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Lessons from outside the classroom: performance pedagogies in Portugal, 1970–1980

Cláudia Madeira  and Fernando Matos Oliveira 

In the 1970s, Portuguese performance art exhibited itself as a language of experimentation in the local artistic scene with increasing public visibility. This prominence, which led to regular festivals and live events, was, however, not accompanied by any formal education or the integration of performance into the curriculum of art schools. In this article, we argue that the Portuguese approach to a performance pedagogy occurred mainly through a double path. On the one hand, through the convergent actions of two important critic-curators with relevant international connections in the area of performance, namely Egidio Álvaro and Ernesto de Sousa. On the other, through the singular activities of an association of artists, the *Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra (CAPC)*, which had an institutional relationship with the students' academy (*Associação Académica de Coimbra*) of the University of Coimbra. The CAPC takes the pedagogical and performative utopia of an art-life relationship a step further, at a time which shared the *ethos* of the democratic revolution of 1974. This generation collaborated with the international performance scene, not only developing projects with Wolf Vostell, in Malpartida (Spain), but also organising an important exhibition of Portuguese performance at the Centre Georges Pompidou, in Paris (1984).

Keywords: Portuguese performance art, performance pedagogy, alternative art education, curating performance

Alternative institutions of art education before the revolution of 1974

Having lived under a dictatorial regime between 1926 and 1974, Portugal trod a long road to democracy. Over this period of 48 years, the country experienced a widespread suppression of freedom of speech with profound consequences for the artistic field. State organisations were created for the purpose of monitoring society, imposing censorship on public and private contents that would undermine the state's official discourse, with an impact on correspondence, the press and the performing

arts. Exhibitions, shows and live performances were carefully monitored, while texts, rehearsals and the public presentation of performances were censored.

This context did not favour the development of art education or its openness to the vanguards and the experimentalism which, in the first half of the 20th century in Portugal, intermittently took place in theatre, in music and in both written and visual culture. Instead, the curriculum and teaching practices at formal institutions of art education were slow to develop, including at the *Faculdade de Belas-Artes (Faculty of Fine Arts)* (1881–1925), the *Escola Superior de Belas Artes de Lisboa (Lisbon School of Fine Arts)* (1950–), the *Faculdade de Belas Artes (Faculty of Fine Arts)* (1992–) and also at the *Conservatório Nacional (National Conservatory)* (1836–), renamed in 1983 as the *Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema (Lisbon Theatre and Film School)*. These institutions maintained their conservative profile even in the period after the 1974 revolution, preferring creators, references and artistic practices of a more canonical kind.

In the 50s and 60s, this pedagogical profile increasingly contrasted with the practices and the interests not only of the artistic community but also of the potential students. The May 1968 protests happened alongside new artistic forms and trends which were open to challenging tradition and to experimental art, propagated particularly among artists and curators with access to the international scene. These artists and curators were frequently supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Madeira 2007), a private funding institution of great significance in the development of the artistic field in Portugal through providing scholarships for artistic training and research abroad.

Until 1974, therefore, the pedagogies and teaching methods of a more experimental and performative art were developed in alternative and complementary contexts of art education. They included the *SNBA – Sociedade Nacional de Belas-Artes (National Association of Fine Arts)*, where exhibitions were promoted and art education was developed; the *IADE – Instituto de Arte e Decoração (IADE – Creative University)* (1969), which also sponsored art courses; and *Ar.Co – Escola de Arte Independente (Independent Art School)* (1973), which offered independent short-term artistic courses, mainly on painting and sculpture. In Coimbra, the *CAPC – Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra (Coimbra Circle of Fine Arts)*, created in 1958 within the context of an association of university students, would gather non-professionals and professionals in open and informal artistic courses. It is in this alternative context, adjacent to formal and academic education, that we can identify emerging practices and pedagogies of performance art in Portugal.

We should, however, stress that these ‘alternative’ spaces and discourses did not establish in Portugal in opposition to an institutionalised and robust artistic system, as happened in other cultural contexts (Ault 2002). The presence of the latter in the country was still weak, and only much later did a local network of galleries and dynamics resembling an art market emerge (Santos e Melo 2001; Jürgens 2016). For endogenous political and cultural reasons, what we refer to as alternative spaces and discourses constituted mostly a topography that diverged from established

discourse within the arts academy and resisted dominant surveillance, creating opportunities for an open dialogue with contemporary creation.

There is therefore a very particular synchrony between, on the one hand, resistance and intervention practices which, from their inception, have characterised international performance art within the artistic ecosystem and, on the other, the urgency of a nonconformist art operating in a country living under a dictatorship. The adventure of Portuguese performance art takes place in this twofold social and aesthetic path, which anticipates a pedagogy of 'rebel artists' as suggested by Gómez-Peña, built by a local community (Gómez-Peña 2011). From the 1960s to the 1980s, political urgency and pre- and post-revolutionary unrest did not allow the assimilation of the rebellious gesture of performance into the art market. In Portugal that would only occur after the democratic normalisation and the material affluence amplified by the European integration of 1986.

The role of critics and curators: showing and doing performance art

In a rare volume dedicated to the teaching of performance art, edited by Marie-Luise Lange in 2006, the international scene is characterised by a continual adaptation of pedagogical approaches, in search of transmission processes and methods that can do justice to the ethos of performance and responding to the difficulties of adapting to the prescriptive curricula that often dominate the academic landscape (Lange 2006). Considering the limitations on free expression and artistic creation in Portugal in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the difficulties in having access to the international scene, the possibility of teaching and transmitting performance makes the country's otherness more evident. One of the principal methods for the public and pedagogical manifestation of performance art in Portugal was led by two critics and curators, especially sensitive to the disruptive power and the social and aesthetic impact of action art. Ernesto de Sousa (1921–1988) and Egídio Álvaro (1938–2020) together developed an activity of artistic dissemination that had great impact within the Portuguese context, either in institutions which were an alternative to the official teaching of art or inside art galleries, which, at the time, were only just emerging in the national scene. As such, both men played a significant role in legitimising the field of experimental art and performance, both in Portugal and internationally, operating through actions of critical, performative and pedagogical mediation. Both were close to an 'expanded' conceptualization of art, from which the hybrid, mixed-media, art = life and broad appreciation of a new culture of performativity stood out (Nogueira 2013).

Both critics were watching the art developments of the 1960s and 1970s closely and, consequently, were also present at (and wrote about) Documenta 5 in Kassel in 1972, which under the inventive curatorship of Harald Szeemann was themed *Questioning Reality – Pictorial Worlds Today*. Ernesto de Sousa interviewed Beuys and transcribed parts of a personal conversation about their shared year of birth. de Sousa's article 'O Estado Zero: o Encontro com Joseph Beuys' (The Zero State: The



Figure 1. Ernesto de Sousa talking to Joseph Beuys at Documenta 5, Kassel, 1972. © CEMES.

Meeting with Joseph Beuys), in which he underlined the artist's role as a guru and a teacher-performer, described Beuys' public figure and his continuous dialogue with the Documenta visitors as a process de Sousa dubbed 'direct democracy', which originated from a creator with a mission to accelerate 'the end of monument art' (Sousa 1998, 33, 64) (Figure 1).

Egídio Álvaro, in turn, wrote the article 'Kassel Kassel. Documenta 5' for the first issue of the *Revista de Artes Plásticas. Análise Crítica – Ensaio e Informação* (1973), stating that Kassel presented itself to art as a 'huge research laboratory' (Álvaro 1973).

In Portugal's artistic field, these two critics also stood out for some of their rivalry and divergent perspectives on Portuguese performance art. In 1977, Ernesto de Sousa organized the exhibition *Alternativa Zero. Tendências Polémicas na Arte Portuguesa Contemporânea* (Zero Alternative. Polemical Tendencies in Portuguese Contemporary Art) at the *Galeria Nacional de Arte Moderna* (National Gallery of Modern Art) in Lisbon, as part of which several happenings and performances were developed, including a special participation of The Living Theatre. In the same year, Egídio Álvaro organised the exhibition *Identidade Cultural, Massificação e Originalidade* (Cultural Identity, Massification and Originality), for which he sought to include more Portuguese visual artists as well as a significant number of performers. This exhibition has been considered by critics as having been conceived as an alternative to *Alternativa Zero*; however, both exhibitions were marked by eclecticism and a clear approach to hybridity and the growing performativity of art.

Álvaro also organised, together with Jaime Isidoro, the fourth *International Art Meetings in Portugal* (Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal) in Caldas da Rainha (1977), which was attended by several international performers and nearly all of the Portuguese artists engaged in performance art. Several public exhibits generated controversy for



Figures 2 and 3. Ernesto de Sousa and his students from the 'Experimental Workshop' performing an object destruction at Guincho beach, Lisbon, 1969. © CEMES.



Figures 4 and 5. Ernesto de Sousa and his students from the 'Course on Art Education-SNBA' watch Ana Hatherly perform her pioneering *Object-Conference* piece, Lisbon, Quadrante Gallery, 1967. © CEMES.

their explicit use of the body, among them the performances of Orlan's *Le baiser de l'artiste*, *S'habiller de sa propre nudité* and *Se vendre sur les marchés en petits morceaux*.

Ernesto de Sousa assumed a vastly important role in the Portuguese artistic field, being at the same time artist, critic and curator. Following his life motto, 'ma vie est une entier performance', he developed a set of performance activities in which he combined theory and practice. Examples of his performance-conferences include *Da vanguarda artística em Portugal e do Mercado Comum – Anti-conferência* (On the avant-garde art in Portugal and the Common Market – Anti-conference) (Dynasty Gallery, Lisbon, 1972), *Agressão em nome de Joseph Beuys* (Aggression in the name of Joseph Beuys) (Ogiva Gallery, Óbidos, 1972), and the *Curso de Formação Artística* (Course on Art Education) (SNBA – National Society of Fine Arts, Lisbon, 1967–1970), from which he developed the *Oficina Experimental* (Experimental Workshop) that took students to live performances and organized study trips (to Oporto, London and Coimbra) (Figures 2–5).

Also of note was 'Contemporary Art Knowledge', a practical course convened by de Sousa and held at the Quadrum Gallery in Lisbon

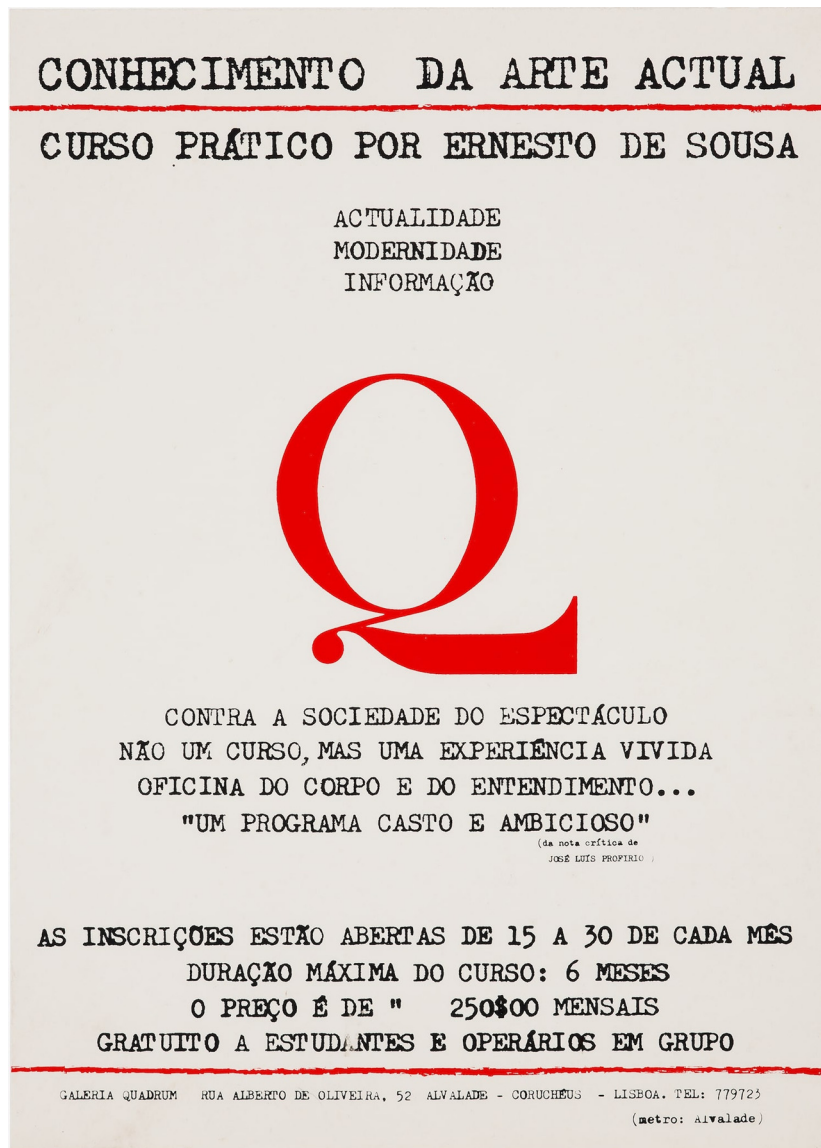


Figure 6. 'Practical Course by Ernesto de Sousa', Quadrum Gallery, Lisbon, 1978–1979. © CEMES.

1 Here and throughout this article, all quotes from Portuguese sources are given in our own translations.

(1978–1979), with its elaborate pedagogical dimension in the form of a workshop with theoretical and practical characteristics. The poster publicising the course contains a critical note which presents the course in the following emphatic terms: 'Against the society of the spectacle/not a course, but a live experience/workshop on body and knowledge...'.¹ The course was divided into four parts, dealing with performance topics such as: Fluxus-happening; assemblage, collage and participation; from the event to performance and ritual (Figure 6).

At the Quadrum Gallery, where the course was presented and its administrative headquarters were located, de Sousa took an active role in the curatorship of the gallery. He presented there the conference 'Art-Process or Action-Art', to which he invited international performance artists such as Ulrike Rosenbach and Gina Pane (1978). The presence of international artists was decisive for the formation of a new generation of Portuguese artists. Besides allowing direct access to ways of making, the presentations, under de Sousa's critical mediation, were also opportunities to debate fundamental issues related to contemporary creation.

While Ernesto de Sousa perceived the artist as an 'aesthetic operator' (*operador estético*), Egídio Álvaro developed the concept of the 'theoretical artist', with which he tried to reflect on the role of critic-commissioner and associated it with a desire for intervention and reflection in the artistic field (Barão 2009). In this sense, Álvaro intentionally expanded and incorporated into the critic's activity a creative and artistic component. The 'theoretical artist' surpassed the art historian's own activities and would therefore go beyond the critical reflection on the contexts of art.

The figure he proposed, and which he himself tried to embody, integrated a performative component, in the sense that it represented and sought to create and open new possibilities in the artistic field, expanding and blurring its boundaries while increasing spaces for dialogue and encounter. An example of this performative role is Álvaro's 'blank text', an initiative of his own, in which he asked the artists participating in the International Art Meetings in Póvoa do Varzim in 1976 to sign a blank sheet of paper, assuming prior acceptance of and trust in what he would later write.

Álvaro sought to establish a 'new expository formula that privileges the insertion of the work of art in a living context in an approximation to the real space of social life' (Barão 2009, 95). Performance thus gained space as an element that enabled communication, sharing and a direct dialogue with its audience. Because of this, the Portuguese art historian Raquel Henriques da Silva classified Álvaro Egídio as a 'critical outsider' (Barão 2009, 291). However, it would be this position that would create the foundations for a more structured emergence of a performance art field where other *outsider* artists could gain new places of visibility, not only in Portugal but also internationally.

In addition to regularly writing articles in different newspapers and creating new publications, such as the *Revista de Artes Plásticas* (Journal of Plastic Arts, 1975) or *Interfaces* (Interfaces, 1985), Álvaro organized a set of activities with a clear pedagogical component, such as the *Ciclos de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Cycles) (Lisbon, IADE, 1977–1982), with four editions, which focused on artists, groups and movements, and from which he developed editorial initiatives, including the *Cadernos de Acção/Action Notebooks* (IADE, 1977–1982). The *Cadernos* where notebooks about Portuguese contemporary artists and performers, such as Albuquerque Mendes, Darocha, Manuel Alves, GICAP/Coeres Group, Miguel Yeco, Armando Azevedo, Manoel Barbosa and Elisabete Mileu. Published outside the official education system, these notebooks are pedagogical materials that allow for the construction of authorial narratives around the work of several Portuguese performance artists.

Álvaro subsequently settled in Paris, where he taught a course called *Performance in Europe* at the University of Sorbonne Paris VIII. He also organised performance festivals, to which he regularly invited Portuguese artists and performers. One of his initiatives with great formative impact was the series of four *International Art Meetings* in Portugal, which he held in different locations, deliberately crossing the symbolic borders between urban Portugal and rural Portugal (Valadares, 1974; Viana do Castelo, 1975; Póvoa do Varzim, 1976; and Caldas da Rainha, 1977). The 1977 edition included exhibitions, debates, interventions, performance presentations, and both film and video screenings. It also involved numerous international participants (Orlan, Marianne and Robert Filliou, Shirley Cameron, Serge III



Figure 7. Poster of the IV International Art Meeting in Portugal, Caldas da Rainha, 1977.

Oldenbourg, Fernando de Fillipi, among others) and hosted three debates on topics related to artistic training: on arts education; on female artistic production; and on the social function of art (Figure 7).

As the reception by the press at the time shows, what was at stake in the first of the debates was also the (non)place of performance in official education and the radical challenges posed by the 'whole body' pedagogy that was endorsed and practiced in the *International Art Meetings* organized by Álvaro. In an article entitled 'O ensino das escolas de Belas-Artes' (The teaching in Fine Arts schools), the journalist Arlindo Rocha accused the participants in the 1977 edition of political dirigisme. But what truly impressed him was the 'break with traditional education' present in catholic mainstream practices:

There were several experiences suggested at those *Meetings*, but it is worth mentioning the one that 'calls for the use of the whole body' in the totality of the emotion one wishes to express (...). It seems confusing, it seems bewildering, since these are classes taught in the nude, and it seems utopian; however, to some it seems possible (in Guéniot 2019, 447).

The regular organisation of national and international meetings and festivals worked as a strategic device for the promotion and development of performance art. Festivals enabled training, sharing and celebration, allowing for an economy of resources which responded to the precariousness and the absence of a market in the field of performance art in Portugal. For this reason, in the 1980s, Egídio Álvaro organised a new cycle, with five editions, of the *Festival Internacional de Arte Viva (International Live Art Festival)* (Almada, 1981, 1982, 1983; Cascais, 1985; Porto, 1987) (Figure 7).

Learning in a kind of 'Workshop Spirit': *Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra*

In a text originally published in 1976, Ernesto de Sousa says of the pedagogical activities developed by the *Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra* (after 1980 named CAPC): '[T]he only art society in this country that keeps a kind of workshop spirit' (Sousa 1998, 243). This unique institution, established in 1958 within the context of the Students' Association of the University of Coimbra, has since developed an independent and continuous activity of artistic training, which is open to everyone. The CAPC produces and hosts exhibitions, organises debates and has maintained an intense relationship with performance in Portugal since the 1970s. One could say that there is a remarkable synchrony here between alternative education, the dynamics of self-management, a revolutionary utopia and a complete fulfilment of the art-life equation that artists and performers have pursued across different geographies.

In the '70s, within the context of the May 1968 protests and the Portuguese revolutionary process, the CAPC converted into a militant community of artists. Its performative actions and interventions gradually made it a key operator, crossing the symbolic barriers between non-professionals and professionals, between university students and ordinary people, between private space (of the house they occupied in Rua Castro

Matoso in Coimbra) and public space (which they expanded from the street and the square to the walls they covered with collages), over the course of that revolutionary period.

With the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Students' Association of the University of Coimbra, the CAPC developed its pedagogical action with great freedom. Initially it was more focused on drawing, painting and sculpture, offering courses which could be taken freely. The growing participation of artists and teachers with different backgrounds and interests – particularly João Dixo, Alberto Carneiro, Tília Saldanha, Albuquerque Mendes, Armando Azevedo, Silvestre Pestana, Rui Órfão or António Barros, alongside the activities and the contacts provided by de Sousa and Álvaro after 1972 – allowed the CAPC to develop a significant set of activities: this included training courses, the creation of collectives carrying out interventions, such as the group *Gipac-Cores* (1974–1978), and the organisation of numerous actions and collective creations within the Portuguese context.

It is important to highlight the way teaching and performance have converged in the pedagogical practices of CAPC. By reading the historical documentation, the critical studies carried out and the testimonies of its protagonists, it is possible to reconstruct that path and assess its specificity within the national and international context. According to art historian Hilda Moreira de Frias, 'Learning was completely free, from the point of view of creativity and the choice of techniques and materials to be used (...). October marked the beginning of the school year and the enrolment period in the CAPC classes. The students could enrol freely in the classes they wanted' (Frias 2013, 75–78). The curriculum on offer had some flexibility and largely resulted from the tuition and participatory role of the trainer-artists involved.

As such, in the 1970s, we find theoretical courses aligned with the spirit of the time, such as 'Art and Sociology', 'Art in Contemporary Society' or 'The Social Function of Art'. But the programme of activities between 1973 and 1978 also included initiatives such as the 'Studio Course', 'Study Groups' (which later originated the 'Aesthetic Initiation Course'), and several drawing, composition, and painting courses. A further initiative is worth mentioning: in 1973, at the suggestion of the artist Alberto Carneiro, a regular activity entitled 'Criação Coletiva' (Collective Creation) began:

The activity involved collective manipulation exercises without pre-defined plans – with the purpose of raising awareness about the value of the object that was going to be transformed in order to stimulate creativity – different materials should be used without producing a finished work. It was an open process, an object of study and experimentation with the purpose of developing creative activities. (Frias 2013, 83)

In an interview in 2018, Armando Azevedo, partner and active participant in the management and creations of CAPC, highlights the experimental, playful and pioneering nature of these activities, which included the exploration of materials, textures and other expressive, nonverbal and performative possibilities. He recounts how he decided to buy fluted

paper rolls to encourage a process of experimentation within a group, which would then lead to interventions in the public space, including other kinds of extensive paper manipulation, the use of colour, and an increasing awareness of body use and movement.

In 1976, Azevedo had bought a piece of raw cloth and divided it into 2-metre strips among eight students, challenging them to experiment with the material, an exercise that would be at the origin of the 'hooded' figures. These figures in the following year were performed at a public intervention in Lisbon, by the same group, in association with the aforementioned exhibition, *Alternativa Zero* (1977).

The actions were a way of broadly objectifying the idea of the artist as an 'aesthetic operator', promoted by Ernesto de Sousa. The very transformation this group made subsequently at the CAPC headquarters positioned them between the art school they once wished to be (they even made a proposal to this effect to the Secretary of State for Culture) and the opportunity to explore the experimental virtues of the emerging 'black box' practices of the period. As Azevedo explained, CAPC headquarters were a place of fusion between the social and the professional: 'this was our first home, not the second; art was life and life was art' (Azevedo in Olaio 2008).

The performative actions by the members of the CAPC had a more precise starting point in 1972, when they presented themselves in the historic town of Óbidos to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of the Ogiva Gallery, at the time an important space for the decentralisation of the Portuguese art world. Here they not only debated de Sousa's provocation-conference entitled 'Aggression in the name of Joseph Beuys', but they also publicly introduced themselves, in Azevedo's own words, with a large fridge packaged as an 'enormous gift for this celebration'; in a parade, at the sound of a brass band, this object contained a 'succession of parcel-drawers that emerged as a ritual-offering' (in Azenha 2010, 52).

Some of the main features of the performative interventions of CAPC can be identified as follows: the convergence between collective and individual action; the activation of the installation as a relational device; the integration of parade/group movement; and the ritualistic and symbolic exploration of chromatic, visual and audio components. An object such as a fridge, as Azevedo would say, would not exactly be the kind of portable gift with which one would expect to celebrate a new gallery in the country, but this was their choice: it was transported, unveiled, meddled with and manipulated during the performance. These actions are close to the procedures of the 'happening'. In this same performance CAPC also used colour games, chess, the exploration of chance and promoted the manipulation of objects such as walnuts, blank sheets, postcards and other mnemonic devices (Figure 8).

Among CAPC's most significant presentations of this period we highlight the *Forest* (Alvarez Gallery, Porto, 1973), *The Whole and the Part* at the exhibition *Alternativa Zero* (Lisbon, National Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1977), and the memorable participation, at the invitation of Egídio Álvaro, in the *IV Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal* in Caldas da Rainha in 1997, where the group presented an elaborate version of the colour exercise first performed in Lisbon. It was based on a common



Figure 8. GIPAC-Cores - Intervention Group of CAPC, Coimbra, 1974–1977. © CAPC.

starting point: one body, one colour, one identity. The group of six ‘farricocos’ (penitent figures, dressed in black according to the popular-religious imagination), supported by sticks in different colours, paraded to the sound of music and noise from the José Malhoa Museum to the central square of Óbidos. The interaction they maintained during the parade dramatized, with the support of other associated elements, the identity and exclusivist dynamics of each one of the colours, turning them into a verbal, graphic and physical imposition. The conflict of the colours was a metaphor for the turbulent and libertarian times experienced in the civil and aesthetic arenas of post-revolutionary Portugal: each of the figures would write, in their own way, ‘the world will be yellow’, ‘the world will be green’, and so on, before they carried on with the parade.

Performance art did not emerge for this generation of CAPC members from an abstract conceptualization previously learned in a disciplinary way. Instead it emerged, as it were, ‘naturally’ (Azevedo 2018) as a device that enabled the exploration of and experimentation with materials, with maximum freedom, to complement artistic formation:

For me, performance is the unmasking of the causes (...) I see the two functions of performance as a kind of complement to the object that

persists and as the unmasking of the causes of this object (...). Performance is the apogee of aesthetics, the presentativeness and the intransivity. The object in the painting and in the sculpture always puts us before and after ... (Azevedo 2018).

At the CAPC, performance is, first of all, the main communicative and relational tool in the dialogue between art and society. For this reason, larger-scale performative actions locally developed at the CAPC occurred in contexts of training, celebration and public involvement. Thus, it is possible to understand why CAPC insisted in 1977 that The Living Theatre should present *Seven Meditations On Political Sado-Masochism* in Coimbra alongside Lisbon, as indeed it happened.

Among actions with a formative and public purpose was *Minha (Tua, Dele, Nossa, Vossa) Coimbra Deles* (My (Your, His, Our, Your) Their Coimbra, Coimbra, CAPC, 1973), an act of critical resistance and citizenship claimed by a generation that failed to recognise itself in the controlled times in which they lived. On the eve of the Portuguese Revolution, they accepted Robert Filliou's challenge to celebrate, on 17 January 1973, the *1.000.010. Art's Birthday* with several actions (Figure 9).

Following the 1974 Revolution, the organisation of the *Semana da Arte (da) na Rua* (Art Week (of) in the Street) (1976) took place, another intense moment of joint participation and mobilisation worth mentioning. Mobilisation through performance art would also happen in an ecological register, at a time when the ecological agenda was only beginning to emerge in Portugal. A 1979 action 'showed an "ecologist" being attacked by several "polluters" who, by attacking him, each in their own way, stripped him of his own internal pollution' (Azevedo in Olaio 2008, 42) (Figure 10).

In a text dedicated to the CAPC in 1974, at the height of discovery and shared adventure, Ernesto de Sousa summarises the significance of this collective and the misaligned relationship they upheld within the context of Portuguese creation and artistic education:

CAP or C.AP. these are the letters to remember, if the reader ever finds himself in Coimbra to talk 'about art' with people from the 'arts.' Action arts, fine arts, maladroitness of freedom: against oneself (...). What matters is not this whole wonder of technique and alienation, labyrinthically pre-built and pre-established beauty; this path is for all Academies (and the market economy, of course). What matters is the discovery itself, which can only be achieved through a total exercise of body and spirit, hands and head. That exercise is the daily practice of CAP (Sousa 1998, 241)

A pedagogy of immanence and mobility: transnational meeting points

The power of the encounter, the sharing of experiences and creation processes manifests itself particularly in the way the two Portuguese critic-curators – Ernesto de Sousa and Egídio Álvaro – created



Figure 9. *1.000.010 Art's Birthday*, CAPC, Coimbra, 17-01-1974. © CAPC.

international networks that worked not only as platforms for the circulation and visibility of Portuguese artists abroad, but also as places where the dynamics of collaboration and co-creation were produced. de Sousa played a decisive role at the *SACOM 2 – 2º Semana de Arte Contemporânea de Malpartida* (2nd Week of Contemporary Art in Malpartida), developed in 1979 at the Vostell Museum in Cáceres, Spain. In 1984, Álvaro organised *Performance Portuguesa* at the Centre Georges



Figure 10. Intervenção ecológica/Ecological Intervention, CAPC, Coimbra/Praça da República, 1979. © CAPC.

Pompidou in Paris. Both events were meeting points with a strong participation by Portuguese artists, but adopted different critical approaches: in Malpartida, there was experimentation and artistic involvement with the local community; in Paris, the intention was aimed at internationalising performance, in one of its most central places. Both curators contributed thus to densify the field of performance and the contact between artists, beyond a mere logic of market or competition – a logic which was, in fact, far removed from performance art practices as they existed during those years of reinforced militancy in Portugal.

Regarding the pedagogy of performance art and artistic teaching, we can therefore talk about a contiguous relationship between, on the one hand, the work of a curatorship of proximity and, on the other, the appreciation of a pedagogy of *immanence*, in a Deleuzian sense, as ‘a state of constant change where there is no beginning, or end, and only a coming from the middle’ (Naughton, Biesta, and Cole 2017, 3, 4). Understood as an experience of movement and change, beyond fixed hierarchies and teleological perceptions of authorship and aesthetics, this perpetually moving middle (which is occupied in reality by performance) is the work of immanence that both curators proposed: bringing artist together, celebrating performance, establishing platforms for dialogue and debate, crossing national/territorial borders.

In 1979, Álvaro created in Paris the gallery *Diagonale – Espace Critique*, where he hosted performances and thereby intensified his support for a growing number of artists and performance festivals in different continents. In an article entitled ‘Crossing the Desert’, published at the end of the 1980s, for which she interviewed him, the journalist and performance artist Tara Babel described Álvaro as a ‘prolific and charismatic organiser’ of

performance festivals (Babel 1987, 31). In the same article, Álvaro reasserted his curatorship as a quasi-artistic activity, approaching it in terms of the inventive concept that was growing more and more prominent in the international scene: 'In so far I see a festival as a living entity, a separate sort of creation in itself (...); I do make art (...) with a difficult medium to grasp, as a city, for example' (Babel 1987, 31).

In fact, in the transition to the 1980s, Egidio Álvaro was a prominent name in performance curatorship, in outreach activities and in teaching, being responsible for several courses and seminars in the French capital. Because of this position and his previous educational role in Portugal, he coordinated an important show at the Center Georges Pompidou, *Performance Portugaise* (1984). It was the largest representation of Portuguese performance up to that date, testifying to the interest that performance aroused among the national artistic community. Artists from different generations were present, among them: Fernando Aguiar, Manoel Barbosa, Gerardo Burmester, Carlos Gordilho, Albuquerque Mendes, Elisabete Mileu, António Olaio, Rui Orfão, and Miguel Yeco, together with the experimental music group Telectu (Jorge Lima Barreto and Vítor Rua). For Álvaro, the success of the call was a test of vitality: 'Mais la Performance est terriblement vivante. Elle sera, je le crois, événement majeur au Portugal pendant cette première décennie encore placée sous le signe de la révolution' (Álvaro, 1984) (Figure 11).

Ernesto de Sousa was invited by artist Wolf Vostell to participate in the opening of his environmental sculpture/monument VOAEX in Malpartida in Spain, one of the first events of the museum that was being established there by Vostell (Cáceres, 1976). The creation of this museum in the middle of Los Barruecos Natural Park allowed for a unique articulation between art, nature and local community. Consequently, the museum became a place of confluence between artists, developing experimental practices (Fluxist and participatory) and including the population of Malpartida in them. It is in this context that the encounter of de Sousa with Vostell in 1976 initiated a collaboration that continued for some time. Immediately after the opening of VOAEX, de Sousa sent Vostell a book he had written about popular art, which Vostell welcomed, indicating that a shared understanding existed between both men regarding the relationship between experimental art and the participation of the local population. de Sousa then collaborated with Vostell for SACOM 1 in 1978, with two exhibitions presented in Malpartida: the solo exhibition *O teu corpo é o meu corpo é o teu corpo* (Your body is my body is your body) and a documentary exhibition about *Alternativa Zero*, the event de Sousa had created in Lisbon in 1977. The solo exhibition was aimed at a performative dialogue with the audience, as described in the newspaper *A Capital*: 'Ernesto de Sousa presented conceptual sets consisting of photographs and texts in a series of serigraphic 'screens' on which images of a film entitled 'Este es mi cuerpo' were projected. During this performance, the audience participated directly in the 'work', changing the serigraphic screens with the outlines of their own bodies' (Anon 1978, 1). This individual work contained excerpts from of all



Figure 11. Catalogue organised by Egídio Álvaro for the exhibition *Performance Portugaise*, which he curated at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1984.

the various aesthetic and political events, including performances and happenings, that the artist had been developing up to that time.

The wish to include the rural population of Malpartida became evident with the participation of farmers, who brought with them old objects of daily use or related to forgotten rites. A clothesline acted as a device for displaying photographic records developed by de Sousa between 1978 and 1979. The visitors of Malpartida were invited to take objects in exchange for something from their 'body' as a souvenir: 'deja un senal; una marca de tu cuerpo. Acuerdate tu cuerpo es mi cuerpo, mi cuerpo es tu cuerpo'. (Leave a sign; a mark of your body. Remember your body is my body, my body is your body).

SACOM 2

7. 4. 79 - 11. 4. 79

**SEMANA DE
ARTE CONTEMPORANEO
MALPARTIDA DE CACERES
MUSEO VOSTELL MALPARTIDA - ESPAÑA**

ORGANIZADORES: MERCEDES Y WOLF VOSTELL
COORDINADOR: J. J. LANCHO MORENO
INFORMACION: 927/50 27 10
SEÑAS: SACOM 2 / MVM - MALPARTIDA DE CACERES - EL LAVADERO

**EL LAVADERO
MVM**

Día 7. 4. 1979

INAUGURACION
5 tarde

**Duración:
exposición
permanente**

HORAS DE VISITA:
DIAS LABORABLES:
DE 10 A 2 Y DE 5 A 8.
DIAS FESTIVOS:
DE 10 A 2 Y DE 5 A 8.

FLUXUS

Colección presentada por Gino Di MAGGIO

BRECHT, BEN, CHIARI, FILLIOU, HIGGINS,
J. JONES, KAPROW, KNIZAK, KNOWLES, KOEPCKE,
KOSUGI, LA MONTE YOUNG, MACIUNAS; N. J. PAIK,
PATTERSON, SIMONETTI, SCHYMIT, SPOERRI,
VOSTELL, WATTS, E. WILLIAMS, YOKO ONO, ZAJ.

Los Barruecos

**EL LAVADERO
MVM**

Día 9 . 4. 1979

**10 mañana
hasta
20 tarde**

PORTUGAL

Acciones
Comidas portuguesas olvidadas
Performances

ALMEIDA, BARRIAS, BUARQUE, CALHAU, CARNEIRO,
CARVALHO, CONDUTO, FALLORCA, GIL, PALOLO,
ROSA, SARMENTO, E. DE SOUSA, A. DE SOUSA
VIEIRA, VARELA.

Figure 12. Poster of SACOM 2, Museo Vostell Malpartida, Spain, 1979.

In April 1979, as an artist-commissioner or cultural animator, as he called himself, de Sousa took with him a large entourage of Portuguese artists to Malpartida to participate in SACOM 2, with the aim of holding an exhibition, actions, performances, and a common meal of Portuguese and Extremadurean food. This programme took place from 7 to 11 April 1979 and included the participation of artists from Lisbon, Porto, and the CAPC in Coimbra: Alberto Carneiro, António Barros, Ção Pestana, Cerveira Pinto, Fernando Calhau, Helena Almeida, Irene Buarque, João Rosa, João Vieira, José Barrias, Fernando Calhau, José Carvalho, José Conduto, Julião Sarmento, Mário Varela, Monteiro Gil, and Tília Saldanha. In a retrospective about SACOM 2, presented in the catalogue *Portugueses en el MVM ¿y qué hace usted ahora?* (2001), Mercedes Vostell and José António Garcia mention that in the festive atmosphere established

between the artists and the population of Malpartida 'everyone was master and student at the same time' (Buarque and García, 2001, 13).

The abovementioned pedagogy of mobility witnessed a high-impact social drift in Malpartida. de Sousa himself noted the importance of this teaching. In an interview with Michel Giroud, he referred to Vostell as follows:

For twenty years he has been dreaming about this ideal, flexible academy, open to all innovation: just read his projects. Here, he carries out the first stage of his utopia, connecting the avant-garde with tradition, information with education. (Sousa cited by Giroud, 1979)

The same premise led to the development, in 1980, in the same museum and by artists from different parts of the world, including Spain, Portugal and Germany, of the *The Lavadero Manifest*, which argued for a smaller distance between artists and audience. de Sousa spoke to the public about the artist's ethical responsibility and Vostell confirmed this by insisting on the idea that every person is a work of art.

One of the symbolic moments of this initiative, which remains in place until today, was the inscription *Arte=Vida* into in a stone of Los Barruecos by Alberto Carneiro, the promoter of the seminar *Collective Creation* at CAPC. The whole population of the town was invited to participate in SACOM 2. The artist Monteiro Gil presented a panel with photos called *A Mão e a Escrita – Inquérito Visual* (Hand and Writing – Visual Inquiry), inviting local inhabitants to write down their thoughts. Ernesto de Sousa had written a year earlier about the meanings of the word 'performing' and highlighted the importance of shared participation in the performative event. The communal meal at Malpartida in particular emerges as an ancestral reference to a pedagogy of mobility and participation that brings together bodies and subjects.

The third day of the event was busy with actions, performances, and the exhibition of works by the Portuguese delegation and ended with a dinner cooked by them. The day wrapped up in a culinary party atmosphere with everyone sitting down at a table in an act of sharing that cut across age, social condition, artists and locals:

Malpartida, and that was its success, allowed us [the artists from Lisbon] to work with artists from Coimbra and Porto, for the first time since *Alternativa*. During a week we experienced a new spirit. (...) we were really able to know each other better by working together in a friendly environment. I am both a creator and an animator (...). With *Alternativa* and with Malpartida, we had a practical demonstration of the possibilities of bringing old and new together. Without discussing aesthetic trends, different paths. In this it is similar to the Fluxus concept. They have in common an operational quality and not an aesthetic.' (Sousa in Giroud, 1979)

This seems to us to be a good synthesis of the non-hierarchical teaching which in 1979 was being performed in galleries and in public spaces, although it is common for performance to present itself as unrestricted territory. The urgency of the performative ethos of the 1970s, often similar to and supportive of the revolutionary ethos that lived in the street in Portugal during this

period, would hardly have fitted the walls or the curriculum of an official art school. In the 1980s, the Missionary Group, mainly consisting of art students from the University of Porto, presented a performance entitled *Vaudeville Show for a School of Fine Arts* (Porto, 1983) that pointed directly at a more performative art school. The opening of the institutional art curriculum toward performance was slow; but the future generation of artists and performers were able to build on the initiatives and activities of the 1970s to increase the pressure toward this opening.

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