trafficking will exist. Hence, there will always be drug dealers and there will always be young people involved.

So we always try to be seduced by them, never the other way round. Some people ask us what we're focussing on. The answer is: we're focussing on what young people are feeling.

Art is a reflection of our achievements and those achievements have come through the development of the most varied arts. Art has been the basis of all our work. It's the guiding force that creates spaces of new interactions. It is capable of showing new opportunities towards change. It gives young people the chance to earn an income and to experiment with different ways of leading their lives independently.

What's important is to acknowledge that it is the State and not Non-Governmental Organizations that must still play the principle role in people's lives. NGOs should be the intermediaries between the State and the communities they represent or with which they work. In that sense, CUFA has progressed in silence along the years, growing every day and training more people. And from its experience, it has discovered alternatives that it has suggested to governments. It's very important for us to occupy that position and to make sure we are heard so that we can have a positive impact on the issues that matter most.

Celso Athayde, Central Única das Favelas

For over a decade, CUFA has been recognised as a highly significant cultural, social and political organization. CUFA was created by young people - mainly black - coming together from favelas across Rio de Janeiro, seeking space to express and to question. Acting as a hub of cultural production through partnerships, grants and sponsorship, CUFA now shapes and informs citizens not only from Rio de Janeiro but from 25 other Brazilian states. Among the activities developed by the project, there are courses and workshops in DJ'ing, breakdance, graffiti, street basketball, skateboarding, computer studies, gastronomy, audio-visual and sport. In addition to being one of Brazil's most important hip-hop producers, Celso is nowadays an influential and much respected writer, broadcaster and social commentator.

Rappin' Hood

Rappin' Hood is one of Brazil's most famous and influential rappers. His peaceful but powerful message promotes dialogue between social classes through art.

I've never been limited in terms of music; I've always kept moving. I've listened to everything. I'm the rapper who's handed drumsticks to the percussionists in carnival. Now I'm the vice-president of a samba school. I love samba and I started rhyming to its cadence. That's how samba rap was born, an unpretentious bringing together of values and rhythms which allows me to travel artistically and to take rap to another public who think they don't know or understand it. Today I manage to move through any social sphere. I perform both to the upper classes and to my own community. I realized that if my rap was aggressive, I wouldn't be able to reach certain places. I prefer to talk about some subjects in a subtle way because I want to promote a dialogue between different parts of society and to speak to everyone. I chose a middle-ground type language to be able to generate that discussion. That's the Brazilian special knack of avoiding confrontation. My aim is to make rap and hip-hop distinctively Brazilian.

Negritude is at the heart of my music as I question racism and discrimination. Lula's government created more opportunities for young, black and poor people to ascend, to express ourselves, to have access to things we didn't have before. But we still have a lot more to add, to say, to contribute. I believe that art, music and sport are still the great doors to freeing Brazilian youth from crime and drugs. But that's not the only solution.

We need a proper investment in the quality of life, education and social mobility for all young people if Brazil is really going to develop.

I've made some money, I could have already left my community, I could have gone away. But my commitment is to try to open doors for other people to grow, for other people to be successful as well. I see that my journey has been inspiring for many youngsters of my community of Vila Carioca in São Paulo who now want to follow their own paths, their own experiences. It's my responsibility to remain faithful to that purpose.

Art is an exercise of citizenship. I'm not concerned about training rappers. Not all of these young people will be famous or successful through music. What's important is to nurture citizens, better people, to get them to understand the philosophy of life that we are trying to pass on, that is contained in hip-hop and traditional samba. The most important thing is to nurture citizens who are prepared for the world, better people willing to seek improvement, to study, to work, to take care of their families, to build a family, instead of going into crime and drugs. Rap enables a fair and honest exchange, making many people think about social issues. The suburban boy understands why his father can't give him trainers of a particular brand, he realizes that his father is a winner who supports his family, and that he should be

proud of the place where he lives. The upper-middle-class kid understands why a youth accosts him with a gun and asks him to take off his trainers or to get out of his brand new car. Our intention isn't to train a generation of rappers who are all famous. No. It is to nurture citizens.

The artist is ahead of his society - sees things that society cannot see. Neither the establishment nor the government fully grasps the cultural effervescence that's happening in this country. Perhaps the artist is alerting everyone, anticipating a new way. Art has the power to see first, to see the doorway to what is new.

A Samba School is one of the few places where the poor and the rich mix. My dream is to make *Imperador do Ipiranga* grow so that it can develop more social projects and create opportunities for our community, both inside and outside it. And, of course, to win the carnival parade in São Paulo.

Rappin' Hood

Rappin' Hood (Antônio Luiz Júnior) was born and raised in Heliópolis, in the suburbs of São Paulo. He started to compose at the age of 14 and was soon being acknowledged as a champion rapper. He has released two albums, featuring household names of Brazilian music such as Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. He presents the programme "Manos e Minas" on TV Cultura and is currently vice-president of the samba school Imperador do Ipiranga, in São Paulo, where he has established IT and sport resources for young people as well as medical and dentistry provision for the community.

Encounters:

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Marco Aurelio Ayres

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Mohammad Ahmad

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Encounters Beyond Text

art transforming lives

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