

Art with Revolution! Political mobilization in artistic practices between 1974 and 1977 in Portugal

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Summary

This article analyzes the relationship between Portuguese artists and bodies of power and the popular masses after the Revolution of 25 April 1974 and until 1977.

The analysis of this period in Portugal will consider the dynamics surrounding socially engaged artistic practices integrated in the public space, within its historic and social framework.

The article argues that the Portuguese artistic context under consideration arose from the politicians and artists motivation to bring art and the popular masses closer to the ongoing revolutionary process.

In this approach, I identify collaboration as the most frequent attitude used by artists in relation to the political system and population. This approach decreased since 1976, at which

time there was an increase in conflict with the political power structures. Regarding the relationship with the population, from that moment on there was also a decrease in the use of collaborative tools and an intensification of transgressive and provocative tools in artistic practices.

These changes will be articulated in the article based on the country's objective political and social conditions, and their influence on attitudinal nuances identified in the socially engaged artistic practices under analysis.

Keywords: Portuguese Revolution; Socially Engaged Artistic practices; Portugal; Participation; Collaboration

Resumo

Arte com a revolução! Mobilização política nas práticas artísticas entre 1974 e 1977 em Portugal

Este artigo aprofunda as relações estabelecidas entre os artistas, os organismos de poder e as camadas populares portuguesas após a Revolução do 25 de Abril de 1974 e até 1977.

A análise deste período português considera a dinâmica criada pelas práticas artísticas socialmente comprometidas integradas no espaço público, a partir do seu enquadramento histórico e social.

O artigo influi que o contexto artístico português em análise surgiu da motivação de determinados circuitos políticos e artísticos em aproximar a arte e as camadas populares do processo revolucionário em curso. Seguindo esta óptica, a colaboração é identificada como a atitude mais frequente utilizada pelos artistas em relação ao sistema político e à população.

Essa postura colaborativa diminuiu a partir de 1976, altura em que o conflito com as estruturas de poder político começou a aumentar. No que se refere ao relacionamento com a população, foi também a partir desse momento que houve uma diminuição do uso de ferramentas colaborativas e uma intensificação de ferramentas transgressivas e provocativas nas práticas artísticas.

A alteração destas dinâmicas será articulada, no artigo, a partir das condições políticas e sociais objectivas vividas no país e sua influência nas nuances atitudinais identificadas nas práticas artísticas socialmente comprometidas em análise.

Keywords: Revolução portuguesa; práticas artísticas socialmente comprometidas; Portugal; Participação; Colaboração.

Resumen

¡Arte con la revolución! Movilización política en las prácticas artísticas entre 1974 y 1977 en Portugal

Este artículo analiza la relación entre los artistas y las estructuras de poder portuguesas y las masas populares después de la Revolución del 25 de abril de 1974 y hasta 1977.

El análisis de este período en Portugal considerará las dinámicas que rodean las prácticas artísticas socialmente comprometidas integradas en el espacio público, dentro de su marco histórico y social.

El artículo sostiene que el contexto artístico portugués en estudio surgió de la motivación de los políticos y artistas para acercar el arte y las masas populares al proceso revolucionario en curso. En esta aproximación, identifico la colaboración como la actitud más utilizada por

los artistas en relación con el sistema político y la población. Este enfoque disminuyó desde 1976, momento en el que se incrementó el conflicto con las estructuras de poder político. En cuanto a la relación con la población, a partir de ese momento también hubo una disminución en el uso de herramientas colaborativas y una intensificación de herramientas transgresoras y provocativas en las prácticas artísticas.

Estos cambios serán articulados en el artículo a partir de las condiciones políticas y sociales objetivas del país, y su influencia en los matices actitudinales identificados en las prácticas artísticas socialmente comprometidas en análisis.

Palabras clave: revolución portuguesa; Prácticas artísticas socialmente comprometidas; Portugal; Participación; Colaboración.

Resum

Art amb la revolució! Mobilització política en pràctiques artístiques entre 1974 i 1977 a Portugal

Aquest article analitza la relació entre els artistes i les estructures de poder portuguesos i les masses populars després de la Revolució de el 25 d'abril de 1974 i fins a 1977.

L'anàlisi d'aquest període a Portugal considerarà les dinàmiques que envolten les pràctiques artístiques socialment compromeses integrades en l'espai públic, dins del seu marc històric i social.

L'article sosté que el context artístic portuguès en estudi va sorgir de la motivació dels polítics i artistes per apropar l'art i les masses populars a l'procés revolucionari en curs. En aquesta aproximació, identifico la col·laboració com l'actitud més utilitzada pels artistes en relació amb el sistema polític i la població. Aquest enfocament va disminuir des de 1976, moment en què es va incrementar el conflicte amb les estructures de poder polític. Pel que fa a la relació amb la població, a partir d'aquest moment també hi va haver una disminució en l'ús d'eines col·laboratives i una intensificació d'eines transgressores i provocatives en les pràctiques artístiques.

Aquests canvis seran articulats en l'article a partir de les condicions polítiques i socials objectives de país, i la seva influència en els matisos actitudinals identificats en les pràctiques artístiques socialment compromeses en anàlisi.

Paraules clau: Revolució portuguesa; Pràctiques artístiques compromeses socialment; Portugal; Participació; Col·laboració.

Riepilogo

Arte con la Rivoluzione! Mobilitazione politica nelle pratiche artistiche tra il 1974 e il 1977 in Portogallo

Questo articolo analizza il rapporto tra artisti e strutture di potere portoghesi e le masse popolari dopo la Rivoluzione del 25 aprile 1974 e fino al 1977.

L'analisi di questo periodo in Portogallo prenderà in considerazione le dinamiche che circondano le pratiche artistiche socialmente impegnate integrate nello spazio pubblico, all'interno del loro quadro storico e sociale.

L'articolo sostiene che il contesto artistico portoghese oggetto di studio è nato dalla motivazione di politici e artisti di avvicinare l'arte e le masse popolari al processo rivoluzionario in corso. In questo approccio, identifico la collaborazione come l'atteggiamento più utilizzato dagli artisti nei confronti del sistema politico e della popolazione. Questo approccio è diminuito dal 1976, quando è aumentato il conflitto con le strutture del potere politico. Per quanto riguarda il

rapporto con la popolazione, da quel momento si registra anche una diminuzione dell'uso di strumenti collaborativi e un'intensificazione di strumenti trasgressivi e provocatori nelle pratiche artistiche.

Questi cambiamenti saranno articolati nell'articolo in base alle condizioni politiche e sociali oggettive del paese e alla loro influenza sulle sfumature attitudinali individuate nelle pratiche artistiche socialmente impegnate in analisi.

Parole chiave: Rivoluzione portoghese; Pratiche artistiche socialmente impegnate; Portogallo; Partecipazione; Collaborazione.

Résumé

L'art avec la révolution ! Mobilisation politique dans les pratiques artistiques entre 1974 et 1977 au Portugal

Cet article analyse les relations entre les artistes et les structures de pouvoir portugaises et les masses populaires après la Révolution du 25 avril 1974 et jusqu'en 1977.

L'analyse de cette période au Portugal considérera les dynamiques qui entourent les pratiques artistiques socialement engagées intégrées dans l'espace public, dans leur cadre historique et social.

L'article soutient que le contexte artistique portugais à l'étude est né de la motivation des politiciens et des artistes à rapprocher l'art et les masses populaires du processus révolutionnaire en cours. Dans cette approche, j'identifie la collaboration comme l'attitude la plus utilisée par les artistes par rapport au système politique et à la population. Cette approche a diminué depuis 1976, lorsque le conflit avec les structures du pouvoir politique s'est accru. Concernant le rapport à la population, à partir de ce moment, il y a également eu une diminution de l'utilisation des outils collaboratifs et une intensification des outils transgressifs et provocateurs dans les pratiques artistiques.

Ces changements seront articulés dans l'article en fonction des conditions politiques et sociales objectives du pays, et de leur influence sur les nuances comportementales identifiées dans les pratiques artistiques socialement engagées en analyse.

Mots-clés : Révolution portugaise ; Pratiques artistiques socialement engagées; Le Portugal; Participation; Collaboration.

Introduction

Since the late 1950s, strategies for bringing art and society together have been discussed throughout Europe. Integrating art in the public space and public sphere were assumed as essential. Philosophical and sociological thought, particularly in France, determined in this period a concern for the definition of concepts, such as space, place or context. There was a reflection on heterogeneous space, by Michel Foucault in 1967 and other authors, including Henri Lefebvre and Michel De Certeau. In the artistic context, the realization that our experience of the world is dependent upon our spatial experience heightened the connection between work of art and context. As occurred in other fields, several European artistic practices assumed this understanding as poetic, leading to a growth of action art, happenings, performance art and public art.

In the 1960s and 1970s, sociological analyses of art – interested in understanding cultural production in relation to political and social structures – were also decisive. Hervé Fischer, founding artist of the Collectif d'Art Sociologique, reiterated in this regard: *“consciousness of the dialectical relationship between infrastructures and superstructures also allows one to hope that artistic work can really intervene in the social field and eventually modify its values and structures [...]”* (Fischer, 1977, p.60).

In the late 1980s, this impulse led to a growth in artistic practices of public interest, with a careful reflection on concepts such as community or public. The artist's interest in working on community issues and a wide variety of social issues prompted a special attention given to local needs, and turned the artist into a figure of proximity. But this same interest also determined the community's involvement in developing the artistic work, leading to a *“shift from site specificity to community specificity”* (Kwon, 2002, p.6). Thus, the use of collaborative work methodologies and processes became one of the essential issues of these practices and since then, different nomenclatures for artistic practices involving collaboration have been proposed, including *“socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, participatory, interventionist, research-based or collaborative art.”* (Bishop, 2012, p. 1), as well as several proposed definitions. For example, for Miwon Kwon, collaborative art is tied to forms of political representation, as well as political and social activism through art, and to involving the community in discussion and reflection, with no concern for producing something concrete (Kwon, 2002). Claire Bishop proposed two models of collaboration: one where artists resort to the creation of artistic objects and the use of traditional exhibition devices, seeking a balance between political and aesthetic issues; and another model where artists tend to replace traditional means of producing and exhibiting art with public discussions, local actions, debates and presenting the process's documentation, privileging the involvement of local

stakeholders and ethical issues, rather than the production of artistic objects (Bishop, 2012, pp. 11-40). For Grant Kester, collaborative art operates on multiple levels, such as co-authorship, collaboration with the public, and projects where artists work directly with local communities (Kester, 2010).

Regarding Portugal, these reflections emerged mainly after the revolution of 25 April 1974, which ended a forty-eight year long fascist dictatorship. Like other fascist regimes, the Portuguese dictatorship was characterized by the socio-economic dominance of monopoly capitalism and, politically, by the liquidation of freedoms and rights, by repression, and the state's militarist and colonialist domination. During the course of the Portuguese revolutionary process, the desire to establish an anti-capitalist democracy that would open the way to socialism became evident¹. This desire was publicly expressed not only by parties such as the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Socialist Party (PS), but also by parties from different distinct sectors, such as the Popular Democratic Party (PPD).

During this period, there was a rapprochement of several socialist countries with Portugal, including from the Eastern Bloc and Cuba, whose close cooperation took place especially until the counter-revolutionary coup of November 25, 1975. This cooperation extended to the cultural level. The experience of the Cuban revolution – which was gathering enthusiasm among the most progressive European circles – was particularly influential for the country. In addition to representing a recent example of success in the fight against imperialism (López, 2015, p.6), some of the strategies, procedures and cultural models developed in Cuba were imported to Portugal, such as the artistic dynamics, similar in several aspects: active participation in the political system under construction; direct intervention in society – without traditional mediation and exhibition formats; an increase in collectivism; or even the use of collaborative production methods that extend the creative experience to non-artists.

The process following the Portuguese Revolution immediately garnered popular support, and that of many intellectuals. Although there was no extensive politicized movement in the arts and many artists were not politicized (Ribeiro, 1974, p.11), there was a complex but intense process to democratize art and culture during this period.

Together with the emergence of a profusion of forms of artistic expression, often performed in the streets, the period between 1974 and 1977 stimulated a discussion about artistic structure, formats, models of exhibition and methods of artistic production. The Portuguese artistic practices in the public space, part of a lineage of socially engaged art, engraved a consciousness and direct political implication upon the proposals they developed, even if marked by contradictions.

1.- The Portuguese Constitution, approved in 1976, maintains until today, in its preamble, the aim “[...] to ensure the primacy of the democratic rule of Law and to pave the way for a socialist society [...]” Constituição da República Portuguesa (2005).

The Portuguese political and social period in focus was complex and changed rapidly, and included different moments that are important to note. The revolutionary process inaugurated on April 25, 1974 ended in 1976, with the approval of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (April 2, 1976). However, *“within this chronology, there was a more intense sub-period between the failed attempt of the regressive coup of March 11, 1975 and the moderate coup of the following November 25 [...]”* (Loff, 2006, p.168).

For the cultural sector – particularly with regard to the political mobilization of artists and other cultural intellectuals –, the revolutionary process was the period of greatest commitment and of closer convergence with government forces. The decline of this approach became noticeable during the first Constitutional Government, composed by PS, and increased further after it fell – following the rejection of a motion of confidence in parliament, on December 9, 1977 – and the second Constitutional Government, composed by PS and the Social Democratic Centre (CDS), took office in January 1978.

Although Grant Kester argues that there are two problematic assumptions in the analysis of socially engaged art: *“the assumption that any given art project is either radically disruptive or naively ameliorative [...]”* and *“that any form of art practice that produces some concrete change in the world is developed in alliance with specific social movements [...]”* (Kester, 2019, p.78), the inherent contextualization cannot be ignored. As Remesar said

“Public Art, regardless of its practices, has the mission of signifying the city, endowing it with a certain “senses” and that in two ways not necessarily complementary and often antagonistic: As an exercise of the power of ruling classes or, on the contrary, as an exercise of power - understood as capacity - of citizenship.” (Remesar, 2019, p. 11).

So, the spatial and temporal nature of a given artistic practice has a decisive influence on the attitude regarding power, on the social change it aspires to, and on the inter-relational structure it builds. Thus, the context of the objective conditions under which these artistic practices develop can not be disregarded.

This article uses the assumption of contextualizing socially engaged artistic practices in their contemporary social conditions, and applies it to Portugal and the period between 1974 and 1977, after the 25 April Revolution. We seek to reflect upon the relationship between artists and political power and upon artistic production with a collaborative character or involving the population, within the public space.

Revolution is in the streets

Collective action and the invasion of urban space (Mascarenhas, 2004, p.6) flourished soon after the Revolution. The revolutionary process

“was accompanied by the multiplication of channels for political expression, and by the development of new mechanisms for civil participation. Cityscapes experienced profound changes with the newly acquired freedoms of expression, which assumed several different forms.” (Madeira et al., 2021, 318).

The visual street manifestations of popular feeling, as on walls, represented an spontaneous act of political speak, the will to communicate, which *“is a fact that truly reveals the liberty of a PEOPLE and a collective manifestation of the communicative force of its will”* (Melo e Castro, 1977, p.49), as E.M. de Melo e Castro said.

The artists were not oblivious to this will. Collective organization was used by artists for both issues of creation and political and social issues. The Movimento Democrático de Artistas Plásticos [MDAP; Democratic Movement of Visual Artists], the Frente de Acção Popular de Artistas Plásticos [FAPAP; Popular Action Front of Visual Artists], Acre, Puzzle, 5+1, Cores/GICAP or the Alvarez Group were references in this regard, among others². In addition, several cultural and recreational associations, as well as cooperatives, were created, with the participation of several artists in their governing bodies.

Although several of the new collectives and informal groups developed collective artistic projects, as well as cultural initiatives and events, often their main function was discussing forms of social intervention, thus outlining *“the first steps towards political awareness at the group level”* (Ribeiro, 1974, p.10). For example, MDAP’s activity was aimed at acting *“on a more general front of cultural democratization”* (Gonçalves, 1974, p.38). Although this movement was short-lived, it established a close dialogue with the first democratic governments and carried out a series of artistic actions in the public space, such as drafting bulletins addressed to the cultural sector, fostering working committees, and promoting collective artistic initiatives (Gonçalves, 1974, p.38). In Porto, the action of the Comissão para uma Cultura Dinâmica [Commission for a Dynamic Culture] was also significant. For example, on June 10, 1974, in a *“demonstration-protest”* (Couceiro, 2004, p.24) – which took the form of the symbolic funeral of the Soares dos Reis Museum (Porto), institution still associated with the museological policy of fascism –, the commission announced that the *“Burial [...] aims to raise the people’s awareness about the negative values of the culture of Porto.”*

2.- Beyond the field of the visual arts, including musicians, actors or art critics, there were the Movimento Unitário dos Trabalhadores Intelectuais para a Defesa da Revolução [MUTI; United Movement of Intellectual Workers for the Defence of the Revolution], the Frente de Artistas Populares e Intelectuais Revolucionários [FAPIR; Front of Popular Artists and Revolutionary Intellectuals] or the Colectivo de Trabalhadores da Actividade Cinematográfica [Collective of Cinematographic Workers].

(“Vai a enterrar amanhã o Museu Soares dos Reis”, 1974, p.4).

In the various disciplines of artistic practice, the use of public space was intensified, as a demonstration of the freedom and democracy then conquered. While during the fascist dictatorship control of the population was also exercised on the street, now the right to the city was claimed as a collective right to social construction, enabling a surge of practices, such as mural paintings and other forms of visual communication on walls and street furniture, and also consolidating practices such as performance art.

Some initiatives and events became engraved in Portuguese art history, given the impulse they represented at this level. For example, the initiatives organized by MDAP – on May 28, 1974, in the Foz Palace (Lisbon), and on June 10, 1974, in the People’s Market (Lisbon); the funeral procession for the Soares dos Reis National Museum (Porto) held on June 10, 1974; the Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal [International Meetings of Art in Portugal] (Valadares, 1974; Viana do Castelo, 1975; Póvoa de Varzim, 1976; Caldas da Rainha, 1977); the event in Viseu, April 7, 1975, organized as part of the Campanhas de Dinamização cultural e Acção Cívica [CDCAC; Cultural Promotion and Civic Action Campaigns]; or the Acre Group’s interventions in the streets of Lisbon and Porto. Also noteworthy, as political party activities, were collective mural paintings – mostly by the Partido Comunista Português [PCP; Portuguese Communist Party] and the Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado [MRPP; Re-Organized Movement of the Party of the Proletariat] – and the Avante! Festival, a popular festival organized annually by PCP since 1976, which in this period played a relevant role in promoting exhibits, collective work and a new relationship between the popular masses and art.

In summary, *“amidst the effervescence of the political struggles, regular visual arts nearly disappears and ‘life itself’ seems to gain protagonism”* (Caeiro, 2014, p.117). The scope was so significant that – in addition to the

“exceptionality of the emotions (pathos) in play [...] involving countless creators in operations of concrete and immediate change for the populations through art”– it simultaneously extended to the “ethos”, through government policy, and the “logos” (related with precise theoretical, political and conceptual assumptions, applied with intensity).” (Caeiro, 2014, pp. 117-118).

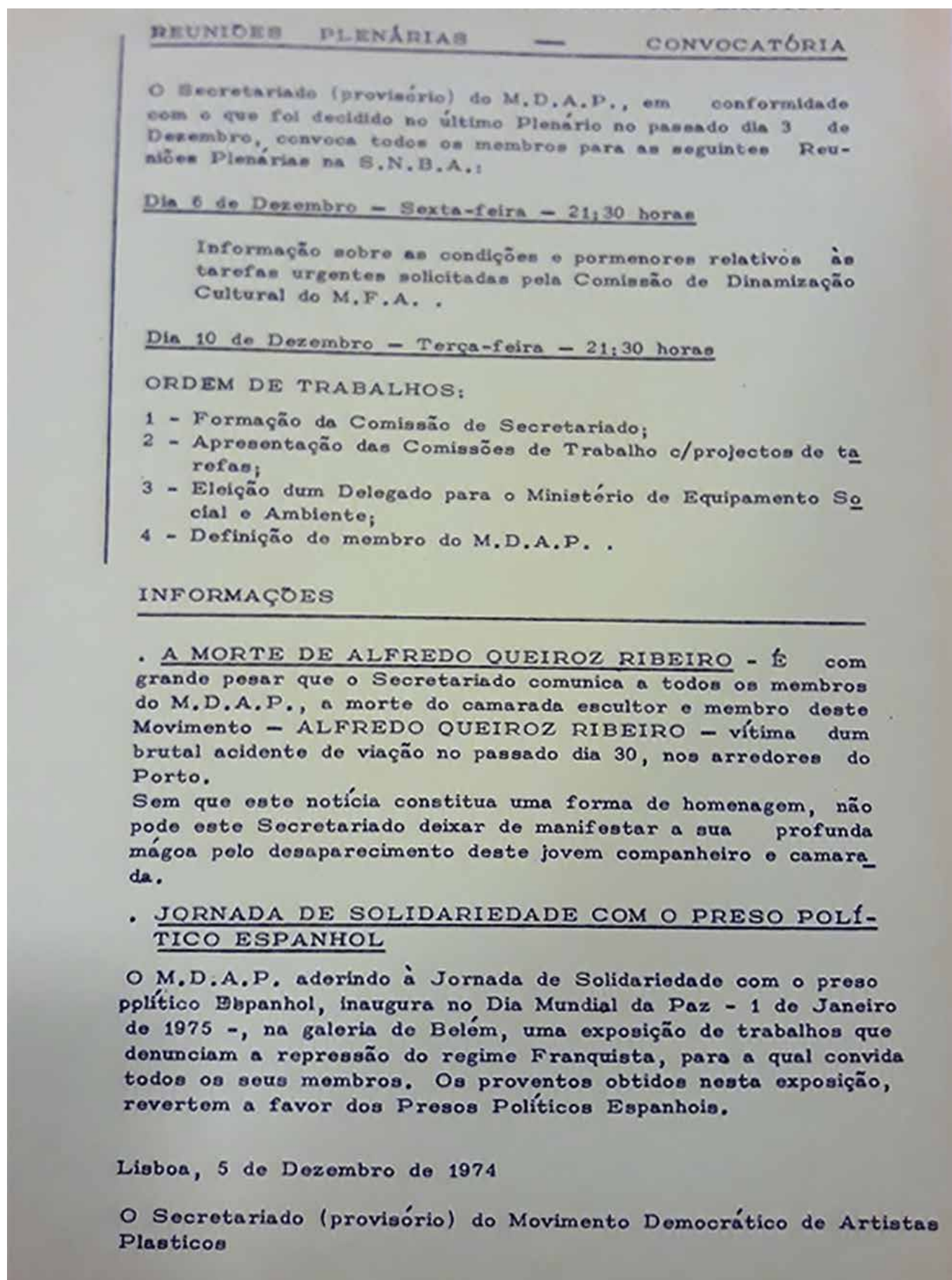


Image 1 - Flyer by Movimento Democrático de Artistas Plásticos to inform their activities (1974, December 5). (Source: Ernesto de Sousa Archive)

Artist participation and government action and policy

The overthrow of the fascist dictatorship in Portugal, conducted by the Movimento das Forças Armadas [MFA; Armed Forces Movement], was accompanied by the popular democratic movement, known as the alliance People-MFA³. This convergence was essential for the revolutionary process, determining a mutual cooperation that, despite difficulties and contradictions, led the country to democracy. This cooperation determined that, along with the initiatives developed or promoted by the military sector, there was a strong mobilization of civil society that assumed *“an important role in the tasks of the revolution”* (Almeida, 2009, p.60), integrating or promoting different initiatives.

Until the inauguration of the first Constitutional Government, following the first legislative elections on 25 April 1976, Portugal was governed by six Provisional Governments that had the responsibility of implementing the MFA's Program. This was a troubled period – which did not end after the first democratic elections –, marked by conflicts, crises, advances and setbacks that, in several moments, jeopardized the goals of the revolution.

During the revolutionary period, several artists extended their activity into politics, either institutionally – by integrating government and political party actions – or trying to build a new paradigm that changed the conditions for the production, distribution and reception of art. In turn, there was also a governmental desire to build a new cultural policy, particularly until 1976, expressed in several consultative commissions and government bodies with the direct participation of artists. This new dialectical situation between the arts and politics led to a generalized and unprecedented reflection on the role of the arts in building democracy in a new society and in the very construction of a national cultural policy.

The most relevant concerted impulses with intellectuals, including artists, began essentially with the third Provisional Government, led by Vasco Gonçalves⁴, who consolidated a relationship with several artists. This relationship manifested itself in a more dynamic way with the visual arts, while in other artistic areas, such as performance art, contacts were less fruitful. The rhythm and intensity of this cooperation was

3.- To better understand the assumptions and the relevance of the alliance People-MFA in the documents and sources of the time consult: Programa do MFA. In Universidade de Coimbra. <http://www1.ci.uc.pt/ihiti/proj/docs25a/MFA1-1.HTM>; Aliança POVO-MFA. In Universidade de Coimbra <http://www1.ci.uc.pt/ihiti/proj/docs25a/MFA1-1.HTM>; Cunhal, A. (2014) A Revolução Portuguesa: O Passado e o Futuro, Editorial Avante (pp.165-172); Conselho da Revolução, plano de acção política (1975); Constituição da República Portuguesa (1976); Livro branco da 5ª Divisão (1974-1977) (1984).

4.- Then Prime Minister, having assumed for a time the position of acting Minister of Education and Culture.

not uniform across the country's several regions, nor during the entire period. For example, there was a different practice in the regions of Lisbon and Porto, although both regions were highly active in terms of culture.

One of the tools created to strengthen the relation between civil society and MFA were the CDCAC⁵. Part of the People-MFA partnership (Santos, 1992, p.60), it sought to contact the population, stimulating a dialogue with rural communities regarding MFA's program, the anti-fascist struggle, and the ongoing process of democratization⁶. The CDCAC covered different areas of culture and the arts, including theatre, visual arts, cinema, music, circus and dance.

In a way, the CDCAC reflected the *"need for a Cultural Revolution [...] present on everyone's lips"* (Correia et al., p.16). Therefore, they were joined by other initiatives with intense mobilization of several sectors of the population⁷. The creation of some of these structures and initiatives was inspired by the experience of the literacy brigades and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution [CDR] developed in Cuba (Cervelló, 1996, p.263). Despite its uniqueness, plurality of experiences and originality, the CDCAC took the Cuban model as its international reference (Almeida, 2009, p.94). This is corroborated by Rodrigo de Freitas, who coordinated the visual arts sector of CODICE and who pointed to the CDRs of Cuba as a 'starting point' that was attempted to *"adapt to the Portuguese reality"* (Almeida, 2009, p.94).

Soon after the beginning of the CDCAC, on 6 November 1974, MDAP expressed its *"position of unity, understanding and active participation with MFA in the country's process of cultural democratization"* (Correia and Gomes, 1984, p.145). A month later, the Encontro Nacional de Artistas Plásticos [National Meeting of Visual Artists] took place in the Foz Palace (Lisbon), organized by CODICE. Afterwards, the revolutionary power counted on the official collaboration of several visual artists and the CDCAC had a Visual Arts sector in the Central Promotion Commission⁸. This sector was also in charge of graphic communication, and counted on the collaboration of João Abel Manta, Marcelino Vespeira, Maria Velez, Justino Alves, Henrique Ruivo, Armando Alves, Artur Rosa, Fernando Cruz, Moura George and Rogério Amaral (Almeida, 2009, p.114).

5.-Formalized on 25 October 1974.

6.- The program of the CDCAC was coordinated by the Comissão Dinamizadora Central [CODICE; Central Promotion Commission], a structure of the 5th Division of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, in collaboration with the Directorate General for Culture and Entertainment, which assumed the challenge of cultural change as a priority.

7.- Such as the Campanhas de Alfabetização e Educação Sanitária [Literacy and Health Education Campaigns], the Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local [SAAL; Local Ambulatory Care], the Serviço Cívico Estudantil [SCE; Student Civic Service], or the Movimento Alfa [Alpha Movement].

8.- Among the members of the Visual Arts Coordination of CODICE were, firstly, the painters Rodrigo de Freitas and João Moniz Pereira and, later, Marcelino Vespeira and Álvaro Patrício.



Image 3 - CDCAC promoted by the MFA, on the streets of Viseu. Here the emphasis is on the paintings in the Caixa Geral de Depósitos building. (Source: <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/acao-civica-do-mfa-em-viseu/>)



Image 4 - CDCAC promoted by the MFA, on the streets of Viseu. Here the emphasis is on the paintings in the Caixa Geral de Depósitos building. (Source: <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/acao-civica-do-mfa-em-viseu/>)



Image 5 - CDCAC promoted by the MFA, on the streets of Viseu. Here the emphasis is on the paintings in the Caixa Geral de Depósitos building., with the people painting with the artists (Source: <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/acao-civica-do-mfa-em-viseu/>)



Image 6 - MFA's artistic mural, Viseu (Source: António da Paixão Esteves archive)

In this context *“painters, theatre groups and music bands were who most engaged in direct contact and the discovery of new forms of approaching the people. Collective paintings [...] are a good example of much of what was done”* (Correia et al., p.93). Four murals were painted in the country: in Viseu, Lisboa, Évora and Figueira da Foz. These paintings were part of a broader action of contact and collaboration with populations, where the *“plastic interventions carried out in the framework of CODICE denote a new conception of the work of art, appearing now as a collective act and always shared with the populations [...]”* (Almeida, 2009, p.115).

The CDCAC allowed the geographic and authorial decentralization of artistic practice, which stimulated intervention in the public space. The issue of the public and popular participation or collaboration in artistic creation was therefore central to practices in this context, particularly in theatre, but also in the visual arts, allowing *“the development and experimentation of new languages of relationship with populations [...]”* (Almeida, 2009, p.120).

Within the CDCAC, there was some friction between the artistic and political coordination, but the decisive cause of its abrupt end was the counter-revolutionary military coup of November 25, 1975 that led to the extinction of CODICE and the cancellation of the CDCAC.

However, collaboration among artists, artistic institutions and government bodies did not end there. There was collaboration under the scope of the Direcção-Geral da Cultura Popular e Espectáculos [DGCPE; Directorate General of Popular Culture and Entertainment (1968-1975)], where the Comissão Nacional Consultiva para as Artes Plásticas [National Advisory Commission for Visual Arts] operated, which involved artists and art critics representing several artistic institutions⁹. The Commission's most visible initiative was the conceptualization, in 1975, of an exhibit in the Musée National d'Art Moderne, in Paris, which was cancelled for several reasons. While there were several intellectuals involved in its conception, the initiative never had the circle's unanimous support. The art critic Egídio Álvaro argues that the criteria to select artists revealed a *“Lisbon-centred and circumstantial parochialism”* (Álvaro, 1977, p.57). Manuel Augusto Araújo recounts that several artists rebelled *“against the criteria used for that exhibit”* and that *“decisions, not always correct, and the opportunism of many (...) polluted the possibility of serious controversy, which would inevitably lead to rethinking the precocious but necessary cultural policy for the burgeoning new country”* (Araújo, 1977, p.11).

9.- Such as Nuno Sampaio and Rui Mário Gonçalves (SNBA), Salette Tavares and Manuel Rio de Carvalho (AICA), Lagoa Henriques and Rogério Ribeiro (ESBAL), Alberto Carneiro and Jorge Pinheiro (ESBAP), Eduardo Nery and Artur Rosa (Cooperativa Gravura), Joaquim Vieira and José Rodrigues (Cooperativa Árvore) and also Fernando Azevedo and Sommer Ribeiro (FCG) (Couceiro, 2004, p.30).

Meanwhile, the DGCPE gave rise to the Direcção Geral dos Espectáculos [Directorate-General for Entertainment (1975-1980)] and on 2 August 1975, the Direcção Geral dos Espectáculos [DGAC; Directorate-General of Cultural Action] was created, under the Secretaria de Estado da Cultura [SEC; Secretariat of State for Culture]. The DGAC had the *“mission to provide support to national artists and creators, and promote the market, which was practically non-existent in Portugal [...]”* (Pinho, 2013, p.72). Operating within DGAC were the Animation Services, Theatre Services, the Visual Arts Services and the Music Services, directed at various times by visual artists, playwrights, and writers¹⁰. Associated with DGAC were, for example, the exhibits in the Modern Art Gallery (Lisbon), namely the exhibit Alternativa Zero, curated by Ernesto de Sousa, in 1977.

With the inauguration of the first Constitutional Government in 1976, the SEC services were integrated within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. This Government’s program stated that *“the Secretariat of State for Culture covers four major areas – cultural heritage, cultural research and promotion, entertainment, and cultural action”* (“Programa do I Governo Provisório”, 1976, p.103). The program proposed *“access to culture for the widest sectors of the population, through the determination and application of methods of cultural intervention that consider the character of the populations they address”* (“Programa do I Governo Provisório”, 1976, p.103). The Government assumed the objective of implementing *“modern conceptions of «cultural animation», stimulating diverse forms of collective creativity”*, intending to *“provoke an awareness of cultural needs among populations”* and *“fully develop the personality of each citizen, enriching their way of relating with art [...] and awakening all their creative abilities”* (“Programa do I Governo Provisório”, 1976, p.103).

The emphasis on sociocultural animation in the government’s program did not mean this practice did not exist in the country before 1976. However, the sociocultural animation that *“began to flow intensely with the winds of change of May 1968”*, founded upon *“the premise of citizens with full citizenship conferred by a participated democracy, not ritualized and scheduled”*, was substantially consolidated only after 25 April 1974 (Lopes, 2006-2007, p.3), in particular with the support of local authorities.

Sociocultural animation found fertile territory among the goals of the Revolution. The democratization of culture implied the development of mechanisms for geographic decentralization and the development of a participatory and creative consciousness in populations, with animation playing a fundamental role in these objectives. In this period, animation was characterized by the animator’s militancy, that is, the understanding that an animator’s work had a social and political cause.

10.- Such as Modesto Navarro, Norberto de Ávila, Fernando Calhau and Vitor Belém, among others.

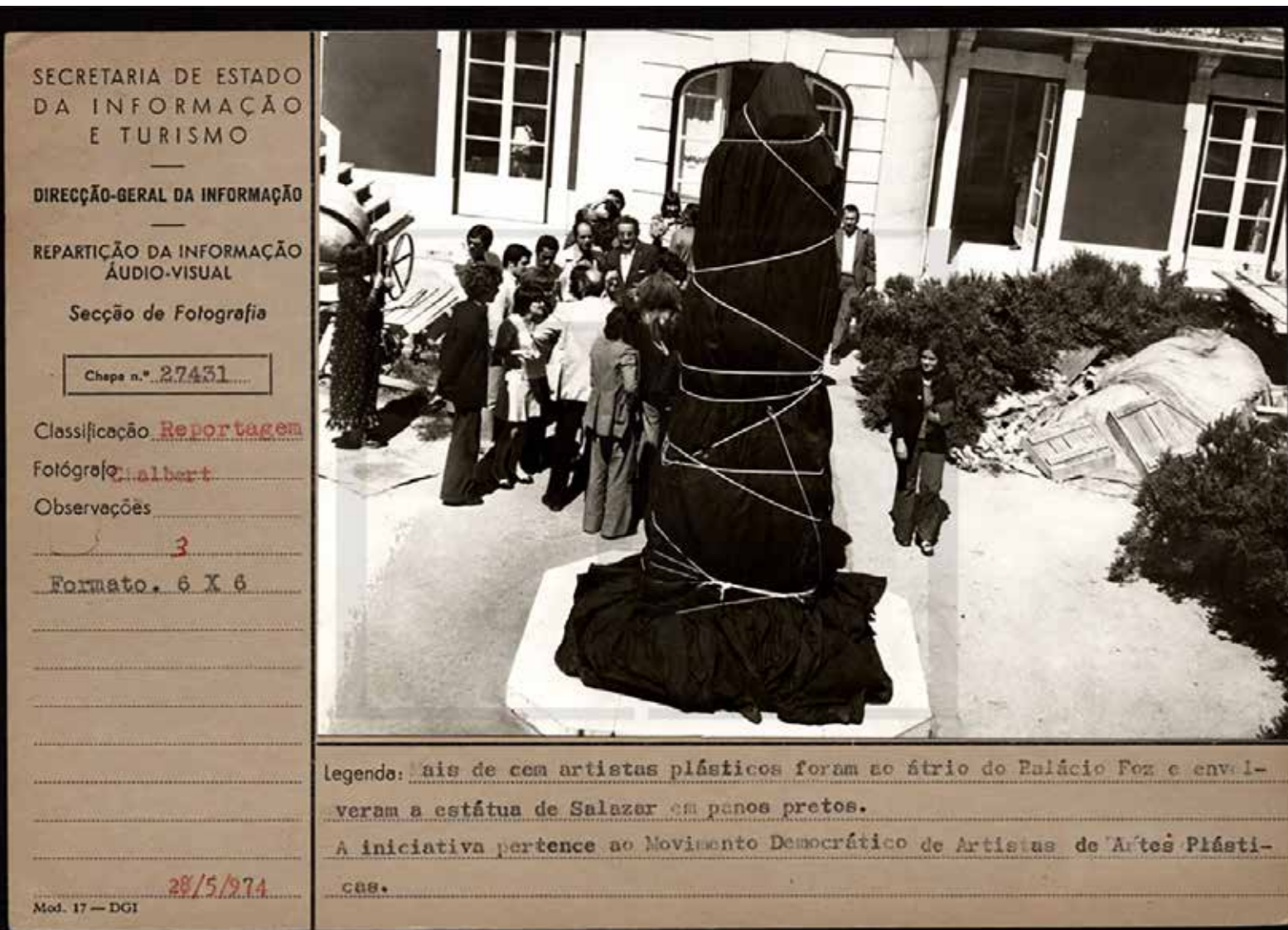


Image 7 - Action by MDAP on 28 May 1975, in Foz Palace (Lisbon). Here the Secretaria de Estado da Informação e Turismo file with the description of the action. (Source: Torre do Tombo)

Both the central and local authorities, in articulation with the association and corporative movement, developed a fruitful activity in this field¹¹. Several visual, theatrical and performance artists developed collaborative projects with the population, by their own initiative, by hiring technical staff, or by participating in the National Team of Animators.

Despite ideological, procedural or other disagreements, one can say that the vast majority of artists who assumed the production of a socially engaged artistic practice during this period, simultaneously adopted a position of collaboration with institutions of central, but also local power. But this attitude was neither uncritical nor uniform in its intensity. Precisely for this reason, Portuguese reality in this period is rich and fertile, articulating more theoretical and conceptual discussions with an artistic practice of concrete, in-place (and therefore dialectical) implementation.

11.- In addition to SEC, DGAC and the Direcção Geral da Educação Permanente [DGEP; Directorate General of Permanent Education], the Fundo de Apoio aos Organismos Juvenis [FAOJ; Youth Organization Support Fund] had a prominent role, with funding but also organizing actions and training animators.



Image 8- Photo of the protest action by the group ACRE, in April of 1975. Here the occupation of the Mendonça Palace and on the right the poster calling it the “Museum of Modern Art” (Source: Sempre Fixe (1975, April 19) n.d.)

The conflictual attitude of artists is present in the texts they wrote but also in some artistic actions. The first of these actions occurred on 28 May 1975, in Foz Palace (Lisbon), with the participation of about a hundred artists (Gonçalves, 2004, p.110). The action consisted in climbing “*the stairs of Foz Palace clandestinely*” (Almeida, 2009, p.111), covering the statue of Salazar (by Francisco Franco) and the bust of António Ferro with black cloths and tying them with rope, placing a banner with MDAP’s inscription, and distributing a pamphlet¹², which stated the initiative was “*at the same time a symbolic destruction and an act of artistic creation in a gesture of revolutionary freedom. Fascist art harms your vision*” (Almeida, 2009, p.111).

This initiative was followed by a series of other socially engaged artistic actions that, for the most part, were centered upon the State’s museological policy regarding contemporary art, the center of an unresolved dispute.

Since the Revolution, several artists tried to answer the need for a modern and contemporary art museum in the country, since the museums most suited to this end – like the Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis [MNSR; Soares dos Reis National

12.- Signed by Alice Jorge, Ana Vieira, Artur Rosa, Aurélio, Conduto, David Evans, Eduardo Néry, Escada, Eurico, Fernando de Azevedo, Helena Almeida, João Abel Manta, João Moniz Pereira, João Vieira, Jorge Vieira, Lima de Carvalho, Nikias Skapinakis, Nuno San Payo, Pomar, Rogério Ribeiro, Sá Nogueira, Vespeira and Virgílio Domingues. (Movimento Democrático de Artistas Plásticos: A arte fascista faz mal à vista, 1974, p. 41.)

Museum, Porto] and the Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea [MNAC; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Lisbon] – had removed vanguard and contemporary art from the scope of their collections. In addition to texts written by artists, historians and art critics in defense of this need, there were some direct actions by artists. In Porto, in June 1974, the aforementioned “Burial” of the MNSR – which should give rise to a “new «living» museum, more guided towards the artistic community and the population” (“Artistas e escritores no «enterro» do Museu de Soares dos Reis: pediram a criação dum museu activo e válido para toda a gente.”, 1974), p. 2) – was the first action, in democracy, to demonstrate this desire, although “*more through slogans than the presentation of a specific project*” (Oliveira, 2013, p.84). In Lisbon, there was also a protest action by the group ACRE, in April of 1975, which consisted in the occupation of the Mendonça Palace and the placement of a poster calling it the “Museum of Modern Art” (“Uma Casa para a Arte Moderna”, 1975).

Although “*the debate about the non-existence of a museum of modern art in Portugal had remained until then within specialized circles*” (Oliveira, 2013, p.93) and was not exactly an expression of popular voices, there are indications that this discussion also took place in the government. The creation of the Centro de Arte Contemporânea [CAC; Contemporary Art Centre], in the MNSR, in operation between 1976 and 1980, was thought to satisfy this need. According to Etheline Rosas, its existence was already being discussed in the cultural environment of Porto, following a government initiative (Oliveira, 2013, p.102). Amidst the fragile Portuguese museological context, this center assumed importance within intellectual circles.

Discontent regarding government cultural policies grew mostly after 1976, when the relational dynamic between artists and political bodies decreased markedly. A weariness regarding political disputes may have contributed to this change (Chicó, 1999, p.264), or the fact that during the revolutionary process the prevailing idea of culture was that of a “*practice that encouraged paternalism and contributed towards the marginalization of alternatives [...]*” (Ribeiro, 1986, p. 20).

Nevertheless, the main reasons were the lack of a cultural policy and the State’s gradual unaccountability towards culture, product of an ideological reorientation and the greater prominence of right-wing parties in power. In 1976, Francisco Bronze declared that “*in this sea we swirl, submerge, return to the surface; in the midst of various currents, we wave our arms, fight for survival, try to grab the current that will take us to the beach (in the new world? the old world?). All of us. Artists as well.*” (Bronze, 1976, p.66). In 1977, Manuel Augusto Araújo said that “*policy of the Secretariat of State of Culture, taking care to not define any policy*” is destroying “*the possible promotion of cultural activity at a national scale (...)*” (Araújo, 1977, p.11). Rui Mário Gonçalves lamented the disregard for proposals from artists and critics, provided since 25 April

“in the responsible commissions”, for the creation of the country’s cultural policy and that government rulers were following the same plan since 1977, that of hiding “*in their offices*” and casting aside the “*advisory commissions*” (Gonçalves, 1980, p.64). The progressive removal of artists and other intellectuals from the governmental decision-making centers dictated the end of a commitment thought possible soon after the Revolution.

Artistic practices with the popular participation

If the relation between political authorities and artists who intervened politically in the artistic landscape after 25 April was largely one of collaboration and/or communion, the relation between the popular masses and the artistic practices implemented in the public space, those of a participatory nature that involved the population, was more complex.

After the Revolution, the explosion of artistic practices seeking the participation or collaboration of the population was mainly associated with experimental poetry and performance art, but also the visual arts, such that

“The street, the mural and the situation, the debate and confrontation, the installation and intervention, however sporadic, replaced the gallery and museum, the painting and sculpture on plinth, the academic lecture and art criticism” (Caeiro, 2014, p. 112).

New terms entered the art lexicon, such as popular participation, collaboration, public space or urban space and the participation of non-artists in socially engaged artistic practices became a “*clearly new movement [...] considering the more specific component of the «arts of April»*” (Silva, 2009, p.28). The desire by artists was, in many cases, matched by popular participation, but it is important to point out that participatory methodologies were, in most cases, applied intuitively. Also, the desire to get closer to the populations was made through artistic practices that encouraged the participants to a collaborative action but also to a confrontational attitude.

The Day of solidarity with MFA, on 10 June 1974, in Lisbon, marked the beginning of an attempt to bring artists and the popular masses together. This event, organized by MDAP, included different interventions in the fields of music, visual arts and theatre, and completion of a collective painting, entitled 48 Artistas, 48 Anos de Fascismo [48 Artists, 48 Years of Fascism], inspired by an action held in Cuba years earlier¹³.

13.- According to the artist António Mendes, it emerged “on May 1st, in the street, when a group of painters, recalling their recent experience in Cuba, suggested they paint the walls of the Engineering School.” (Sousa, E. de, 1974, p.45). The collective painting ‘Cuba Colectiva’ was performed in Cuba in 1967, in the context of the Salón de May, held in Havana, with the participation of the artists René Bertholo and Lurdes Castro.



Image 9 and 10- The Day of solidarity with MFA, on 10 June 1974: Left and right part of the panel 48 Artistas, 48 Anos de Fascismo [48 Artists, 48 Years of Fascism] (Source: Gonçalves, E. (1974) Movimento Democrático de Artistas Plásticos: A intervenção necessária. Flama 1378 , 38-42.)

In country's history, this was the first initiative under freedom attempting “a set of actions [...] that proposed a new relationship between art and the public.” (Almeida, 2009, p.113). This relationship, of proximity, occurred during several moments of the event, namely in the construction of “towers of painted bricks” and of an “extensive wall, scribbled scratched and written upon by a compact crowd that filled the Belém Gallery [...]” (Gonçalves, 1974, p.40). The “great collective joy” (Gonçalves, 1974, p.40), the “contagious feast and power of creativity” (Gonçalves, 2004, p.110) did not, however, nullify the critical spirit of the artists. During the event, as it was broadcast live on public television (RTP), the session was interrupted by government order. The theater group A Comuna was performing, caricaturing individuals with ties to the dictatorship¹⁴. The government's attitude provoked “the lively revolt of all those

14.- According to Rui Mário Gonçalves, the caricatures were of Américo Tomás, Marcelo Caetano and Cardinal Cerejeira (Gonçalves, 1992, p.329).



Images 11, 12, 13 and 14: The Day of solidarity with MFA, on 10 June 1974: Interventions in the fields of music, visual arts and theatre. (Source: <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/inquerito-para-um-museu-de-arte-contemporanea-1-e-painel-da-liberdade/>)

who, in Mercado da Primavera and in their homes, were interested in following the festivities.” (Gonçalves, 1974, p.40). Júlio Pomar, a participating artist, upon learning of the occurrence “grabbed his brushes, tied them to his painting [...] and painted upon it: «censorship exists”¹⁵. There were other, more ideological, criticisms questioning the intentions of MDAP and the artists organizing the event. Egídio Álvaro described the event as a “political, cultural, plastic and economic operation” (Álvaro, 1974 p.10), suggesting that the choice of participating artists had been questionable. Regarding the artists involved, Alfredo Queiroz Ribeiro questioned whether this was

“a sudden action by well-intentioned characters or, instead, a way for them to associate their names to an event they surrounded with publicity so everyone knew that they, artists, have something to say?” (Ribeiro, 1974, p. 35).

15.- According to Rodrigo De Freitas, one of the coordinators of the plastic arts sector of CODICE. (Almeida, 2009, p.112; Gonçalves, 2004, p.111).

This event can be understood as a prime example of an “experiment in direct democracy” (Caeiro, 2014, pp. 116-117), which from then on would repeat itself more coherently, for example in the Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal [International Meetings of Art in Portugal], held between 1974 and 1977. Organized by Jaime Isidoro and Edígio Álvaro, the meetings were part of their project of cultural dynamization and decentralization, to which they associated the development of performance art in the country. The emphasis on *“approaching to the local communities was a structuring factor for the organization of all the Meetings, being the factor that possibly explains the massive participation of artists in all their editions.”* (Guéniot, 2019, p.56).

According to Egídio Álvaro, these events sought

“a space of liberty capable of fostering contact between artists of divergent tendencies [...] and to establish (or research) an effective dialogue with the different social and cultural classes that constitute an urban community” (Álvaro, 1979).

The structure, divided into three types of activities – exhibits, colloquia and interventions –, was conceived to mobilize the community’s participation, although interventions best fulfilled this aim (Silva, 2019, p.24).

While the first Meeting (Valadares, July to August 1974) *“had the audacity of intervening more by reflexive action than by its ability to exercise street art”* (Silva, 2019, p.32), progressively, the following meetings gave this aspect greater prominence.

At the second Meeting (Viana do Castelo, August 1975), there were some noteworthy interventions with the population’s participation. Henrique Silva invited the population of Viana do Castelo to create a painting on the floor of a city square (Metello, 2007, p.226). Artur Barrio organized an action that collected materials and objects in the area and from the people, and invited *“a fishmonger, D. Lucília, to bring her sales cart to the square and – in the presence of her friends, family and the artist – speak about her life and work [...]”* (Silva, 2019, p.34). Claudio Rotta Loria organized the debate-intervention Método projectual e metodologia do material [Design method and methodology of material], certainly inspired in Colletif d’Art Sociologique¹⁶, which analyzed live audience participation, presented slides demanding action in disadvantaged areas, worked on issues like artist marginalization, and conducted a survey of the population (Silva, 2019, p.35).. Other interventions attracted popular curiosity, such as the work of Albuquerque Mendes, although the level of participation of his contribution was small. Also during the Meeting, the population was invited to

16.- The Colletif d’Art Sociologique (1974-1977) was, in the European context, one of the more explicit examples of socially engaged artistic practice. In Portugal, the collective was known among intellectuals and Colóquio Artes magazine had published, since 1974, some articles about the artists involved in the collective, discussing their ideological and artistic principles. Among Portuguese art historians and critics, José Augusto França was a very frequent participant in this matter.

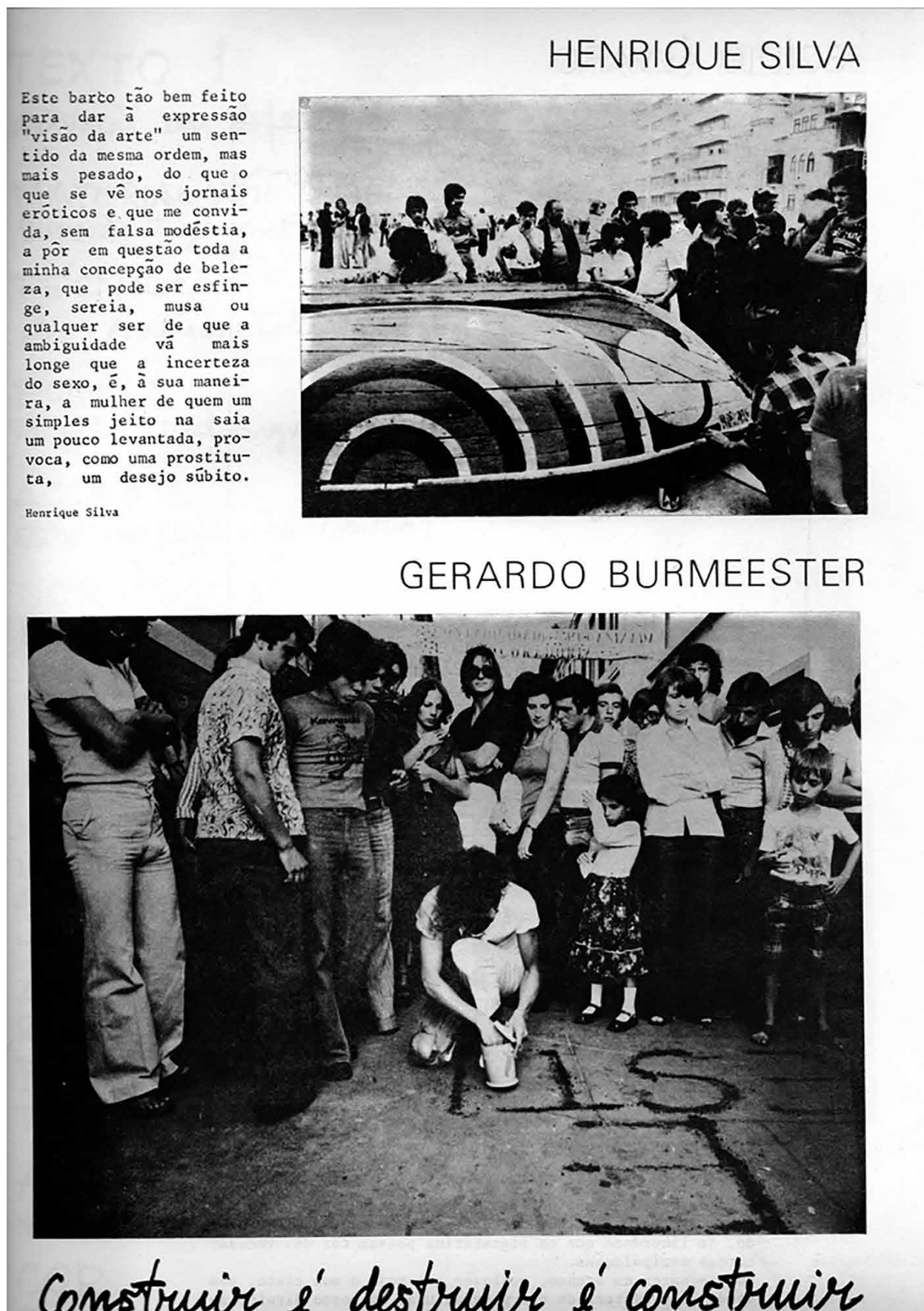


Image 15: Page of the Artes Plásticas 7/8 Magazine, with the interventions of Henrique Silva and Gerardo Burmeester at the third Meeting of the third Meeting Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal (Póvoa de Varzim, August 1976). (Source: Revista de Artes Plásticas 7-8, p.30)

intervene plastically with artists on a wooden panel installed in a city square. Although Egídio Álvaro considered there was an active participation that *“awoke a dumbfounded, suspicious, curious and, sometimes frankly enthusiastic population”* (Álvaro, 1979), the interventions were restricted to a fixed location in the city, and rapprochement with the community ended up being small and of reduced effectiveness (Ferreira, 2017, p.254).

At the third Meeting (Póvoa de Varzim, August 1976), the interventions were, once again, the preferred tool to reach out to the population. Henrique Silva worked with the population in painting a Poveiro boat [a fishing boat typical in Póvoa do Varzim], and Fred Forest developed a survey/debate/performance with the firefighters of Póvoa do Varzim, which resulted in a video presented to the public together with a series of other initiatives that called for participant collaboration. The same artist also presented the video *Itinerário sentimental de um emigrante*, [Sentimental journey of an emigrant], made during his stay in Póvoa and resulting from his chance encounter with an emigrant, Carlos, who resided in France and was there on holiday (Silva, 2019, p.48). Other participatory actions occurred during this event, although they did not summon popular collaboration.

The fourth Meeting (Caldas da Rainha, August 1977) was the last organized by Jaime Isidoro and Egídio Álvaro. In this edition, the area for interventions was expanded and the *“the event organizers communicated directly with the public, through a permanent information center located in the Praça da República, near Café Zaira”* (Silva, 2019, p.65).

Contrary to previous editions, the actions in this meeting were more individualistic, not seeking forms of participation or collaboration and, when they did, they denounced a disruptive or provocative interaction with the population. For example, for his intervention Armando Azevedo positioned himself at the center of an hexagonal space – made with superimposed newspapers on the floor delimited by streaks of paint of different colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet) – where he painted, wrote, drew and cut shapes from the newspapers. To observe the actions, the public had to enter this space, step on the paint and leave a mark on the newspapers. ORLAN intervened with several performances, among which *Se vendre sur les marchés en petits morceaux* [Selling Oneself at Markets in Small Pieces], where she used a wheelbarrow to transport a series of photos of her naked body, trying to sell them to the public. In the same vein, Sergue III Oldenburg’s performance *Agressão de Identidade* [Aggression of Identity] consisted of walking with a mirror that had an incision at the center. When someone took the mirror to see their reflection, the artist hit the rear of the mirror with a hammer to divide it in half and thus doubly reflect the person. An exception to this more provocative line or individualist production,

arte sociológica

FRED FOREST

TERCEIROS

ENCONTROS INTERNACIONAIS DE ARTE EM PORTUGAL / PÓVOA DE VARZIM

FRED FOREST CONVIDA-VOS, NO DIA 14 DE AGOSTO, ÀS 23 HORAS
NA SALA DO GRANDE HOTEL

PARA

O GRANDE ENCONTRO INTERNACIONAL ENTRE OS BOMBEIROS DA
PÓVOA DE VARZIM E OS ARTISTAS

DEBATE ANIMADO PELO
SENHOR LUCIANO
QUARTELEIRO DOS BOMBEIROS



E

FRED FOREST
TRABALHADOR ARTÍSTICO



O PROGRAMA COMPREENDE:

- 1 - DIFUSÃO DE UMA BANDA VIDEO: "A VIDA DE BOMBEIRO"
- 2 - TESTEMUNHOS PESSOAIS DOS BOMBEIROS SOBRE O SEU MODO DE VIDA E CONDIÇÕES DE EXISTÊNCIA
- 3 - UM EXERCÍCIO SIMULADO DE ALERTA AO FOGO OU DE REANIMAÇÃO PELOS BOMBEIROS
- 4 - UM RITUAL ARTÍSTICO DO FOGO
- 5 - UM DEBATE SOBRE AS CONDIÇÕES DE VIDA PARALELAS DE ARTISTAS E BOMBEIROS
- 6 - UMA PESQUISA HISTÓRICA SOBRE O FOGO NA ARTE E SOBRE A ARTE DE EXTINGUIR O FOGO

50

Image 16: Page of the Artes Plásticas 7/8 Magazine, with the intervention of Fred Forest at the third Meeting of the third Meeting Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal (Póvoa de Varzim, August 1976). (Source: Revista de Artes Plásticas 7-8, p.50)



Image 17 - Photo of the intervention of Serge III Oldenburg at the fourth Meeting of Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal (Caldas da Rainha, August 1977). (Source: Guéniot, D. A. (Ed.) (2019). *Caldas 77 – IV Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal*. Editions Ghost, p.354)

Robert Filliou and Marianne distributed a pamphlet throughout the city presenting the Movimento de Libertação Infantil [Children Liberation Movement], asking children and adults to write their life's desires on the pamphlets.

For different reasons, this edition was marked by several disagreements between artists, local authorities, political parties and the population. Episodes representing these frictions included, among other, the population calling the police during the Puzzle Group's intervention, not having understood it was a performance; ORLAN's detention during the performance of *S'habiller de sa propre nudité* [Dressed in One's Own Nudity]; or the population's destruction of the installation-sculpture titled *Monumento ao 16 de Março* [Monument to March 16]. The local press also reported "*some attempts of aggression against foreign artists and tourists who looked like «hippies»*" ("*Incidentes no último dia do...*", 1977) and the "*brutal wave of violence*" ("*Violência no fecho dos Encontros...*", 1977) in the event's last day.

Also in this regard, we note the statements and open letters written by the City Hall of Caldas da Rainha, as well as political parties, formulating aesthetic judgments, such as "*false manifestations of art*" and "*disgraceful 'spectacles'*" (PCP, 1977), questioning compliance with the aims announced by the Meeting's organization (CMCR, 1977) or even raising political suspicions¹⁷. Regardless of the denunciations and accusations, their emphasis was always on the population's reactions, underlining they were

17.- The statement released by PSD (July/17/77), the Social Democratic Party, which held City Hall, refers that "*behind this demonstration of art was also a political objective*", suggesting PCP was its orchestrator, as "*some demonstrations ostensibly reflected communist ideology*" and "*some of the 'artists' did not hide their affiliation with the Communist Party*". (PSD, 1977)



Image 18: ORLAN's performance *S'habiller de sa propre nudité* [Dressed in One's Own Nudity] at the fourth Meeting of Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal (Caldas da Rainha, August 1977). (Source: Guéniot, D. A. (Ed.) (2019). *Caldas 77 – IV Encontros Internacionais de Arte em Portugal*. Editions Ghost, p.331)

“unfavorable” and that the population’s sensibility was injured (CMCR, 1977; PSD, 1977).

Overall, during the span of four years when the Meetings took place, there was a significant variety of performative acts, happenings and performances, collective paintings, discussions and debates, among other initiatives, that reflected an understanding of cultural and artistic democratization associated with the use of public space – “*a hitherto disregarded support*” (Álvaro, 1977, p.28) –, but also the participation of the popular masses.

Egídio Álvaro stated that “*the interventions [...] aimed directly to those sectors of the population less reached by artistic work, using immediate languages and allowing active participation, without any censorship*” (Álvaro, 1977, p.28). Although one can’t state this occurred across the board, a behavioral context undoubtedly fostered these objectives.

One can say there was popular mobilization, despite tensions of various kinds. Egídio Álvaro mentioned “*exceptional*” results, the population’s “*deep interest*”, “*enthusiasm, openness to dialogue, unrestricted support*” (Álvaro, 1977, p.28). However, analyzing the different actions over the several meetings, there was variation in this regard. The people reached by the meetings varied in their behavior, and the artists also changed their modus operandi. As mentioned, most interventions in the first three meeting sought a consensual interaction with the population and in

the last meeting this changed and artists brought proposals that sought to instigate dissent and confrontation.

Conclusion

Since the late 1950s, strategies for bringing art and society together have been discussed throughout socially engaged artistic practices. Integrating art in the public space were assumed as essential. Collectivism and the use of participatory and collaborative work methodologies and processes became one of the essential issues of these practices.

The forms of collective organization marks *“a shift within the practices of visual artists from a focus on art as a given institutional and linguistic structure to an active intervention in the world of mass culture.”* (Stimson and Sholette, 2007, p.9). In Portugal, this change happened with the revolution of 25 April 1974. Its duration was closely tied to the revolutionary process, a period when political and artistic motivation coincided regarding the political rapprochement between art, artists and the popular masses. In this decisive moment for building democracy, collaboration was the most frequent attitude used by artistic practices in relation to the political system and to the population. However, the construction of democracy was also made up of dissent and confrontation. In the aforementioned artistic practices, provocation deliberately served to instigate this confrontation, considered to be constructive.

At a time of the country's social reinvention and re-symbolizing the public space, new forms of organization and popular participation emerged, such as Comissões de Trabalhadores [Workers' Commissions], Assembleias Populares [Popular Assemblies] or the Comissões de Moradores [Residents' Commissions], for example, *“which contributed to the establishment of models of participatory local governance”* (Vicente, 2016, p.75).

Like these examples, there were Portuguese socially engaged artistic dynamics that thought of the

“public dimension not as an abstract work methodology (...) but as a strategy that broadens and enables the social objectives (...), based on the concept of participatory democracy, for which every citizen is a political being.” (Cruzeiro, 2012, p.384).

In this sense, although embryonic, there was an awareness of the transforming capacity of artistic practice itself, which, as Grant Kester refers, has the *“ability to produce new perspectives, against normative perspectives, on the constitution of power and subjectivity.”* (Kester, 2019, p.79).

The importance of this specific moment in Portuguese history goes beyond the national context. As Stimson and Sholette said: *“Between 1945 and 1989, culture took on a definite political heft in the undeclared war between capitalism and socialism. And reciprocally, politics took on a cultural cast of its own.”* (Stimson and Sholette, 2007, p.9). In the midst of the Cold War, the Portuguese revolution represented yet another beacon of hope and a hammer colliding with the capitalist system and neo-liberal thought. The socially engaged artistic practices in Portugal during the revolutionary process were part of this political stance. If the *“collective social form during the cold war became political [...]”* (Stimson and Sholette, 2007, p.10), one must integrate this Portuguese period within the context of the wider cultural radicalism of *“denigration of the individual, who becomes synonymous with the values of Cold War liberalism [...]”* (Bishop, 2012, p.12). These values implied that the

“virtuosic contemporary artist has become the role model for the flexible, mobile, non-specialized, laborer who can creatively adapt to multiple situations, and become his/her own brand.” [so, a] *“collaborative practice is perceived to offer an automatic counter- model [...]”* (Bishop, 2012, p.12) to these values.

This radical dynamic will decrease in Portugal during and after the first Constitutional Government (since 1976), with artists distancing themselves from political power, a movement coinciding with an increased use of transgressive and provocative tools in their relationship with the population. Therefore, the departure from the values brought by the revolution was proportional to the country's approximation to neo-liberal thinking and capitalist system.

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