

# Understanding Artistic Education From the Feminine and Anti-colonial Experience in the Quilombo

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## Abstract

We studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto (Portugal), a noble and internationally recognized institution where we were able, within the intercultural movement “Identities\_Collective of Action and Research” [original name: Identidades\_Coletivo de Ação e Investigação] (ID\_CAI), to create space and time for artistic education and intercultural relationships with the interior and south of Portugal, with Mozambique, Brazil and Cape Verde.

The movements to the quilombola community of Conceição das Crioulas, in the interior of the state of Pernambuco, Brazil, forged a continued relationship with schools and the community where it became more evident to us that both the idea of art we learned was obsolete, as were the forms teaching at its core making it a patriarchal and neoliberal eurocentric bubble endowed with essentialism, arrogance and paternalism towards the Political South.<sup>1</sup>

The bodies that we transport to this quilombo, bodies of white women, from the privileged european class, carry with them not only the referred heritage of hegemonic artistic education but also the desire to decolonize the thought and actions that we advocate through the encounter with Conceição das Crioulas and its various struggles, namely in the field of specific, differentiated and intercultural education. What is the place and time for the effort to decolonize the ‘self’, authorial, academic, of genius, within the knowledge and culture that each one carries?

**Keywords.** Anti-colonial, Feminism, Displacement, Quilombola, Relational Art

## General description

Europe lives in the illusion of being the example of an evolved society with the best theories and knowledge. With a tendency to be closed in on itself, it contributes to the genocides that occur throughout the world, justified by the cultivation of individualism, forgetting and/or denying the centuries-old links with the South, as well as the strong presence of these peoples in European territory. As individuals we are part and product of this Western education that conforms and formats us, marking the seduction of superior, advanced and omnipresent thinking.

Attentive to this discomfort we emphasize the listening, that becomes more and more urgent as a way of relating to the communities with which we were relating, and we also realize that our vision is impregnated with the insufficiency that the hegemonic ideas that constitute us originate. This awareness of our fragility brought us closer to the field of action-investigation in an anti-colonial search, which has allowed us to perceive how much the political south is not only domination and oppression, but also resistance, self-determination and independence of its peoples, today in struggle for the decolonization of the domains of being, power and knowledge.

In Europe we tend to find an agenda and policies for the integration of people from the south from a perspective that is sometimes paternalistic, sometimes delighting and contemplating its exotic, as well as shaping for cultural assimilation in western standards and not for the affirmation and reinforcement of their subjectivities and histories.

This discussion arises from our displaced and committed female bodies with the urgency of decoloniality. The action and research within ID\_CAI has allowed us to confront what this displacement of European bodies, from the middle class, to other places, can provoke in thinking. We displace ourselves, not to forget nor glorify, but to better recognize the failure widespread by the old continent and its ideals of evolution, progress and development. Arriving at the quilombola community of Conceição das Crioulas, in the Brazilian hinterland, we are faced with a collective experience, strengthened by a female leadership, enormously committed to the quilombola struggle, in a context hostile to minorities, with vertiginous setbacks at the social, cultural and educational levels which affect workers, indigenous and quilombola communities, traditional riverside populations, the LGBTQIA+ population and all oppressed minorities. Their struggles for the territory, rights and the construction of specific, differentiated and intercultural



Figure 1. Preparation of clay for traditional burning



Figure 2. Know the territory - walk<sup>2</sup>

education, for the preservation of material and immaterial heritage, strengthen their form of conscientization of the quilombola people's identity.

We understand that we are ethnic communities, with our beliefs, way of speaking, eating, praying, celebrating and playing, with struggles and knowledge different from the surrounding society, within a diversity that is rich in creativity, respect and resistance. Therefore, our school must be thought of in our own way, as an instrument of our struggle for our territories, in the valorization of our ethnic identity and the knowledge and stories transmitted by the older people, seeking an improvement in the quality of life for each quilombo. (NASCIMENTO, 2017, p. 79).

Their committed struggle and the unique value of the community organization of the "Quilombola Association of Conceição das Crioulas", puts us before the effort to be part of a struggle and respond to requests bolded by the community, in the sense of getting involved in it, because we recognize in the quilombola struggle a very strong conscience and a decisive openness to identity, racial, LGBTQIA + diversity.

That movement and that connection between the university and the community, allows both a collective encounter of a political-militant nature, in which the border between the aesthetic and the political is sewn, as a place and a time for the effort to decolonize the "self", authorial, academic, genius, within the knowledge and culture that each one carries. It allow us not only to listen to the voices of various leaders, now also masters by the academy, presenting their thesis of Creole education to the community itself and what it has taught them, but also the contrast with the reflection of education and white, western, middle class visual culture that inevitably affects the quilombo's "think-do", subjecting it to the forces of the atrocious and capitalist system.

## Methodology

Starting from the methodological legacy that ID\_CAI has traced throughout its twenty five years of action, we sustain the relationship with Conceição das Crioulas based on the three C's, Knowledge [original name: Conhecimento], Trust [original name: Confiança] and Complicities, assuming continuous ties, engagement in a common struggle, and joint construction of achievements and reflections.

We were formatted to pre-determine, however this relationality in contingency is from the domain of what is not known, but will come, an intercultural, agonistic and radical relationality. (RAINHO, 2018, p. 72)

The approach emerges from the collaborative and participatory work that we experienced in the II Encontro com As Artes, As Lutas, Os Saberes e Os Saberes da Comunidade de Conceição das Crioulas (II Meeting with the Arts, Fight, Knowledge and Flavors of the Quilombola Community of Conceição das Crioulas), characterized by relationality and immanence (COLECTIVO SITUACIONES, 2002), intercultural, agonistic and radical relationality (MOUFFE, 2007), composing research situations that are also built within the collective effort. This type of research integrates three methodological influences: i) decolonizing methodologies (SMITH, 1999); ii) participatory methodology of Research-Action (WOLUKAU-WANAMBWA, HLASANE, 2015), incorporating sensory ethnography and multimedia, being that the text will be accompanied by a set of images that convey the reality under study, as well as the landscape that gives sense to it; iii) respect for the necessary steps: Meeting, Trust, Sharing, an approach that reflects the understanding that ID\_CAI has inscribed in the consolidation of its relations with the

communities, based on listening and doing research with the community, instead of research processes and methodologies that do not consider the community part of the research (RAINHO, 2018).

It is intended that communication occurs by assuming a dialogue, recognizing the strength of each speech, and the plural meaning of a collective presentation.

## Outcomes

If the construction of knowledge itself is already a major challenge in the history of mankind in all contexts and times, that challenge increases when we start to imagine what it means when we want that constructed knowledge to perceive the presence, to hear the voices and visualize the bodies of subjects who have historically been ignored and subordinated, as is the case of blacks, indigenous and women in Brazil. (SILVA, 2017, p. 16-17)

With this reflection we aim to confront hegemonic narratives around the displacement of our european women's bodies to the territory of women leaders of the community of Conceição das Crioulas in an anti- patriarchal, capitalist and colonial effort. The contamination of the field of aesthetics and politics based on art education is a basic condition to talk about commitment, but also about the obstacles in the construction of thoughts and practices of resistance and affirmation in the face of excessively controlling systems.

“But the work of various thinkers on radical pedagogy (I use this term to include critical and/or feminist perspectives) has in recent years truly included a recognition of differences—those determined by class, race, sexual practice, nationality, and so on. Yet this movement forward does not seem to coincide with any significant increase in black or other nonwhite voices joining discussions about radical pedagogical practices.” (hooks, 2013, p. 20)

Returning to the reflection in the european academic and artistic context after this encounter with radical pedagogies linked to a very specific and community struggle in Conceição das Crioulas, requires a transport of:

- necessary enchantment of those who experienced the utopia in the quilombo, due to its democratic, community, plural and agonistic capacity to conceive and implement artistic education in the community;
- possible shock of what the bodies and the affections are capable of in the discussions and intense struggles in the quilombola territory, with what the gesture of scientific, literary and academic translation of activist and militant nature can do;
- understanding of the individual, quilombola, but also indigenous, woman, black and LGBTQIA +, as entities loaded with subjectivities that make up a collective of struggle for an epistemology and western praxis caught in the bonds of the individual seduced by the consumer society of neoliberal work.

The edification of transcontinental relations, aware of the historical relations that bodies transport in time and space, gives the field of this action-investigation an anti-colonial and feminist commitment. This requires attention and listening in the intercultural relations of the authors, as part of the ID\_CAI, and

their disobedience in the field of artistic education, both in the joint actions in the quilombo of Conceição das Crioulas, and in the effort of educational interference in Europe.

## Notes

1. With this expression, Political South, we refer not only to the geography of the southern hemisphere, but to the contexts and groups of people who resist the modes of supremacy and neoliberal hegemony
2. II Encontro com As Artes, As Lutas, Os Saberes e Os Saberes da Comunidade de Conceição das Crioulas, PE-Brazil

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