



## **GRUA Gentlemen de Rua: modes of production and communication of a creation process in times of crisis**

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**ABSTRACT – GRUA Gentlemen de Rua: modes of production and communication of a creation process in times of crisis** – This article examines communicative practices and modes of production in the creation process of the dance and performance group GRUA Gentlemen de Rua, in the period of the 2020 crisis, observing creative procedures that intersect with audiovisual media and the use of cyberspace, investigating whether these relationships are characterized as actions of resistance and reinvention. For this, we discuss documents generated by the Group, such as projects, notes, scripts, films, websites, etc. The theoretical foundation is structured from the critical theory of creation processes by Cecilia Almeida Salles and proposes dialogues with Edgar Morin, Pierre Musso, Zygmunt Bauman, Josette Féral and Vincent Colapietro, among others.

Keywords: **Creation Processes. Crisis. Body Arts. Audio-visual. Communication.**

**RÉSUMÉ – GRUA Gentlemen de Rua: modes de production et communication d'un processus de création en temps de crise** – Cet article examine les pratiques communicatives et les modes de production du processus de création du groupe de danse et de performance GRUA Gentlemen de Rua, dans la période de la crise de 2020, en observant les procédures créatives qui se croisent avec les moyens audiovisuels et l'utilisation du cyberspace, en cherchant si ces relations se caractérisent par des actions de résistance et de réinvention. Pour cela, des documents générés par le Groupe sont discutés, tels que des projets, des notes, des scénarios, des films, des sites Internet, etc. Le fondement théorique est structuré à partir de la théorie critique des processus créatifs de Cecilia Almeida Salles et propose des dialogues avec Edgar Morin, Pierre Musso, Zygmunt Bauman, Josette Féral et Vincent Colapietro, entre autres.

Mots-clés: **Processus de Création. Crise. Arts Corporels. Audiovisuel. Communication.**

**RESUMO – GRUA Gentlemen de Rua: modos de produção e comunicação de um processo de criação em tempos de crise** – Este artigo examina práticas comunicativas e modos de produção do processo de criação do grupo de dança e performance GRUA Gentlemen de Rua, no período da crise de 2020, observando procedimentos criativos que se cruzam com meios audiovisuais e com o uso do ciberespaço, investigando se essas relações se caracterizam como ações de resistência e reinvenção. Para isso, discutem-se documentos gerados pelo Grupo, como projetos, anotações, roteiros, filmes, sites etc. A fundamentação teórica estrutura-se a partir da teoria crítica dos processos de criação de Cecilia Almeida Salles e propõe diálogos com Edgar Morin, Pierre Musso, Zygmunt Bauman, Josette Féral e Vincent Colapietro, entre outros.

Palavras-chave: **Processos de Criação. Crise. Artes do Corpo. Audiovisual. Comunicação.**

## Introduction

This article was developed within the scope of the Grupo de Pesquisa em Processos de Criação do Programa de Pós-graduação em Comunicação e Semiótica (PUC-SP), which hosts studies on a great diversity of archives of artists and groups from the performing arts and cinema<sup>1</sup>. In the beginning, the focus of the researches concentrated on private records, which in contemporary experimentation exceeded such limits and were, in many cases, incorporated by the scene. At the same time, the audiovisual records of the processes increased significantly in face of the technological facilities with smaller cameras and cell phones and the need of some groups that deal with improvisation, for example. Such interactions with the audiovisual are quite relevant for Grua Gentlemen de Rua, our research object, as we will see.

The development of process studies led to the observation of the recurrence of general aspects of creation, which, in dialogue with the artists and the concepts of semiosis, by Charles Peirce (1955), of network, by Pierre Musso (2004), and the thought of complexity, by Edgar Morin (2011), were systematized in what we call process criticism. Such an approach is supported by the concept of creation as network (Salles, 2017).

We will bring some of these theoretical tools, which will be relevant to our reflections, more specifically the communicative practices, within the framework of the Peircean tendencies, and the space for the entry of new ideas.

Creation as a network can be described as a continuous process of interconnections, with vague tendencies, generating interaction nodes, whose variability obeys to directing principles. This continuous process, with no starting or ending point, is a fallible movement, sustained by the logic of uncertainty, encompassing the intervention of chance and making room for the introduction of new ideas.

The tendencies are vague directions, which guide the process of construction of objects in the environment of uncertainty and imprecision; generate work in search of something that is yet to be discovered. They can be observed from two perspectives: the constitution of poetic projects or guiding principles, and communicative practices. As for communicative practices, we are talking about relationships with others in a broad way: the

experience occurs in relationships between subjects. What interests us to highlight, more specifically, is the subject in the midst of interactions.

This notion is in dialogue with Vincent Colapietro (2014), who, when interpreting Charles Sanders Peirce's writings on subjectivity, states that we are not constituted as simply divided subjects (conscious/unconscious), but as historical, embodied, and culturally over-determined subjects. These properties, which define the construction of our subjectivity, mean that we have no escape, for example, from the consequences perpetrated by the crises that spread throughout the world, because we are an active part of their dynamics. The states of crisis create reflexes upon reflexes, hitting and hitting back at ourselves, individually and collectively, to the point of making these instances indistinguishable. Thus, crisis resides in all aspects of our existence, including the processes of creation.

Subjects belonging to a globalized society in disequilibrium, we are all connected. Our interactions happen from the mediation of social, economic, geographical, virtual vectors, etc. If networks and communicative technologies connect us, however, we remain in our fragile bubbles. We live apartment situations that go beyond the social distancing imposed by the spread of a virus. Thus, despite being connected and having, from this, a sense of collective protection, we are unprotected – in crisis.

Crises, in the context of the concept of creation offered by process criticism, can be seen from two complementary perspectives. From the perspective of Peircean semiotics, we are talking about crisis as a common constraint in the case of pandemic crisis, as a detonator of artistic hypotheses. Such hypotheses are tested within the framework of the guiding principles of each group and open up space for the entry of new ideas.

The crises are characterized by placing obstacles and difficulties, sometimes insurmountable. However, they can provide opportunities for changes and new experiences that generate other points of view and ways of being in the world. This contradictory aspect, engendered by the state of crisis, is explained by Morin (2013, p. 9), for whom “[...] the crises aggravate uncertainties, favor questioning; they can stimulate the search for new solutions and also provoke pathological reactions, such as the choice of a scapegoat. They are, therefore, deeply ambivalent”. Morin, as a thinker of culture, of-

fers his look at the crisis, thus deepening our reflections on the artistic confrontation of this lived moment.

Ambivalence is part of the very concept of crisis, in the sense that it generates events that will inevitably force changes, displacements that can be good or bad. By favoring uncertainties, the state of crisis will call for a confrontation for its resolution that will require creativity, boldness. It is necessary to open new paths, propose solutions, treatments, seek the cure. Ambiguity also presents itself in the fact that, although it affects us all collectively, not everyone faces crises in the same way. Therefore, from this perspective, crises present opportunities. Bauman and Bordoni contemplate this aspect (2016, p. 11):

As you can see, 'crisis' in its proper sense, expresses something positive, creative, and optimistic, because it involves change and can be a rebirth after a breakup. It indicates separation, to be sure, but also choice, decisions, and thus the opportunity to express an opinion. In a broader context, the notion takes on the meaning of the maturation of a new experience, which leads to a point of no return (both in the personal and in the historical-social sphere).

The senses implicit in the meanings that define the concept of crisis<sup>2</sup>, which relate to a limit state in which decision making is crucial so that paths of resolution and cure can be implemented, perhaps can attribute to the pandemic crisis the acceleration of creation processes that already pointed, in recent years, paths of reinvention of language, trailed by experimentations that unite the arts of the scene with the audiovisual. Thus, in this article, to reflect on issues that the pandemic crisis has imposed simultaneously on modes of production and artistic-communicative processes, we will observe the transits between the body arts and the audiovisual that take place in cyberspace, promoted by the dance and performance group Grua Gentlemen de Rua, based in the city of São Paulo. For this, we will discuss the following aspects of the processes of this group: the experience that takes place in the relationship and the friction between image and materialization.

### **The experience takes place in the relationship**

Grua Gentlemen de Rua (Figure 1) emerges legitimized by the interactions between the audiovisual, dance and performance, which have been

taking place since the last century. It is an intertwining that conceptualizes its birth and that, gradually, will become defining of its creation procedures. Osmar Zampieri, one of the founders and directors of Grua Gentlemen de Rua, characterizes the Group as “[...] composed of interdisciplinary artists that, since 2002, unravels the encounter between dance, cinema and urban spaces, in a refined game of improvisation between camera, artists and the flows of the places where they perform”<sup>3</sup>.

Also directed by Jorge Garcia and Willy Helm, since its foundation the Group has performed in Brazil and abroad.



Figure 1 – Some members of the Grua Gentlemen de Rua. Source: Photo by Leandro Moraes<sup>4</sup>.

The performances are performed by men dressed in suits – the *grueiros* –, who create, from improvisation, scenic situations in dialogue with the space, its events and the passer-by spectator. In this way, Grua’s poetic action, which occurs through interactions with the urban ecology<sup>5</sup>, is built on transits between dance, performance and audiovisual languages, rescues gestures, memory, the bonds of collectivity and denounces invisibilities, exclusions and daily violence imposed on the bodies by architectures and political-social dynamics.

The work is elaborated from improvisations made in a deep state of attention and availability of the *grueiros*, in order to dialogue with the complexity that arises from the intersections of these elements, “[...] as observers following all the events in their surroundings through their actions, creating a torrential dance, made of nexuses of connection with the place”<sup>6</sup>. Thus, Grua’s artistic action can re-signify the historicity and the memory of the public space (Figure 2) and offer the passer-by viewer more subtle locations, which go beyond the geographical ones.



Figure 2 – *Corpos de Passagem*. Source: Photo by Osmar Zampieri<sup>7</sup>.

The advent of the 2020 pandemic crisis imposed countless challenges to all art workers, and especially affected the presential arts, which had to reinvent themselves to survive. It was necessary to change directions and focus of the works, to adjust objectives. In that context, Grua makes considerations about the changes that should be implemented so that its poetic project could resist, in a proposal for an edital<sup>8</sup> in 2021:

[...] the project presented for this call for proposals, ‘Corpos de Passagem’ (Passing Bodies), will be revisited, investigating no longer the face-to-face meeting between the *grueiros* and passers-by, but understanding how this relationship of the *grueiros* takes place, in a certain physical space, without the public’s presential participation, without the immediate relationship with it, and finding ways to exhibit this investigation in an online space<sup>9</sup>.

The artists in isolation needed, in many cases to survive, to approach and understand as never before the procedures of audiovisual creation, the functioning of online platforms, of digital technologies and networks. A critical situation that, at that moment, established the urgent need for new paths of creation that would rescue and/or reinvent the communicative practices among artists and, very specially, with the public. Grua, in the proposed project, treaded the path of preservation of its processes and proposed to dislocate its investigation, which used to take place in person, in a body-to-body setting, to another sense of presence, to be established online.

Grúa knows that this is the central question of our days, therefore, that there are many attempts that have been elaborated by several artists from different geographies, national and international, but it is in the effort of this arduous exercise of trying to understand the instances that guide this prerogative, that is, we are talking about 'presence', 'representation', 'body', in an online environment, the tonus of our project<sup>10</sup>.

Given the interactions of the group's research with audiovisual media made so far, the crisis imposed a totally new environment, full of challenges, in which it was necessary not only to restructure the poetic senses and the procedures for creating the language of dance/ performance, but also to deepen the knowledge of the digital means of production and diffusion of work and also of the audiovisual language. It was important that new questions were asked, that modes of production were invented or resized, that processes of creation and communication were rethought.

The Group realized that it was necessary to base other understandings on important issues of their work, with the awareness that, for this, it was necessary to deepen the relations with the audiovisual language, with digital networks and re-signify the senses of presence, representation and body, important points for the presential arts. Thus, it was realized that the Group should investigate other and/or new possibilities. From a greater engagement of the audiovisual in its language, Grúa restructured important points of its dance/performance creation procedures related to the ways of construction, manipulation and deconstruction of the presence nexus. This aspect is brought up by Féral, when reflecting on the relationship between art, the real and the diversity of interactions media – technologies – performance:

The performance proposes itself, in fact, as a mode of intervention and action over the real, a real that it seeks to deconstruct through the work of art it produces. That is why it will work on a double level, seeking, on one hand, to reproduce it as a function of the performer's subjectivity and, on the other, to deconstruct it, whether through the body – theatrical performance – or through the image – image of the real that projects, constructs, or destroys the technological performance (Féral, 2015, p. 137).

The intensification of audiovisual media and digital networks in Grua's dance/performance creation processes will inexorably modify its relations with the body, space, presence and with the artist-spectator communicative bonds. It is necessary to remember that the Group, despite having been related to cinematographic processes and the internet since its foundation, only during the pandemic crisis did it use the audiovisual medium to build its performances and cyberspace to transmit and interact with the public live.

At that moment, there was, then, an effort from its members to understand what Féral calls a *double level*, resulting, from this new experience, the emergence of new meanings for previously familiar concepts, such as body, presence and image. Thus, Grua's creation process fused image (cameras, projections and online transmission) and the materialization of presence (body, movement, gesture) while going through the pandemic context. These were issues of great intensity that emerged, at that moment, and that acquired more and more complexity, making it urgent for the group to re-think the relationship body/environment/communication.

If we start from the premise that dance is a device that acts, acts in environments, and that the experience takes place in the relationship body and environment, in the exchange of information between both, we need to pay attention to the modifications that the online experience has been promoting in the body, in order to understand what we have been communicating with our doing<sup>11</sup>.

Before the 2020 pandemic, the audiovisual proposition structured by Grua, even though it had an evident concern with the elaboration of the image and the desire to let itself be contaminated by the scenic game, interfered more subtly in the Group's performative actions. However, it is the dialogue between languages that will engender powerful and independent audiovisual works that are publicly projected – the films – and, also, will

produce important archives of the Group's creative processes. The video maker and his camera, according to Grua, are present in all the presentations: "All the performances are captured on video and are part of a bank of images for the audiovisual production of the group, proposing a capture, beyond a simple register, since the camera and the video maker are always inside the events"<sup>12</sup>.

The Group's actions, when captured, create process registers/archives in which parameters and goals for the development of its experimentations, creation procedures and production strategies can be based. These images will go beyond the archival sense, becoming other and/or new *possibilities*. In this sense, the register of the image, at that moment, materialized this *other possibility* for Grua's trajectory of creation: to be, also, a film.

Until the beginning of the pandemic crisis, questions about the processes of dance and cinema occupied spaces that established points of convergence, but, in general, they did not compose such vehement transits as those that occurred during the health crisis. The interactions between the languages resulted in two works: one more related to dance, performance and the presential, and the other, more related to cinema, video, and the virtual – distinct corporeities and temporalities.

We noticed, when observing Grua's processes, that the relationship between states of crisis – that is, a common restriction – and the processes of creation, when they rubbed against each other, created breaches for the artists to promote the emergence of other creative procedures, contacts with different languages and technologies and the establishment of new poetic meanings. Facing the pandemic, these questions emerged strongly in Grua's processes, which, without the possibility of acting in the public space and body-to-body interactions with the passing-by spectator, reorganized itself to open fissures in the normatizations. In this scenario, the Group asked itself:

Amidst the whirlwind of the health crisis we are living, questions that seem obvious cross our minds: How does this moment affect our vision and perspective on artistic doing in the street, in public spaces? If and which logics implied in this process are likely to be modified?<sup>13</sup>

Questions that reached all artists in the face of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, because all community spaces were banned. Obviously, a lot changes. Nevertheless, to what extent would the group's modes of pro-

duction, creation, and communication have to be different, or adapted? Some characteristics that emerged in the presentation of the performance *Corpos de Passagem*, made in March 2021, at Sesc Avenida Paulista, as part of the *Sesc em Casa* project, may if not answer, at least add clues for the deepening of reflections about some of these questions.

First, it is important to point out that the performance *Corpos de Passagem* maintained, until the pandemic event, the traditional presentation dynamics of dance/performance: face-to-face and taking place in a certain space of time. However, the performance that took place in 2021 did not find its physical and communicative *locus* in the conventional artist/spectator bonding interactions common to presential arts. The *grueiros* asked themselves: “The public will be an agent distinct from that experienced in the presence, so, what is the relationship possible to be established in this situation?”<sup>14</sup>. These are questions that will produce an experiment more contaminated by aspects of the language of cinema, of video. The dance/performance/audiovisual interaction that occurred at that moment in Grua’s work began to be less dichotomous and more permeable. What will happen is a complex experience of dance/performance/audiovisual or audiovisual/dance/performance in which the languages are more diluted.

### Frictioning the image and materialization

The script *Corpos de Passagem*, from 2021, is constructed by the senses of *live* and *online*. The unfinished *ROTEIRO GRUA\_SESC AV PAULISTA*, document reproduced below, adds characteristics of audiovisual creation procedures (camera movement, cuts, image framing, etc.) to elements of the face-to-face presentation.

SCRIPT GRUA \_ SESC AV PAULISTA

1ST PART

Vinicius entering SESC and going up the elevator – (Osmar filming in sequence plan)

This scene will be recorded at 7 pm.

Ambient sound or Eder proposes some sound

2ND PART – Introducing everyone

Scene 1 - Vinicius enters the room/stage

The lighting in the room is in the spotlight and backlit. Eder in the sound set is also illuminated.

Scene 2 - (Osmar films Eder playing his electronic instruments)

Scene 3 – Fernando’s frame

Scene 4 - Henry solo on the floor

Scene 5 - Jorge walking by the windows

Scene 6 - Jerônimo goes to the center and starts circling Osmar.

Scene 7 - Everyone goes inside. Check with Rossana this spot light.

Scene 8 - Camera back to Eder

Scene 9 - Pause in a side row of 4 Grueiro. Focus with Moving Light. Slow movement forward.

Scene 10 - Solo Jorge with details on body parts. General light.

### 3RD PART

Scene 1 - Jerônimo climbs the side staircase. Check if lighting is necessary

Scene 2 - Healthy intimacy between Jerônimo, Fernando and Vinicius.

Scene 3 - Solo Fernando

Scene 4 - Fernando meets up with Jorge and they walk through the Mezzanine. Experiment with low percentage lit reflectors, or take LED tubes to place on this path.

Eder walks along taking sound from the objects.

Scene 5 - Camera close up on Eder that returns to the sound SET

### 4TH PART

Soils through the corridors of light, lamps par

Start Jorge on aisle 1

Fernando aisle 3

Jerônimo Aisle 3 and 5

Henrique Aisle 6

Vinicius on Aisle 5 and 4

The rest will be improvised with all aisles lit

FINAL TO BE SOLVED

The script organizes elements from both languages to structure what will be offered to the spectator. At this moment, it is open, unfinished, with questions to be solved. However, it already indicates that it aims at the construction of the work from the perspective of the capture of images by the camera, besides preserving improvisation – a trademark of the Group. The active characteristic given to the camera, as a *body that dances*, that moves and plays with other bodies and with the space, breaks with the normatized relations between the languages and the interactions are strengthened and open

other perspectives, such as the previous recording of the *1ª PART*, which will be inserted in the edition made at the moment of the presentation.

The idea that is revealed is that the camera, as it moves, interacting with the *grueiros* and the space, is something more than an instrument for capturing images. In this sense, the document provides very precise orientations, as we can see by indicating actions such as: “Vinicius enters SESC and goes up the elevator – (Osmar filming in sequence plan)” or “Camera closes in on Eder who goes back to SET of sound”. However, even at the points in the script where there are no explicit indications of camera movement, the interactive sense of image capture and transmission is present.

The script presents an ordering of actions that inserts the camera as one of the main elements of the experiment. In the Sesc Avenida Paulista experience (Figures 3 and 4), the camera enters this equation as a body-camera that interacts with other bodies and plays in space, in an event transmitted simultaneously to the spectator. The result is an experimentation in which the camera transcends its function as an image-capturing object and starts acting as one more dancer, one more performer. The subversion of the camera’s industrial function as a creative procedure of the group in face of new communicative and artistic demands finds support in Machado, when reflecting on the concept of artmedia:

Artmedia, as any art strongly determined by technical mediation, places the artist before the permanent challenge of, at the same time that he opens himself to the present forms of production, also oppose the technological determinism, refuse the industrial project already embedded in the machines and devices, thus avoiding that his work results simply in an endorsement of the productivity objectives of the technological society (Machado, 2007, p. 16).

Denying the technological determinism of the camera is exactly what Grua does when it assumes it as a *body that dances*. At no moment in this experiment does the Group establish its relationship with the camera within an industrial context, but it perceives it as a body-agent of artistic construction in the intertwining with digital networks. These processes will be detonated by the question that Grua asked itself while still designing the experiment: “Will we be merely replicating what we did in the world of presence, but now in virtual space?”<sup>15</sup>. From this question, goals and strategies were established, because we do not want the mere capture of a presential experience.



Figure 3 – *Corpos de Passagem* 1. Source: YouTube Sesc em Casa (2020).

It can be observed that the dancer-performer-cinematographer has a solid knowledge of the audiovisual and dance languages and, in addition, directs most of the films and audiovisual experiments in the Group. Osmar Zampieri is a dancer of great experience in Brazil and abroad, besides being one of Grua's directors and director of the films *Grua Navegantes* (2016) and *Corpos de Passagem* (2018) – among others – and owner of the production company Campevas Narrativas Audiovisuais.

It is not new, in the procedures of audiovisual creation, to use the subjective camera, which produces a type of framing that simulates a character's point of view. In this case, the one who assumes this *action of seeing* is the operator of the equipment. However, it is rarer that the artist takes over the operation of the camera and, with it, to imprint a certain look on the environment and the other person. In this logic, documentary maker Evaldo Mocarzel reported a procedure he did with Cia Livre<sup>16</sup>, which has some similarities with the work of Grua done at Sesc Avenida Paulista in 2021.

In the documentary *Cia Livre 10 anos*, I attached a body-cam to the bodies of the actors and actresses so that they could perform an improvisation mixing the restlessness of the characters with the memory of their own process of creation and also with the subjective layers of their own life stories, with the cameras turned on the cast members of Cia Livre, who did performative solos through the spaces of the dramatic installation the group set up at TUSP as photographers of them-

selves, a radical exercise of alterity that I always like to try when given the chance to do so<sup>17</sup>.

The characteristic of alterity printed in the improvisation exercise that Mocarzel proposed to Cia Livre, presents similarities with the work done by Grua at Sesc in 2021. The experience took place in a flow of interactivity and interdependence between the bodies, the space, and the languages – the gaze of the camera became, essentially, the gaze of the collective. There were important issues to be solved, such as the passage from the street to a theater, to what extent the sense of improvisation could be maintained under these conditions, and the fact that it was the first time the group interacted with stage lighting. In addition, starting by the dancer-performer Vinícius Frances' *conversation* with the spectator at the beginning of the performance, there was a more direct interaction with the camera, in general.



Figure 4 – *Corpos de Passagem 2*. Source: YouTube Sesc em Casa (2020).

In seeking solutions to these difficulties, the Group assumed, as never before, the camera as the internal and collective eye of the process, a device that captures objective and subjective aspects of the dance/performance and of the dancers/performers, and recomposes the space, at the same time that exposes, recreates and extends these images to the spectator. Roberto Alencar, one of the members of Grua, reported in an interview for this research

that this process had the participation of the whole Group and that the script was built according to the interactions with the space at Sesc Avenida Paulista and with discussions between the members of Grua and the technical team. Here, an important characteristic of collective creation processes is presented, according to Salles (2017, p. 159):

In team processes, it is the grouping of subjects in creation, immersed in this whirlwind of sensations, in which two issues are very relevant. On the one hand, they are processes that do not happen if they are not in teams. It is in the nature of theater, cinema, dance, journalism, etc. An actor, for example, is faced with the expressive and playful possibilities of his or her body in relation to the other actors, the director, the playwright, the lighting designer, etc. On the other hand, this whirlwind of sensations of the subjects (as a community) happens in the midst of a common search, coexisting with the sensations generated by the interaction with other members of the group.

From this common search, solutions were produced so that the work at Sesc could happen in the best way, without mischaracterizing the poetic search of the collective. Therefore, consequently, the Group built bridges with the public never before experienced in their processes: digital bridges, live and online. The experience was new for the *grueiros* – which demanded the need to create new interactions among them and with the place of performance. Grua created, then, a body-camera that danced with the body-dancers and with the space, giving the body-camera the ability to re-signify the experiment's temporalities, gestures, actions and communicative processes.

This experimentation also highlighted questions about the differences between the ways of directing and of focusing the gaze between the presential and the virtual. The distinction between the creative and technical resources, that can be mobilized to direct the gaze of the spectator in a face-to-face experience and those that can be done with the intermediation of the camera, became extremely important at that moment. Caldas (2006, p. 29) makes some considerations about this:

The path of the eye on the stage – even on a hierarchical stage like the Italian one – is, of course, a singular construction of each spectator. But the choreographic composition may construct, as a proposal, the tendencies of this path: the varied occupation of the stage, for example (especially in its depth, distinguishing the near and the far), invites the gaze with distinct ap-

peals; but our tendency to dwell on what is closer to us may disappear if that which is distant moves more intensely or is illuminated more intensely. A camera that chose to focus on a motionless body in the foreground, and captured – in the background – a blurry moving body, could suggest to us a similar tension.

However, if the focus of the gaze can be directed in a face-to-face scene on a stage, by the choreographic, lighting or direction proposal, even so the gaze of the spectator always has as perspective the amplitude of the scenic space, be it conventional or not. The image captured by the camera, which will be offered to the spectator, has the potential to direct the gaze much more strongly, since it can be dimensioned by other spatial logics, in which the direction of the gaze can be more controlled: zoom, planes, cuts, effects, etc. In the case of the transmission of presential arts experiments, transposed to screens of TVs, mobile phones, computers, etc., the differences between screen sizes and devices will also be defining *how* and *what* the spectator will experience in the spectacle.

In this sense, the experience at Sesc Avenida Paulista presented a script built from concerns that were located exactly in the distances between face-to-face and virtual looks, in the differences between the spectators' senses of reception, in the resizing of the bodies' performance space, in the mutualities between body-camera. Thus, the questions the Group asked itself to elaborate the script, were put on stage in the experiment at Sesc:

Everything that occurs becomes an element of the established game, building an intense relationship with the situations that present themselves in the instant of the performance. And if the instant is one of the questions of 'Corpos de Passagem', how to deal with this condition at the moment when the performance is broadcasted – live, online, without the presence of the audience, but in their presence? With the spectator as a distinct agent from the one who experienced the spectacle in presence, what is the possible relationship to establish in this situation?<sup>18</sup>

Aspects of temporal and presence interactions, central to the Group and at the core of both languages, were experimented with. At this point, the issue common to the interactions of the body arts with the audiovisual reappears, which concerns the face-to-face relations between the performers and the audience. Theorists such as Glusberg (2013, p. 59) characterize performance as an interaction that provides for “[...] direct contact between send-

er and receiver without the technical intermediation of any modern electronic equipment, except for the use of sound or video”, placing this experience of proximity as an intrinsic condition of performance practice. Nevertheless, what the intersections of performance and the audiovisual install is something of another order. It is not about the destruction of the identifying traditions of the languages, but their re-signification, their displacement. It is an experience of reordering the transits between physical and virtual presences, of joining the different temporalities of the languages that generate other/new possibilities of creation. Arlindo Machado, in a clear dialogue with Flusser<sup>19</sup>, reflects on the interactions between art, media, and creation, considering the artist’s action at these intersections:

What a true creator does, therefore, instead of simply submitting to the determinations of the technical apparatus, is to continually subvert the function of the machine or of the program that he uses, is to manage them in the opposite direction of their programmed productivity. Perhaps I can even say that one of the most important roles of art in a technocratic society is precisely the systematic refusal to submit to the logic of the instruments of work or to fulfill the industrial project of the semiotic machines, reinventing, in return, their functions and purposes. Far from being enslaved by a norm, by a way of communicating, the real founding works actually reinvent the way of appropriating a technology (Machado, 2007, p. 14-15).

The appropriation and reinvention of technologies and modes of production of the audiovisual, according to Arlindo Machado, are characteristics of the founding works and are present in this work of Grua, among other things, with the rupture of the machine’s industrial passivity and its transformation into machine-dancer-body-eye. Thus, from crossed experiences between dance and audiovisual, that when they happened still preserved limits between the languages, the Group arrived to 2021 denormalizing these interactions in order to present much more diluted borders.

### **A landscape to embrace everyone’s desires and looks**

Grua has advocated interactions with the audiovisual since its inception, as an interface of its creation process, however it is an interest that is being re-signified and deepened, as we have seen. These relations were pressured by the social isolation measures initiated in 2020; the Group reacted

to the crisis by strengthening these bonds and, in March 2021, it proposed to make a film.

The film *Janela 43* had as a location an apartment on the 43rd floor of the Mirante do Vale building in downtown São Paulo. According to the Group, “[...] the film invites us to follow Grua in an intimate and vertiginous journey of its face-to-face reunion, after a year of isolation and virtual interactions”<sup>20</sup>. The realization of *Janela 43* (Figure 5) resulted in an experiment in which the audiovisual was the medium-language that characterized the collective experience of the meeting and of the dance.



Figure 5 – *Grua Mirante* – Film (1). Source: *Grua Janela 43* (2022)<sup>21</sup>.

To credit the emergence of *Janela 43* to the protagonism that the audiovisual media acquired during the pandemic period would not do justice to the long relationship established between Grua and the cinematographic language, endorsed by the historical tradition of interactions between dance, performance and audiovisual. Even so, perhaps we can credit to the pandemic crisis the acceleration of the exploration of new possibilities of a path that had already been set by the Group.

At first, *Janela 43* was a project that, with the sponsorship of the *Aldir Blanc Law*, would be made in ten days and would generate six live transmissions. With the worsening of the pandemic, the group gave up this format and decided to create a film in sequence. Roberto Alencar, initially responsible for the script, proposed that a dramaturgy linked to the historicity of

the space be created. Thus, he gives *voice* to the Mirante do Valle building and establishes this aspect as the script's starting point. After that, Willy Helm joins Alencar and they advance in the structuring of the script. The strategies for the creation of *Janela 43* were directed by the difficulties established by the pandemic crisis situation.

Such characteristics of *Janela 43*, in which every process is redirected and takes place in a completely different way than originally intended, finds resonance in Morin's (2011, p. 33) notion of gap, in which innovative deviations manifest themselves before the cultural effervescence of a given historical, geographical and social context. In principle, perhaps it sounds contradictory to think of cultural effervescence related to a pandemic context that restricted all interaction of face-to-face arts to cyberspace. However, it was exactly this environment that was responsible for the ebullience that allowed the opening of gaps by the creation processes and that, furthermore, was potentiated by the interactions of all members of the group. Salles talks about these aspects of the groups, potentially multipliers of the possibilities of interaction:

The networks of the processes gain more complexity when one thinks of each of the group members immersed and over-determined by their culture [...]. Actors, directors, lighting designers, etc. interact with their surroundings, feeding and exchanging information and, at the same time, the ongoing theatrical or cinematographic project, an open system, acts as a detonator for a multiplicity of interconnections with the culture interacting with the other group members. The fields of possibility broaden and the need to make choices begins to emerge, based on the team's way of working and criteria (Salles, 2017, p. 125).

In this understanding, there was a growing sense of appropriation of the language of video by the Group, intensified from the imposition of the social distance and that, also, was multiplied by the experiences of each of its members facing that critical context. In this way, choices were made by the *grueiros* with the establishment of new criteria based on the modes of creation possible at that moment. These aspects, which had already been presented in the experience at Sesc Avenida Paulista, are further deepened in *Janela 43*. The appropriation of the audiovisual as a language worked collectively, by Grua, became more evident after the analysis of the organization characteristics of the initial version of the script of *Janela 43*, written by

Alencar and Helm, which presented more detailed and codified notes of the scenes (Figure 6), clearer indications about the positioning and the actions of the performers and the camera movements and image capturing.

The notations can be seen as follows: the items or topics in black (scenic stations) are the moments proposed to order the sequence of events. The development of each of them, in red, are suggestions from Beto and Willy's point of view based on the material brought and raised by everyone; the highlights in green are the moments where we suppose there may be speeches and verbal interventions<sup>22</sup>.

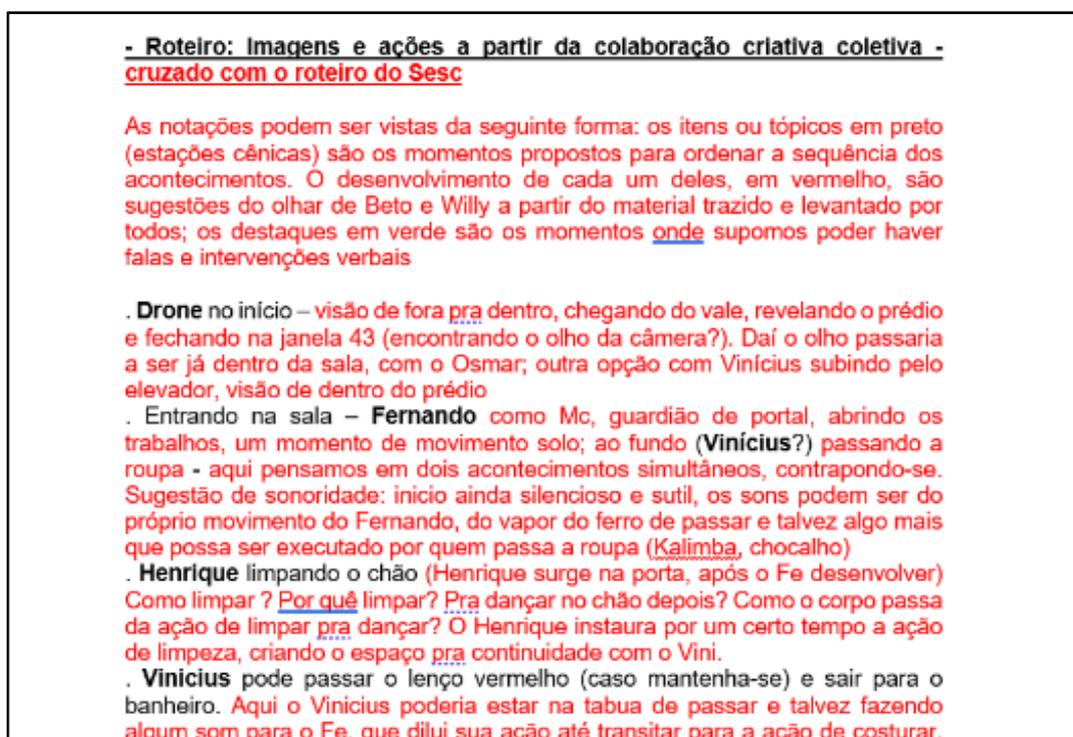


Figure 6 – Image from the document *Roteiro: Imagens e ações a partir da colaboração criativa coletiva*.

Source: Collection of the artist.

The characteristics of the organization of the script indicate that producing the film is, *per se*, the collective purpose of the experiment. Besides this aspect, *Janela 43* was the first audiovisual experiment of the Group to open itself to the total interference of the collective in its creation. Alencar and Helm expressed their expectations in this sense, when proposing this version of the script: “We hope this will help us objectify and format what this film will become, in a truly collective construction and full of new possibilities. We have the desire, the freedom and the opportunity to dare and do something different from our usual way”<sup>23</sup>.

There was the proposal of installing a collaborative creation dynamics, a practice developed, in Brazil, by a great diversity of groups, described by Antônio Araújo (2006, p. 127-133) in an article about the *Teatro da Vertigem*. According to the author, the collaborative proposition presents horizontalized work dynamics, but that foresees hierarchies. In this scenario, the performer, in *Janela 43*, acts from actions organized by the scriptwriters according to the listening to the experiences of each artist in the group in their particular pandemic daily lives.

According to Alencar, each *grueiro* was asked what he would like to bring to this experience of the Group. This collective action of making the script will lead to the creation of situations, movements and actions that will constitute powerful images for the film (Figure 7), such as a dancer/performer serving a ceviche, ironing clothes, or even the presentation of drawings made by the son of one of the *grueiros*.

Jorge serves the food: Jê develops the window action while Jorge brings the portions (ceviche, brusqueta, carpaccio?) for each one; this moment brings a calmer and more melancholic climate, where the action of eating is crossed by interventions of writing on the window, interacting or not with Jê's speech, that can also make provocations and conduct the 'game'<sup>24</sup>.



Figure 7 – *Grua Mirante* – Movie (2). Source: *Grua Janela 43* (2022)<sup>25</sup>.

*Janela 43* is a work in which the individuality of the dancers comes out. This individualization process begins in the Sesc experiment and is reflected, even, in the costumes that, if they still maintain the general and for-

mal structure of the black suit, they deconstruct itself more and more in the entrance of the text as expressive possibility. If in the Sesc experiment the body's trajectories and states tried, in certain senses, approximations with the presential experience, in *Janela 43* this was not necessary. In *Corpos de Passagem*, produced for Sesc Avenida Paulista, just as in *Janela 43*, the camera dances *with* the bodies, follows their paths, assumes itself as a body-camera. However, the work presented at Sesc mediated live relations with the online spectator and there was simultaneity in the artists-spectators communicative experiences, although different. In *Janela 43*, the camera captured the images already in a cinematographic sense that will originate the film. For the spectator, the experience will not happen live, but from the availability of the work in networks (online) and movie theaters. It is a temporal experience linked to cinematographic, audiovisual production, farther from the presential tradition of dance and performance, because there is no simultaneity in the artists-spectators experiences.

The landscape is one of the protagonists in the images of *Janela 43*. The relationship between the bodies, the landscapes and the gaze is a recurrence in the Group's interactions with spaces that overflows into the audiovisual, generating memorable images, such as that of the *grueiros* walking on a sandbank of the São Francisco River in *Grua Navegantes: uma rota de afetos* (Figure 8); that of the performers observing the illuminated buildings through the glass panes of Sesc Avenida Paulista in *Corpos de Passagem*, presented at #EmCasaComSesc (Figure 9); or of the streets of Paris (Figure 10) or of London, from *Grua - Projeto Europa*. *Janela 43* makes explicit the relationship with the landscape – real and metaphorical – in the questions that feed the work: “How not to let the body and the will discourage before a horizon with a view of chaos? How to invent senses to continue dancing in the face of the limitation caused by recent events?”<sup>26</sup>.



Figure 8 – *Grua Navegantes: uma rota de afetos* – Film, 2017. Source: Grua Navegantes (2017)<sup>27</sup>.



Figure 9 – *Corpos de Passagem* – *Sesc em Casa*, 2020. Source: Vimeo (print).



Figure 10 – GRUA *Corpos de Passagem Projeto Europa* – Paris, 2011. Source: Photo by Osmar Zampieri<sup>28</sup>.

In the film *Janela 43* these questions materialize in images of the bodies in interaction with the extensive and chaotic landscape of the city skyline and also with the landscape drawn by the pandemic crisis. Preserved important aspects of dance and performance processes, the dynamics of *Janela 43* are strongly audiovisual. The landscape, as a thing linked to the order of the gaze, the see, the stare, the *mirar at*, raised in the Group associations with the name of the building Mirante do Valle, in which the intervention and the recording took place, and the various unfoldings of the action of *mirar at* the world from the 43rd floor of a building open to the vertiginous skyline-landscape of the city. In this way, immersed in the Group's project, Alencar created the following text:

Gentlemen who *miram*  
 They *miram* into the valley...  
 They *miram* at the sky, the ground, and the soil beneath the ground.  
 They *miram* all the artificiality that presents itself outside the 43rd floor window.  
 Above all, they *miram* at the lives that make this entire reinforced concrete move.  
 They *miram* at animal, vegetal and mineral life.  
 From the window to the inside  
 They *miram* at other miradors, they *miram* into the physical space, and they *miram* into their own bodies.  
 All the organs and memories are *mirados*.

They *miram* not only with their eyes, but also with all of their senses.

Mirador bodies.

*MIRAR*. What meanings can be attributed to this verb?

*Mirar* can mean to look with focus.

To point at a target.

The precision of the hit.

The aim.

*Mirar* also means to look at an entire landscape at once.

The higher the mirador, the more elements can enter the visual field of the one taking aim.

The place where the action takes place is the Mirante do Vale Building.

A skyscraper that was erected more than 50 years ago, at the foot of a valley with an indigenous name, in the urban nerve of São Paulo, and that carries the status of being the largest building of one of the largest metropolises in the world.

Seen from the top of Mirante the ground of the Valley is a deep hole.

The text unveils how, at the time of the film's creation, the Group's relationship with its processes took place. The unfolding of the trajectories of the landscape, which superimpose from geographic and scenographic characteristics to internal images of great symbolic and poetic force, act in the direction of amplifying the meanings of the *miradas* that are established "from the window in" and from the window out, because "*mirar* also means to look at a whole landscape at once".

These are qualities that point to the importance of the *gaze* in the Group's processes: at that moment in which the process of *Janela 43* takes place, the sense of sight is assumed as the protagonist of the action. If before the verbs "to pass" and "to communicate" and the nouns "place" and "body" operated as the master keys for the work *Corpos de Passagem* (Bodies of Passage), presented by Grua Gentlemen de Rua at *Dança #Em-CasaComSesc*<sup>29</sup>, in *Janela 43* the verb "*mirar*" appears and assumes a place of absolute prominence.

### Final considerations

Crises, be they sanitary, environmental, climatic, social, cultural, religious, etc., local or worldwide, are phenomena that, by impacting society and culture in a significant way, generate reactions of art and science, which, thus, can conceive ways to face them. In this sense, it is very clear that the artists' reactions to the pandemic crisis fostered creative experiences

that helped them resist and go through that moment, in which the artists of the body questioned themselves on how to deal with the impositions posed by the crisis and, from there, important experimentations emerged, especially in relation to the intersections with the audiovisual and the use of cyberspace.

If the pandemic crisis changed and destroyed, it also stimulated and reinvented communicative and creative processes, as well as social interactions. Even if the performing arts, for obvious reasons, were deeply affected, their processes survived, resisted, and opened up to other possibilities of creation. At that moment, in all Grua's processes and archives, the crisis was present, defining choices, bringing questions and pointing out possibilities, impossibilities, imposing the necessity of the emergence of new modes of action. It is clear that these new modes did not reverberate only the pandemic moment, because they spoke of something bigger, deeper, they carried in themselves the possibility of reinvention, resistance, survival.

One of the characteristics of contemporary art is the freedom to interact, assimilate and reinvent languages, installing other communicative processes. Thus, in the contemporaneity, unquestionably, numerous works take place from interactions between artistic languages and the use of image technologies. However, think of the creative paths of Grua Gentlemen de Rua, during this period, from the documents generated in its artistic making, besides highlighting the Group's assertive and collaborative attitude in the search for solutions for the development of its creative processes, reveals how the interactions between image technologies and the performing arts can generate singular and relevant works.

By investigating other communicative parameters between its members and the spectator, the Group deepens its relationship between the audiovisual and the cyberspace, which goes beyond any sense of *solution* to the crisis, affirming this interaction as a new mode of production, which establishes another scope of creation. A new environment that happens in the friction between the elaboration of images and the materialization of the work. Its dance/performance, then, assumes the digital technological means as formative of the image, a reconstructive or deconstructive system of the *real*, inserted in the dynamics of choreographic conception – a new

and important means of creation that, continuously, unfolds in new perspectives of reinvention and resistance.

Grua, in this way, produces experiences that indicate other communicative and artistic possibilities for the performing arts, presenting new ways of seeing, being, existing of the bodies, diversifying and expanding the ways of interaction with the artists, collaborators, and spectators.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This article is an excerpt from the thesis *Crise e Criação: interações entre as artes do corpo e o audiovisual na experimentação contemporânea* (Dias, 2022).
- <sup>2</sup> The etymological origin of the word “crisis” is located in ancient Greece. According to Bauman and Bordoni (2016, p. 9), it originates “From the Greek word κρίσις, ‘judgment’, ‘result of a judgment’, ‘critical point’, ‘selection’, ‘decision’ (according to Tucídides), but also ‘strife’ or ‘dispute’ - (according to Plato), a standard, from which are derived criterion, ‘basis for judging’, but also ‘ability to discern’, and critical, ‘proper to judge’, ‘crucial’, ‘decisive’, as well as pertinent to the art of judging”. The concept of crisis, for the authors, is formed in the medical spheres, where it is used to this day, by the need for decision-making in contexts of extreme urgency. When a disease is established in the patient, a point of uncertainty sets in, his body is taken over by something foreign, alien to that system.
- <sup>3</sup> This article is developed from reflections on creation process documents made available on the networks and provided by the Group to the authors.
- <sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://grua.gr/#Fotos>. Accessed on: 02 Aug. 2022.
- <sup>5</sup> According to Oliveira and Santos (2021, p. 116), “Urban Ecology was created in 1920 by the Chicago School, emerging from the need to understand the dynamics of the functioning of the cities, addressing anthropic changes in urban areas and their interaction with natural ecosystems and the built environment. Research in Urban Ecology can be strictly biological (Ecology in the City), or have an interdisciplinary approach with the interaction of natural and social sciences (Ecology of the City)”.
- <sup>6</sup> In the document *CORPOS DE PASSAGEM - uma proposta GRUA*.
- <sup>7</sup> Available at <https://grua.gr/#Fotos>. Accessed on: 02 Aug. 2022.

- <sup>8</sup> This article is elaborated from the reflection on creation process documents made available on the networks and made available by the group to the authors.
- <sup>9</sup> In the document CORPOS DE PASSAGEM - uma proposta GRUA.
- <sup>10</sup> In the document CORPOS DE PASSAGEM - uma proposta GRUA.
- <sup>11</sup> In the document CORPOS DE PASSAGEM - uma proposta GRUA.
- <sup>12</sup> In the document Projeto Grua Pesquisa, presented to the Programa Municipal de Fomento à Dança para a cidade de São Paulo, 28th edition.
- <sup>13</sup> In the document CORPOS DE PASSAGEM - uma proposta GRUA.
- <sup>14</sup> GRUA - Street Gentlemen in 'Corpos de Passagem' on the stage of Sesc Avenida Paulista. Available at: <https://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=HLG68HWJ3M&t=4s>. Access on: 1st Mar. 2023.
- <sup>15</sup> In the document CORPOS DE PASSAGEM - uma proposta GRUA.
- <sup>16</sup> The Cia. Livre, based in the city of São Paulo, has been working collectively since 1999, developing a theatrical praxis whose core lies in the creation of study, research, and creation processes that are open to the public, resulting in the spectators' active participation in its spectacles.
- <sup>17</sup> Interview given to the authors in 2021.
- <sup>18</sup> Available at: <https://cartacampinas.com.br/2021/03/lenine-camila-pitanga-e-espetaculo-de-danca-corpos-de-passagem-estao-em-nova-programacao-ao-vivo-em-casa/>. Accessed on: 1st Mar. 2023.
- <sup>19</sup> By observing the relationship between camera and photographer as a dynamic producer, manipulator, and storeer of symbols, inserted in the post-industrial cultural context, Flusser (2009, p. 23) states that what characterizes the photographic apparatus is the "being programmed", because "[...] the symbolic surfaces it produces are, in some way, previously inscribed ('programmed', 'pre-written') by those who produced it. Photographs are realizations of some of the potentialities inscribed in the device. The number of potentialities is large, but limited: it is the sum of all those photographable by this device. With each photograph taken, the number of potentialities decreases, while the number of realizations increases: the program is running out and the photographic universe is being realized. The photographer acts towards the exhaustion of the program and towards the realization of the photographic universe. Since the

program is very 'rich', the photographer manipulates the device, gropes it, looks into and through it, in order to always discover new potentialities”.

- <sup>20</sup> JANELA 43 do GRUA Gentlemen de Rua em temporada virtual até sábado!. Available at: <https://tr-tr.facebook.com/corporastreado/videos/877655886150645/>. Accessed on: 1st Mar. 2023.
- <sup>21</sup> Available at <https://grua.gr/#Fotos>. Accessed on: 02 Aug. 2022.
- <sup>22</sup> In the document PROPOSTA INICIAL DE ROTEIRO PARA O GRUA MIRANTES (NOME PROVISÓRIO).
- <sup>23</sup> In the document PROPOSTA INICIAL DE ROTEIRO PARA O GRUA MIRANTES (NOME PROVISÓRIO).
- <sup>24</sup> In the document PROPOSTA INICIAL DE ROTEIRO PARA O GRUA MIRANTES (NOME PROVISÓRIO).
- <sup>25</sup> Available at <https://grua.gr/#Fotos>. Accessed on: 02 Aug. 2022.
- <sup>26</sup> JANELA 43 do GRUA Gentlemen de Rua em temporada virtual até sábado!. Available at: <https://tr-tr.facebook.com/corporastreado/videos/877655886150645/>. Accessed on: 1st Mar. 2023.
- <sup>27</sup> Available at <https://grua.gr/#Fotos>. Accessed on: 02 Aug. 2022.
- <sup>28</sup> Available at <https://grua.gr/#Fotos>. Accessed on: 02 Aug. 2022.
- <sup>29</sup> In the document GRUA – Gentlemen de Rua em Corpos de Passagem on the stage of Sesc Avenida Paulista.

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