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## **From (Proto)Performance to Reenactment**

**Similarity and Anachronism in  
(Portuguese) Performance Art History**

### **Preliminary Remarks**

The history of performance art in Portugal did not follow a linear trajectory, instead presenting several beginnings and discontinuities, from the first Futuristic actions led by the artist Almada Negreiros in 1917, to the young generation of performers who, coming from the fields of dance and theatre, have been rediscovering this history through several reenactments and exhibitions.

This essay takes as its starting point the way in which Georges Didi-Huberman's thinking has been questioning the constitution of art history in the sense of the predominance of a genealogy of similarity, in works such as *Devant le temps. Histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images* (2000). Our aim in this essay is to account for both the continuities and the discontinuities in four key moments in the history of Portuguese performance art, exploring the productivity of anachronism as a critical tool. These moments will be conceptually described as follows: 1) proto-performance: *Futurist Conference*, 1917; 2) historical performance: *Two Happened Happenings*, 1965–1967; 3) expanded performance: *Grupo OLHO*, 1991; 4) reenactment: *Reacting to Time. The Portuguese in Performance Art*, 2015. The analysis of

these four cycles highlights various aspects of the critical value of an “epistemology of anachronism” in order to understand not just the foundational narratives regarding performance art in Portugal, but also their connections with temporal and formal aspects of performance art on an international scale.

### Exploring an “Epistemology of Anachronism”

In his book *Devant le temps. Histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images* (2000), Georges Didi-Huberman questions the constitution of art history as the predominance of a genealogy of similarity: “L’histoire des images est une histoire d’objets temporellement impures, complexes, surdéterminés. C’est donc une histoire d’objets polychroniques, d’objets hétéroniques ou anachroniques.”<sup>1</sup> The role of the art historian, in this context, is not primarily to establish a linear narrative but to recognize shifts and divergences, acknowledging the occasional insurmountable gap between the present and the past. In discussing this disparity, the author adds: “il faut la faire travailler dans le tempo différentiel des moments de proximités empathiques, intempéstifs et invérifiables, avec les moments de reculs critiques, scrupuleux et vérificateurs.”<sup>2</sup>

Anachronism, being a symptom of the disagreements, disruptions, and gaps within the historical narrative of the artistic field, is notably conspicuous in the history of performance art in Portugal. This non-linear narrative can be attributed to the fact that a well-documented history of Portuguese performance art has not yet been produced. Several contributing factors to this lack of narrative inscription include a 40-year-long dictatorship that endured from 1926 to 1974 and a colonial war intended to uphold one of the world’s oldest empires which lasted from 1961 until the 1974 Revolution. This social and political context of oppression and lack of freedom of expression accentuated Portugal’s semi-peripheral condition. Throughout these

1 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps. Histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images* (Paris: Minuit, 2000), p. 21. 2 Ibid.

decades, artistic practices revealed several intersecting temporal structures. Consequently, performance art emerged as a series of actions within a complex framework characterized by both the weak local organization of the art scene and, at times, a paradoxically strong connection to the international context.

Portuguese performance art is certainly still part of a global temporality that has made it possible to bring together different discourses and artistic practices, crossing economic and symbolic borders, presenting actions in alternative spaces, organizing festivals and exhibitions in new cultural geographies. In this regard, we can assert that performance aligns with a cultural dynamic that transcends locally conventional notions of center and periphery.<sup>3</sup>

*1. (Proto)performance: Futurist Conference, by Almada Negreiros (1917)*

Almada Negreiros' *Futurist Conference*, presented at the *Teatro da República* on April 14, 1917, can be characterized as a proto-performance, in the sense that it inaugurated the language and the creative processes of performance art, at a time when the concept itself was still non-existent. It is important to stress that, unlike other performative events that were made invisible by the scarcity of records or testimonies in the first decades of the twentieth century, this became a well-known action due to its primordial relationship with the history of modernism and the literary avant-garde in Portugal. Almada Negreiros was a painter, set designer, poet and prose writer, and one of the most recognized artists of the first modernist generation.

The original documentation was made public in the magazine *Portugal Futurista*, one of the iconic publications of this historical period, containing a photo and a detailed description of the conference. However, despite this unique status, Negreiros' *Futurist Conference* remained above all a curiosity, a kind of youthful eccentricity, in a cultural field dominated by the literary referent. It was not until the end of the twentieth century that this event was somehow locally incorporated in the field

3 Alexandre Melo, *Globalização Cultural, o que é?* (Lisbon: Quimera, 2020), p. 121.

# 1ª CONFERENCIA FUTURISTA

— DE —  
José de ALMADA-NEGREIROS



O poeta futurista José de ALMADA-NEGREIROS  
vestidamente futurista é seu retrato no palco do Teatro Republica,  
Sabado, 14 de Abril de 1917.

Com a Presença de José de ALMADA-NEGREIROS  
**TEATRO REPUBLICA**

SABADO, 14 DE ABRIL DE 1917 Às 8 h. tarde (7ª h.)

CONFERENCIA

**FUTURISTA**

por  
José de ALMADA-NEGREIROS

1ª PARTE — ULTIMATUM FUTURISTA AS GERAÇÕES POR-  
TUGUEZAS DO SEculo XX por

José de ALMADA-NEGREIROS

2ª PARTE — MANIFESTO FUTURISTA DA LUSITANIA por

Mme de SAINT-POINT

3ª PARTE — MUNDO-HALL

por

TUONS LE CLAIR DE LUNE por

MARINETTI

ENTRADA 52 Cts.

A minha entrada no palco rebentou uma explosão e tremenda patada seguida de uma calorosa salva de palmas que eu custei de um gesto.

Redonda a plateia é um serapente natural vive a gloria de apresentar o futurista Santa-Rita-Pietro que o publico recebe com uma oração unanime.

Concebi esta a meu ultimatim é juvenilde partigona do seculo XX e a plateia confundida a cogitancia exclusivamente literaria e poetica chorosa solidamente com a vitalidade das minhas afirmações pelo que ex-citava perentorias e cobardes reprovações isoladas mas sem estado de conjunto.

Tendo sido concedido o platão, segundo a orientação literaria, intervenções e contradicções, todas as contradicções foram vigorosamente indicadas a não ser no que dizia respeito á incompetencia dos contradicções.

Os chuchos politicos presentes, quando se ouviam afirmações futuristas pareciam estar de accordo com as suas restrições moralisticas ou repubblicanas apontavam scandalosamente com os olhos bem parabolares, mas as a nomeia idea lhes era evidentemente rival a seu unico escuro entusiasmo na garfuchada, symbolo seguro da inebriedade.

Consegue, inspirado na revelação de Marinetti e apoiado no genial optimismo da minha juramentação, transpor essa labia de insuperar em que se gera Lufano utopia, e atingir ante a curiosidade da plateia a expressão da intem-

Fig. 1. First edition of the literary review *Portugal Futurista*, 1917.

of performance art, keeping a broad conceptual relationship with the performativity, gesture and voice that characterized the public readings of avant-garde manifestos.

At the *Futurist Conference* in 1917, Almada Negreiros was dressed in a stylized overall against the backdrop of a painting. Presented to a small audience at the *Teatro da República*, the conference was widely covered by the press, appearing in the newspaper *A Capital*, referred to by several journalists as *Elogio da Loucura* (Praise of Folly).<sup>4</sup> The conference consisted of the following parts: 1) Futurist Ultimatum to the Portuguese Generations of the Twentieth Century, by Almada himself; 2) Futurist Manifesto, by Madame de Saint-Point; 3) Music-Hall and Tuons le Clair de Lune, by Marinetti. Having been an-

4 Cláudia Madeira, *O Hibridismo nas Artes em Portugal* (PhD. Diss., Lisbon University, 2007), pp.152–154.

nounced, although it never happened, a second practical and positive spectacle of Futurism should have taken place. This would have included “a Futurist comedy in which, intersectionally, the best variety acts currently in Lisbon participated and even a bullfight” (*Portugal Futurista*, 1917).

This performance-conference thus evolved into a creative synthesis of certain Futurist tendencies that Marinetti introduced in his Futurist Manifesto, first published in the newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1909. It is worth noting that this manifesto was surprisingly reproduced in a Portuguese newspaper in the Azores archipelago in the same year. The *Futurist Conference* was presented as a critique of some mythical national representations, linked to history, tradition, and nostalgia. It aimed to serve as a means to reimagine Portugal in the twentieth century. The anachronism within this conference-performance is a key element of the impure process of resurrecting an international manifesto’s imagery, tailored to the Portuguese context, creating a temporal continuum that spans from the past to the present and envisions the future.

A century later, in 2017, the Portuguese Arts Council endorsed a series of public events dedicated to honoring Almada Negreiros in his unique role as a performance artist. During these events, various artists presented performances paying tribute to Negreiros in the very theatre where he had delivered his lecture-performance in Lisbon. Curated by researcher Ana Pais, the *P!* Project’s program, which has since been made available in digital format, demonstrated a strong desire for convergence, prefiguring transgenerational similarity within the realm of performance art. However, the segment dedicated to guest artists, named *Reinventions*, focused predominantly on contemporary themes like technology, the multicultural city, and the LGBT movement. This choice underscored the implied anachronism, making visible the noticeable distance between these two moments.

## 2. *Historical Performance: Two Happened Happenings (1965–1967)*

As a disruptive event, the performance of the Portuguese Futurists was only continued by the Surrealists, at their openings in

cafés or even at the openings of their exhibitions. In 1940, at the Repe Gallery in Lisbon, visitors were welcomed with the performative and surrealist attitude of the artists playing with balloons, dancing with mannequins and quoting excerpts from the exhibition catalogue.<sup>5</sup> This combination of the plastic dimension of the work, immersed in a performative environment, gained formal expression in the emergence of visual or experimental poetry, where precisely these two components were mixed to create a hybrid object, in which the artist's body also became the vehicle for the work.

It is in a similar context that the *Dois Acontecidos Happenings* (*Two Happened Happenings*), named after the experimental poet E. M. de Melo e Castro, who was one of the participants, took place. The actions occurred in 1965, as part of a collective happening called *Concert and Pictorial Audition*, presented in the Gallery Divulgação (Lisbon), with the participation of António Aragão, Clotilde Rosa, E. M. de Melo e Castro, Manuel Batista, Jorge Peixinho, Mário Falcão and Salette Taveres. This was followed by a second part, in 1967, with the happening called *Operation 1 / 2 and Object Conference*, in Gallery Quadrante (Lisbon), presented by Ana Hatherly, E. M. de Melo e Castro, José Alberto Marques and Jorge Peixinho with an introduction by the art historian José-Augusto França.

These happenings can be classified as representative of what we are calling historical performance art. As was usual in performance actions developed in the 1960s, especially in Portugal, the public was not very receptive, and some of the artists suffered reprisals and negative impacts on their lives as a result of their participation in this event. Both the general public and specialized critics were scandalized. As already mentioned, this was a time of repression of freedom of expression and all topics that could be considered political were taboo. Some of the performances showed their political stance, namely through themes linked to censorship, the torture of political prisoners and the colonial war. In the 1965 event, Melo e Castro developed, for example, the *Música Negativa* (*Negative Music*)

5 Ibid., pp. 228–230.



Fig. 2. E. M. de Melo e Castro, *Música Negativa (Negative Music)*, 1965–1977.

happening.<sup>6</sup> Unlike other happenings, we have a visual record of this event. After the end of the dictatorship, it was repeated to be filmed in 16mm by Ana Hatherly in 1977.<sup>7</sup>

The act of filming a performance originally carried out twelve years earlier in 1965 serves as a deliberate act of repetition, already driven by a documentary purpose. It represents a repetition motivated by the pursuit of similarity and a desire for narrative inscription within the emerging history of Portuguese performance art. However, in 1977, it also carried the mark of anachronism, as it was only made possible by the new historical context of increased freedom of expression. The 1977 recording is already a decision by the artist who wants to guarantee, through film, a future materiality capable of controlling the absolute ephemerality of the performance. It's therefore worth noting that this time frame (1965–1977) coincided with the evolution of artistic language during the 1960s and is uniquely aligned with the critical historical propositions put forth by Lucy Lippard in her book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*.

In the role of a maestro, during this three-minute duration of the performance, the artist was holding three large, noise-

6 Cláudia Madeira, *Arte da Performance Made in Portugal. Uma Aproximação às Histórias da Arte da Performance Portuguesa* (Lisbon: ICNOVA, 2020), pp. 54–60. 7 This recording, which lasts 3.56 minutes, is now available in an archive on experimental poetry in Portugal: <https://po-ex.net/taxonomia/materialidades/performativas/concerto-e-audicao-pictorica/> (accessed October 19, 2023).

less metallic rattles as though they were batons, following an abstract pictorial score. This 'action' aimed to metaphorically symbolize the silence enforced by the Portuguese dictatorship. Later, the artist reenacted this performance on an international stage, using different soundless instruments, such as Coca-Cola bottles, in an out-of-service print shop in Belgium, delivering a clear critique of capitalism and silence. On another occasion, they used empty glasses during a performance in former Yugoslavia. These actions generated a new imagery that symbolized the restrictions on freedom of expression experienced under the Portuguese dictatorship.

Undoubtedly, there was a significant influence from international experiments, particularly those of John Cage. In 1952, Cage performed his silent piece *4' 33"* for the first time. Some years later, in 1963, he visited Portugal for a concert and conference at the Tivoli Hotel in Lisbon. While most of the pieces in *Concert and Pictorial Audition* by Melo e Castro engaged with Cage's artistic concept, Melo's *Música Negativa* developed a unique concept of musical silence which represented the symbolic context of repression. It materialized the silence that had been imposed in Portugal, by the dictatorship, as a form of negation. However, this dialogue with Cage's silent piece underscores the connection with the international artistic production context.<sup>8</sup>

This kind of action paved the way for performance as an artistic genre in the 1980s. During this decade, it gained significant popularity in Portugal, marked by the rise of national festivals featuring renowned international participants. This movement was by then already fully conscious of its creative devices, but still operated within a pre-art market context, lacking continuity for the new generation of artists who were soon to embrace a more transdisciplinary and hybrid performance practice.

### *3. Expanded Performance: Group OLHO (1991)*

Following a turbulent period of democratic normalization and the establishment of the new institutional foundations for the

8 Madeira, *Arte da Performance Made in Portugal*, pp. 54–60.

arts, the *OLHO* group, led by visual and performing artist João Garcia Miguel, embarked on a distinctive array of hybrid and transdisciplinary artistic projects and performances. Coinciding with Portugal's integration into the European Union in 1987 and the World Exposition in 1998, *OLHO* took up residence in the periphery of a vast warehouse on the south bank of the River Tagus, known as Cais do Ginjal in the city of Almada. Between 1990 and 2002, it solidified its position as an alternative space, attracting an entire generation of young artists who were eager to engage in experimental processes as informal opportunities for learning and collaboration.

The choice of a large converted warehouse situated within an unconventional urban setting, which had formerly been used as a transport repair shop, was neither a coincidence nor the result of the practical conditions typical of the artistic production circumstances of the post-revolution generation of young creators. The move to this southern location took place as a sign of opposition against the prevailing social dynamics of the 1980s. That is, instead of joining the celebration of the economic virtues of a country that was integrating into the globalized economy and the European market, *OLHO* celebrated the performative and countercultural ethos of the fringes.

The relationship that formed between these young creators and the peripheral warehouse represents a significant shift in the artistic languages within Portugal, which we can describe as a progression towards an expanded performance paradigm. This transformation is closely linked to the unique possibilities that the site itself offered, including its distinctive acoustic and industrial topography, and to the way in which it was used by site-specific projects. The *OLHO* group led this broad performative turn which captured the generation of artists working at the end of the 1980s. Performative and expressive culture was undergoing transformation, by modes of meaning production that shared similarities with and were inherited from performance art: emphasis on process over product, body over character, performing over acting; all representing a shift away from post-revolutionary narrative forms, and an inclination towards a dramaturgy (sometimes a curatorship) centered on actions and gestures, as well as on aural and immersive experiences.

Between 1990 and 2002, *OLHO* challenged the prevailing artistic disciplines and delved into experimentation and artistic hybridism. João Miguel Garcia, the artist who headed the group's creative process, intentionally incorporated his background in visual arts into the realm of performance, merging visual and written components. Over the course of a decade of collaborative work, the group of artists who joined the project brought diverse skills, fostering unconventional artistic crossroads in Portugal's performing arts. They valued visual arts, embraced new multimedia technologies, and emphasized bodily expression, giving them a unique prominence in the Portuguese arts scene.

Not by chance, this hybrid approach coincided with the emergence of new forms of performativity within what is known as the *New Portuguese Dance*. This movement challenged classical technicality and instead emphasized improvisation, solo work, and choreographic experimentation in transdisciplinary projects. The *OLHO* collective played a decisive role in this generational shift and in the evolution of a new corporeal expression. The journey toward this transformation of the body also involved pioneering learning experiences and interactions with the international scene. Notably, these interactions occurred through events like the ACARTE Meetings, a prominent platform for artistic experimentation sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, beginning in 1987 and continuing into the early 2000s. It was within this context of expanded performativity that both the *New Portuguese Dance* and the movement for the revitalization of scenic and performing languages, led by the *OLHO* collective, came into existence.

The *OLHO* collective also had immediate predecessors: some of its members participated in a prior collective experiment, known as *Cosmic Cannibalism*, in the late 1980s. This group consisted mainly of fine arts students, along with artists with connections to music and philosophy. Their performances emerged in response to the sense of isolation experienced in Portugal, coinciding with the growing openness of that period. The activities of this group continued until the mid-1990s. The name *Cosmic Cannibalism* emerged somewhat by accident, stemming from the reading of an article about the Catalan painter Salva-

dor Dalí, which mentioned the concept of the continuous circulation of flesh, where individuals oscillate between “eating” and “being eaten.”

This transgressive dynamic, whether driven by the radical nature of its themes or the selection of visual or textual references, or even by an aesthetic transgression expressed through the breach of formal or disciplinary protocols, gave rise to a new hybrid performativity. This process of aesthetic renewal, which we refer to in this essay as “expanded performance,” encompasses the convergence of (a) performance art from the 1960s to the 1980s, (b) the array of practices identified by Michael Kirby as “non-matrixed” performing<sup>9</sup> or even (c) the broad creative domain noted by Sally Banes in her work *Subversive Expectations: Performance Art and Paratheater in New York 1976–1985*.<sup>10</sup>

*Humanauta* (1992) illustrates this expanded practice in various ways, by bringing together directors, choreographers, visual artists, musicians, horticultural specialists and an extraordinary group of 33 performers who, in the wide space of the Lemauto warehouse, circulated among trippers or hikers, amidst futuristic machines and different scenographic platforms, in a collective performance that underlined the isolation and otherness which initially characterized the *OLHO* artistic community.

As João Miguel Garcia himself states, those performances were conceptually structured in a provocative logic of happenings, generally of a unique and unrepeatable nature, through musical scores and sets of rules shared by the participating elements. This open composition of paintings and the presence of a scenic syntax, not always predetermined, creates both convergent and divergent meanings. Many of the performances were structured under the principle of attracting opposites, having, however, a strong axis based on a new and intense movement of the body: “to revalorize the body as a tragic space of personal and artistic experience.”<sup>11</sup> This revalorization is reflected in a performative approach to corporality, broadening its scope of conscious

9 Michael Kirby, “On Acting and Not-Acting,” *The Drama Review: TDR* 16, no. 1 (1972), pp. 3–15. 10 Sally Banes, *Subversive Expectations: Performance Art and Paratheater in New York 1976–1985* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001). 11 João Miguel Garcia dos Santos, *Performance, Inconsciente, Corpo* (PhD Diss., Lisbon University, 2017), p. 7.



Fig. 3 *Humanauta*, by OLHO, Lémauto Warehouse, Cacilhas, 1994.

and unconscious action, valorizing a bodily state of full availability and questioning, a state of being between art, life, and knowledge as perception: “To open and close the body, to allow art and life to pervade themselves in transformative discourses, adopting the artistic devices as their lexicon.”<sup>12</sup>

A structural element that connects itself to the body is the sound of the word and its resonances, which links the performance not only to something conscious but also to something unconscious or compulsive. The group’s guidelines stated that OLHO intended to “develop a work of invention carried out in the obscure, in the vague, in the unintelligible, using ambiguity as a creative stimulus, that is settled either in death or in an extreme purification.”<sup>13</sup> The action “invites the spirit to achieve the delirium that exalts its energies,” “taking place in a conflict of amplified feelings,” where actors are warriors in a state of trance and in a perpetual war,” accentuating “the erotic obsessions, the dream, the historical chimeras, the savagery, the appreciation for the crime, the utopian meaning of life and things, the tradition devoured by an innovative cannibalism, overflow-

12 Ibid. 13 Ibid., p. 228.

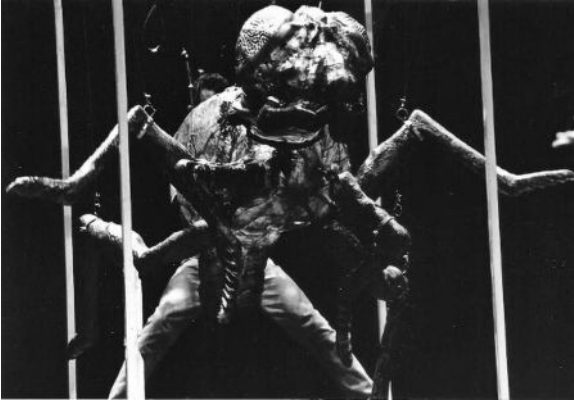


Fig. 4. *Warrior*, by João Miguel Garcia, based on Alexandre Dale and Thomas More, Espaço Ginjal, 1995.

ing on a non-illusory level, but internal.”<sup>14</sup> This would be notoriously the case for the simultaneously formless and monstrous visuality present in the performance *Warrior* (1995).

#### 4. *Reenactment Lab: Reacting to Time. The Portuguese in Performance Art (2015)*

Starting in the 1990s and continuing into the twenty-first century, critical and historiographical research work gradually emerged in Portugal, which aimed to document and build a narrative about performance art in the country, linking it to some of its most significant moments since the seminal year of 1917. These studies clearly show the countless difficulties posed by the lack of archival knowledge. In a way, each researcher has built up their own corpus of documents, always in a preliminary effort and with asymmetrical results. However, this endeavor has nonetheless allowed us to gain a better understanding of the key moments in performance art and its protagonists, tracing the emergence of national and international networks.

Performance art has been defined either by notions of contingency and ephemerality in terms of its ontology or by an unorthodox relationship with institutional protocols of art.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

These factors have promoted a particular resistance to forms of documentation and objectification that continue to be present in contemporary discourse as well as in the global art context. Assuming, as Barbara Clausen points out, that “the progressive institutionalization of performance art is based on the interdependence of its present and past,”<sup>15</sup> several museums in Portugal have been expanding the presence of performance art and the development of new creative and curatorial categories, involving diverse approaches to performative archives and repertoires, with a notable example being the practice of reenactment over the last two decades. While it is true that we can identify an interdependent flow of temporalities, through which the voices of the archive unveil the dynamics of performance heritage, often in dissonance with its own immediate countercultural legacy, it is equally true that the curatorial practices of performance art continue to exhibit significant heterogeneity. Their repertoire of procedures operates with the concepts of action and body, time and space; it involves participatory, relational, ephemeral, and contingent practices; it summons an expanded range of materialities that translate into the agency of objects, sounds, and images. These characteristics operate under varying conditions, between live performance, video, photo-performance, and performative installation, as well as within records and intermedial extensions, including photographs, drawings, and films.

One of the recent works that most clearly illustrates the fourth moment discussed in this essay is precisely a critical and reflective practice of reenactment. In a thought-provoking text, Boris Groys is particularly cautious about the limitations (and dangers) of the contemporary performative or curatorial gesture organized around the documentation of art: “This transformation of the artwork into documentation of a life event opens up a space where all sorts of other genealogies could equally be discovered or invented, several of them quite plausible

15 Barbara Clausen, “Performing the Archive and Exhibiting the Ephemeral,” in *A History of Performance Documentation*, ed. Gabriella Giannachi and Johan Westerman (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 110–141.

historically.”<sup>16</sup> We believe that the project entitled *Reacting to Time: The Portuguese in Performance Art* (2015), under the artistic direction of choreographer Vânia Rovisco, with André Lepecki and Verónica Metello as artistic advisers, is an example of how an encounter with performance history can be reproduced in its own otherness.

The project takes as its starting point the notion of the “archive-body” proposed by André Lepecki<sup>17</sup> and explores the power of embodied knowledge, probing how it can illuminate the performative action and reveal something of its historical latency. In view of the partial and incomplete nature of the documentation pertaining to the period we have referred to above as the moment of “historical performance” (1960s to 1980s), it re-establishes contact with these historical actions through the testimony, memory and personal material provided by the three authors of the performances themselves: Manoel Barbosa (\*1953), Fernando Aguiar (\*1956) and António Olaio (\*1963).

The goal of this project extends beyond the restoration of three historical performances. It aims to create conditions that facilitate widespread access to their historical and conceptual contexts, made possible through the presence and direct accounts of the artists involved in these performances. To achieve this goal, the project established ten “transmission workshops” designed for participants with no prior training. These workshops form a complementary network for transmitting knowledge, involving the historical performers’ archive-body, the project team, other artists invited to the public re-performance, and the workshop participants. The artistic director herself orchestrates public moments to share her processes of receiving and transmitting the performance.

The public presentations took place in 2015 in various spaces, including art galleries, museums, and theatres, which differed

16 Boris Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Art Work to Art Documentation,” in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (London: Intellect Books, 2012), pp. 209–218. 17 André Lepecki, “The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances,” *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2010), pp. 28–48.



Fig. 5. *Il faut danser Portugal*, by António Olaio. Original version (Centre Georges Pompidou, 1984) and Vânia Rovisco's reenactment project *Reacting to Time. The Portuguese in Performance Art*, 2015.

from the original performances. What we witness here is a “re-territorialization of the performance,”<sup>18</sup> which is not so much aimed at restoring its aura but at acknowledging and scrutinizing the various dimensions of its historicity. For example, the reenactment of António Olaio’s performance *Il faut danser Portugal*, originally presented in 1984 at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, evokes (a) the critical response to the picturesque ballets promoted by the fascist regime in the 1940s and 1950s, (b) the libertarian spirit that characterized the post-revolutionary era, and (c) the time of its reenactment in 2015, marked by multicultural identity, the global circulation of images, and post-colonial representations of nationality.

Each public presentation was accompanied by a specific program, which included exhibitions, debates with researchers in the fields of performing and visual arts, as well as engagement with the artistic community and the general public. The *Reacting to Time* cycle serves as a dynamic laboratory, an ongoing experiment that contemplates the regime of similarity associ-

18 Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics,” p. 217.



Fig. 6. *Transmission workshop*, reenactment project *Reacting to Time. The Portuguese in Performance Art*, 2015.

ated with the desire for narrative inscription. However, as we've observed, this intricate practice of reenactment extends beyond the mere recreation of the performance or confirming a linear historical progression in the world of performance art. Instead, it embraces and incorporates into the performance itself the acknowledgment of "discordances in the temporal order," as referenced by Didi-Huberman in the work cited the beginning of this essay.<sup>19</sup>

## Final Remarks

Simultaneously, while performance art in Portugal appears to be presently guided by an *archivistic compulsion*, whereby everything is documented, replicated, ritualized, and repurposed, its historical development reveals a cyclical nature. This history is marked by both convergent movements (similarity) and divergent movements (anachronism). Didi-Huberman points out that it is in this asymmetry, in this temporal and historical mis-

<sup>19</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps*, p. 40.

match, that the concept of anachronism reveals its heuristic audacity. In the very brief examples mentioned above, we can see that the temporality of performance art places it in a circular dialog particularly with social and political structures. These four performance cycles are in direct dialogue with the international scene, but they haven't always left a documentary "trail" for subsequent generations. In fact, the possibility of imagining a narrative linking the live archive of performance art in Portugal has only recently become a foreseeable reality, either through the advancement of research or through the timely encounter between artists and researchers in laboratory reenactment projects.