

## **Otherness Beneath the Open Sky** **The Political-Poetic Laboratory of** **Maurício Dias & Walter Riedweg**

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But what is a device [*dispositif*]? In the first instance it is a skein, a multilinear set. It is composed of lines, each of a different nature .... Untangling these lines within a device in each case means establishing a map, a cartography, surveying unknown landscapes, and this is what [Foucault] calls 'working on the ground'.... The dimension of the Self is by no means a pre-existing determination which one finds ready-made.... A line of subjectivation is a process, a production of subjectivity in a device: it has to create itself, insofar as the device allows it to come into being or makes it possible. It is a line of flight.... The Self is neither knowledge nor power. It is a process of individuation which bears on groups and on persons, and is subtracted from the established relations of power and the constituted bodies of knowledge: a kind of surplus-value.

Gilles Deleuze<sup>1</sup>

The devices of Maurício Dias & Walter Riedweg put the world to work. Not any world, not any work. The worlds in which they operate are located on the fringes of the supposedly guaranteed universe of integrated world capitalism;<sup>2</sup> they are outgrowths produced by the very logic of the regime. An imaginary barrier separates off the inhabitants of these worlds, whose own consistency goes unrecognized, covered up by the stigma-identities, phantasmagoric images with which they are represented. In these images, material poverty mingles with subjective and existential impoverishment, but even more precisely, with an ontological poverty that comes to define the supposed essence of these beings. Thus they are

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<sup>1</sup> Fragments excerpted from Gilles Deleuze, "Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif?" in: *Michel Foucault philosophe: Rencontre Internationale 9, 10, 11 janvier 1988* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), pp. 155-157. [Translator's note: Here and subsequently, whenever foreign-language sources are cited, the corresponding quotes have been translated into English directly from these sources.]

<sup>2</sup> "Integrated World Capitalism" (IWC) is a term coined by Félix Guattari in the late 1960s, as an alternative to the term "globalization," which is generic and which serves to hide the fundamentally economic and more specifically capitalist and neoliberal sense of the phenomenon of transnationalization in its current form. Cf. Guattari, Félix, "O Capitalismo Mundial Integrado e a Revolução Molecular," lecture given in the group seminar of the CINEP (Paris: 1980). Published in: *Revolução Molecular: Pulsões políticas do desejo*, ed. Suely Rolnik (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1981).

assigned the rank of trash-subjectivities in the hierarchies that govern the distribution of human categories on the perverse maps of this regime: geopolitical maps, but even more, cartographies of skin color, lifestyles, behavioral codes, consumer cohorts, languages, accents, cultural wavelengths, etc. These are abstract borders, but they exert a power of concrete command over desire and the processes of subjectivation, with the result that the inhabitants of the capitalistically globalized world tend to produce themselves and their relation to the other as a function of these images. The humanity constituted by all those who are implicitly considered “trash-subjectivities” continues to swell every day across the face of the planet: an existence exposing otherness to the open sky. The raw material of the two artists is precisely this radical otherness, and their collaboration is inseparable from itinerant roving through regions where the pulse of the other’s existence beats loudest. In these regions they mount their devices, whose function is to approach the supposedly dissimilar others and lift the veil of identity that covers and neutralizes their living presence, crossing the chimerical barrier that separates them in order to bring forth the voice of this densely complex encounter, whenever it effectively takes place. A voice that first appears to the protagonists, then is distilled and duly recorded for distribution in social milieus that have some direct or indirect involvement in those lives, even if it is subject to denial.

It is not on any fringe that the artists linger to install their devices. Their work is generally done with populations that have an incisive relation of coexistence with the world of the luxury-subjectivities—an equally phantasmagoric category representing beings whose integration to the regime is supposedly guaranteed. This relation of coexistence can be permanent, when it is involved in the characteristic means of subsistence of these populations, or temporary, when it derives from a passing circumstance. These are points where the social fabric unravels, due to unrecognized tensions between incompatible universes; points where the edge populations experience suffering and fragility because of the suffocation of the potential of existence. From one side of the imaginary border—from the outside—contact and intermingling are desired, in order to exist with social dignity; but those on the inside implicitly or explicitly reject the desire for intermixture, often with a violence that can go so far as extermination. The proximity of these worlds sharpens the exposure to otherness, the friction to which it gives rise, its disruptive effects and the urgent need to confront it. This is probably the reason why many of the works by the two artists officially entitled “public art”<sup>3</sup> were developed in response to invitations from institutions across the

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<sup>3</sup> The works by Dias & Riedweg officially designated as “public art” are: *Devotionalia* (public art and video installation: 1994-97), *Innendienst (Serviços Internos)* (public art and multimedia installation: 1995), *Question Marks* (public art and video installation: 1996), *Inside the tube (Dentro e fora do tubo)* (public art and installation: 1998), *Os Raimundos, Os Severinos, Os Franciscos* (public art and multimedia installation: 1998), *Tutti Veneziani* (public art and video installation: 1999),

planet which are confronted with this kind of situation, and whose function is precisely to deal with the problem it poses. One of the only proposals of this kind that sprang entirely from an initiative of the artists was *Devotionalia*, the first work they did as a team.<sup>4</sup> This was no doubt the work that led to many of the innumerable invitations that followed, and to proposals marked by a certain way of understanding and practicing “public art,” even if, strictly speaking, it becomes necessary to question the attribution of a “public” character to only some of Dias & Riedweg’s works, since this character seems to be present as an essential trait in all of them, including those which are video installations, and even when they are exhibited in spaces traditionally destined for this purpose. The concept of the public that can be extracted from the full range of this work is, without a doubt, one of its most compelling dimensions; but such a concept can only be delineated more precisely in conclusion, after we have explored a number of the artists’ proposals.

Among the examples of the first type of fringe populations with whom the pair of artists develop their work (the groups which live permanently within the world of the “luxury-subjectivities”) there are the children known as “street urchins,” found in the work already mentioned above. Such a denomination seems to capture the city’s image of these children: it is as though they belong to a human race that arises “ready made” in the streets, springing up from nowhere, in part because they are such strange beings for the other inhabitants of the city that the latter see them reified as elements of the cityscape. But the image is also due to the fact that the kids themselves often cut all ties to their families, refusing simultaneously to coexist with the often violent and abusive inconsistency of their familiar worlds and to remain in servile confinement in the humiliating areas of the city destined for them—from the favelas to the Febems<sup>5</sup>—choosing

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*Mama & Ritos Viciosos* (public art and video installation: 2000), *Belo é também aquilo que não foi visto* (public art and video installation: 2002), *Mera Vista Point* (public art and video installation: 2002).

<sup>4</sup> A public art and video installation project (1994-1997) developed with street children in Rio de Janeiro and subsequently including kids from The Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany, via workshops carried out in the various exhibitions of the work that were held in museums and galleries in these countries. More recently, in 2003, the work took on a new life and was actualized with a tour through The Netherlands, Cuba and Spain. *Devotionalia* was presented in the Museu de Arte Moderna de Rio de Janeiro (MAM, Rio de Janeiro: 1996); in the Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain (Geneva: 1996); in the Kaskadenkondensator (Basel: 1996); in the OT Gallerie—Kornschette (Lucerne: 1997); in the Stroom (The Hague: 1997); in the Unesco International Conference on Art/Education (Hamburg: 1997); in the National Congress (Brasilia: 1997); in Witte de With (Rotterdam: 2003); in the Havana Biennial (Havana: 2003); in the MacBa, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (Barcelona: 2003).

<sup>5</sup> The Febem—Fundación Estadual del Bienestar del Menor, or “State Foundation for the Well-Being of Minors”—is an institution linked to the Secretaries of Education of the Brazilian states. Its objective is to apply the Statute of Children and Adolescents, promoting studies and planning solutions addressed to delinquent children and teenagers from 12 to 18 years old. Depending on their

instead to live in the streets, irreverently mixed with the passers-by (*Devotionalia*, 1994-97).

Another example of the kinds of populations with whom the artists have worked is the case of the doormen, immigrants who have come from the poorer regions of the country to São Paulo, to niche inside the buildings where the well-heeled classes of the city dwell. Although the doormen share the buildings with these classes, the tiny and unhealthy quarters reserved for them and their families are as though invisible to the others. As though living in a natural habitat perfectly integrated to the local architectonic landscape, these doormen are only seen in the ground-floor cubicles<sup>6</sup> where they are confined day and night like prison guards (*Os Raimundos, Os Severinos e Os Franciscos*, 1988).<sup>7</sup> A further case is that of the wandering vendors (*camelôs*, in Brazilian) with their informal economic production, advancing like swarms through the interstices of the formalized economy of the city (*Mera Vista Point*, 2000).<sup>8</sup> Both the doormen and the wandering vendors are doubly marginalized: on the national map because the great majority are immigrants from the Northeast, the sewer-region of Brazilian capitalism; and on the city map, not only in the city of São Paulo where they live now but also in their cities of origin. There they belong to the economically underprivileged strata, which is also why they moved to the South.

A final example of populations of this type would be the *chaperos*, as male prostitutes are known in Barcelona. Their profession implies erotic cohabitation with the protected world of their clients, despite their belonging to the zones of supposed trash-subjectivities, to refer back again to the hierarchy of current maps. The *chaperos* are also doubly marginal: on the international map, given that the majority are immigrants from South America, North Africa and South Asia (the sewer-regions of integrated world capitalism); and on the national map, not only that of Spain where they now live, but also in their countries of origin from which they migrated—like the Northeasterners of Brazil—in the attempt to escape their miserable financial condition. Prostitution is the most immediate means they have found to fulfill their hopes in Spain, given their shaky education and their illegal status in the country. *Chapa*—paid sex in the clandestine atmosphere of a cheap, anonymous hotel room, or, as is frequently the case for the *chaperos* of Barcelona, of a dark and sordid sauna room—may be the only situa-

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age and the seriousness of the infraction, the minors enter specific socio-educational programs, either under custody or in states of conditional freedom.

<sup>6</sup> The cubicles occupied by doormen who watch over the entryways to buildings form part of the security system of Brazilian cities.

<sup>7</sup> A public art and multimedia installation carried out at the invitation of the 24th Biennial of São Paulo, 1998. It was subsequently presented at Kunsthalle Bern (Bern: 1999); in Galerie ACC (Weimar: 2000); and in Centro Cultural Light (Rio de Janeiro: 2001).

<sup>8</sup> A public art and video installation carried out at the invitation of *Arte Cidade Zona Leste* (São Paulo: 2002).



From: *Voracidade Máxima*, 2003

tion where flows of eroticism and desire run loose between two worlds so rigidly separated on the established imaginary maps (*Voracidade Máxima*, 2003).<sup>9</sup>

Among the examples of the second type of fringe populations with whom Dias & Riedweg develop their proposals (groups coexisting temporarily with the supposedly guaranteed world) are the children and adolescents of immigrants who have recently come to Switzerland. The work was done in the so-called “integration classes” reserved for them in the public school system when they arrive in the country (*Serviços Internos*, 1995).<sup>10</sup> Another example of the same kind is that of the refugees, the offspring of conflicted lands, living in Switzerland with hopes of having their political asylum legalized; the wait can stretch out for months or even more than a year, beyond which point the judicial decision, in the majority of cases, is to extradite them. The refugees with whom the artists worked live in the suburbs of Adilswil, which itself is a suburb on the outskirts of Zurich; they are lodged in containers in one of the innumerable Reception Centers for Political Refugees existing in the country for this reason (*Dentro e fora*

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<sup>9</sup> A public art and video installation carried out at the invitation of the MacBa, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, for “Posiblemente hablemos de lo mismo,” an exhibition of Dias & Riedweg’s work (Barcelona: 2003).

<sup>10</sup> A public art and multimedia installation carried out at the invitation of the Shedhalle Zurich, in the context of the exhibition *Aussendienst (Serviços Externos)* (Zurich: 1995).

*do Tubo*, 1988).<sup>11</sup> Among this same group of examples you also find the people on the border between the United States and Mexico, the most frequently crossed frontier on the planet. On the Mexican side, the artists worked with poor Mexicans, mostly *campesinos* from the south, and with Latin Americans from various countries; they were all living there in transit and waiting for the opportune moment to jump the wall that separates the two countries and enter the United States on the sly. While they wait—which can be a long time—they live in an extremely precarious situation, because in general they end up spending the bit of money they had saved throughout their entire life to pay the “coyotes,” figures who will permit them to cross the border illegally, but without offering them any guarantee as to their destinies. On the U.S. side, the artists worked with the immigration and customs officers, focusing on their love relation with their dogs, who are trained to identify breaches of the law, and therefore to chase away the Latin Americans hanging around the area, who on principle are all suspected of being on the point of committing some illegal action, or of indeed of having already committed it, when they are caught trying to cross the border (*Mama & Ritos Viciosos*, 2000).<sup>12</sup>

The departure point of the work is always the meeting between the artists themselves and this radical otherness. The politics of this meeting is a fundamental given of the artistic proposal, because it is what lends the work as a whole its particular tone. If there is solidarity in this politics—and there certainly is—it has nothing to do with a politically correct attitude adorned with a touch of piety, that freezes the other into the identity of a victim and feeds narcissistically on its omnipotent pretense of bringing salvation, which also serves to ease a guilty conscience. Dias & Riedweg feel no shame in declaring that they don’t claim to teach anyone anything, or to solve anyone’s problems, to save or cure anyone, also because nobody solves their own problems, saves or cures even themselves, and therefore much less the other. It is something quite different that leads them to meet such a distant other: the awareness that the order which imperatively separates them is a pure fiction, and the need to disobey it and to cross the border to strike out into a world different from one’s own, moved by the desire of getting to know that world and of letting oneself be affected by it, by the pleasure of the outbreaks, of overstepping one’s own limits. Asked about what brings them to chose this or that environment, it is Dias who replies: “I think it happens in an

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<sup>11</sup> An intervention in public space carried out at the invitation of the Swiss cultural philosopher Thomas Schmutz, then director of the Reception Center for Political Refugees of Adliswil (Zurich: 1998). Subsequently presented in Künstlerhaus Mousonturm (Frankfurt: 1998).

<sup>12</sup> A public art and video installation carried out at the invitation of InSite 2000, United States/Mexico (San Diego/Tijuana: 2000). Subsequently presented in the MacBa, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (Barcelona: 2000); in Viper—International Festival of Film and Video (Basel: 2001); in the Rotterdam Film Festival (Rotterdam: 2001).



From: *Mama & Ritos Viciosos*, 2000

uncontrolled way, in a realm of fascination. Everything we don't understand, that we don't have, that we are not.... It's not that we want to be this or to have that, but that's what leads us to try to meet..."<sup>13</sup> A quest entailing the freedom to expose oneself to the risk that one's own references will be destabilized, and a readiness to face the work of elaboration and change that this situation demands by its very nature, a kind of work which also by its very nature can only be realized between these two separate worlds, and on the basis of their mutual contamination. Contaminating oneself with the other is not fraternizing with him or her, but letting the event happen and the tensions emerge. The encounter is built up—when in fact it does occur—on the basis of conflicts and outbursts and not their humanistic denial. It is on the basis of this specific quality of the encounter that Dias & Riedweg put together, each time, the incomparable puzzle of a device that will convoke the involvement of an intricate network of individuals and instances linked tightly or loosely to the existence of the other who is to be approached.

There is a strict autonomy and a sober sense of delicacy in this attitude: and this is the particular tone inherent to the form of solidarity that marks the works of Dias & Riedweg. This politics of the relation to otherness can be found at the origins of their own collaboration, which emerged from the mutual contamina-

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<sup>13</sup> Fragment quoted from the manuscript of the interview granted to Glória Ferreira, subsequently edited for publication under the title "Rencontres avec l'autre: Entretien avec Maurício Dias e Walter Riedweg," in: *Parachute, Art Contemporain/Contemporary Art*, 07-08-09 (Canada: 2003), p. 81.

tion of a Swiss and a Brazilian, both seeking to step outside themselves, outside their preconstituted geopolitical, existential, subjective and professional territories. A Swiss who “grew up slowly with a somewhat complex thinking process, too curious to be a practical farmer,” as Walter defines himself—a performer who felt uncomfortable with what was being done in music and theater in Europe and in the United States where he was studying,<sup>14</sup> at the time when he met Maurício during a short trip to the Switzerland. An “urban Brazilian Indian who doesn’t know how to shoot a goal,” as Maurício defines himself—a plastic artist who was living restless on the national and international art scene, studying in Switzerland<sup>15</sup> where his work was beginning to gain a certain notoriety when, in convalescence from a recent bout of meningitis, he met Walter. As they themselves explain, it was on the basis of their doubts in regard to the art system and the boredom it caused in them, but also of their imperious need to experiment with other forms of life and creation and of their absolute non-knowledge of how or what to create, that they came together. They exposed themselves to each other, hybridizing their worlds and talents, risking an experimentation and giving rise between each other to a universe that set them drifting away from themselves, from their existences and works. This politics of relation with the other that came forth between the two artists is the foundation of the work that they would invent together.

Each work is carried out via the invention of a specific device as a function of the singular problematic field to be explored, an outline of otherness, approached both macro- and micropolitically. Macropolitically, in the sense that this otherness is apprehended as a form, by means of the sensorial body’s perception, translated in its turn into a representation of oneself and the world. From this point of view, the other reaches subjectivity as a formal presence: a representation that is visual, auditory, etc. and is situated within the cartography of reality in its current forms. In addition to the macropolitical approach, this outline of otherness is the result of a micropolitical approach, in the sense that it is apprehended as a field of forces affecting the resonant or intensive body, producing sensations. These sensations function as veritable signs emitted by the world, whose sheer strangeness forces subjectivity to try to decipher them. Via this emission of signs, the other reaches subjectivity as a living presence which will be welcomed to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the extent to which one wishes to decipher it. For the deciphering of sensation implies a change in the forms of the reality of oneself and the world, and in the forms of their car-

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Riedweg studied at the Musik-Akademie Luzern and at the Scuola di Teatro Dimitri in Verscio; he subsequently lived in the United States where he took part in the workshops of Richard Schechner, in the Performance Studies Department of New York University.

<sup>15</sup> Maurício Dias graduated from the Escola de Belas Artes da Universidade Federal de Ríó de Janeiro in 1986 and did a masters in Fine Arts, at the Schule fuer Gestaltung Basel, Switzerland.



tographies, because it has nothing to do with any kind of explanation, but rather with processing and embodying, that is, with creating.

The context apprehended through these two approaches is the one that will be put to work and will become a work; on it will depend the concept of each proposal and the modes of actualization of each device. But the vocation of the device is always the same: reverberating otherness so as to encourage a gradual increase in the density of the collective network involved in the given context. Convoking the forces that compose the context, making visible the macro- and micropolitics of relation to otherness that are current in that context: the macropolitics of interests, of dissensus and consensus, of degrees of negotiation and civil responsibility; the micropolitics of desires, of degrees in the openness to the other and the modulation of the contagion, but also of the processes of subjectivation and territorial creation that the contagion unleashes.

The ability to operate simultaneously in these two registers is one of the most surprising facets of the devices created by Dias & Riedweg in the work they carry out together. This is the facet that differentiates their proposals from other practices of sensitization and of corporeal or sensorial expression, whether artistic, pedagogical or therapeutic. In general, such practices do not even work on the micropolitical level, they limit themselves to the sensorial and ignore the intensive. The double register on which the artists operate also differentiates them from the practices known as political and/or ideological consciousness-raising, whether these are artistic, pedagogical, philanthropic or directly militant. These operate exclusively on the macropolitical level, relating to the other only as representation and taking the current maps of meaning as their sole reference. Limiting oneself to the sensorial and to the macropolitical protects one from the contagion of the other as a living reality, and from the destabilizing consequences of such contagion.

The methodology of the devices invented by Dias & Riedweg includes a series of strategies which, in their broad outlines, can be divided into five phases. The first consists in going to meet the world in which they plan to insert themselves and letting themselves be impregnated with it, both through cohabitation and through all kinds of investigation. From that basis, the artists elaborate a concept that will orient the strategy of the device's creation as a whole. In those cases where the work is not a response to an invitation including the provision of resources for its production, this is also the moment in which they work up a project to find support. The second phase consists in selecting the elements that will enter into the device—persons, places, materials, dimensions to be mobilized/investigated in workshops, etc.—and in defining the operational mode in which the concept will be carried out. The third consists in strategies of interaction with the group chosen to create the conditions of a shared life-experience. Such strategies generally consist of a series of workshops or “staged encounters,” interactions that are staged by the persons involved following a script, in some

cases together with the artists. The final two phases are strategies for the communication of the work, from the most focused circles to the most widespread. The fourth phase consists in inventing communications media circumscribed to the art audience, most commonly video installations accompanied or not by objects, media which can even be presented in museums or galleries; and the fifth and final phase consists of the invention of media of communication for a wider and more diverse public, making possible an unpredictable expansion in many directions at once.

The way the methodology is carried out and the strategies it employs with respect to the five above-mentioned phases will vary as a function of the outline of otherness where the device is inserted, and on whose basis the proposal's concept is defined. But all the elements of the device invariably form part of the work, which itself is precisely the event that results from the confluence of its strategies. It is even possible to redeploy the device at different times and in different contexts, thus unleashing new processes that will continue to compose this open work, which is virtually inexhaustible and can always be reactivated and reactualized.

Let us examine each of the phases in certain devices created by the artists, so as to bring forth certain lines of conceptual elaboration concerning what the proposals put to work, and the way they dialogue with contemporary art.

We will begin with the third phase, where it is a matter of coexisting with the group that has been chosen among a particular kind of population. Whatever the strategy adopted, from workshops to staged encounters, it will try to encourage the demolition of the imaginary wall that separates the supposedly guaranteed world to which the artists belong and the supposedly unguaranteed world of the people in question.<sup>16</sup> Let us therefore linger over the workshops used in the proposals which are officially called "public art."

An initial example of the workshops is one the artists developed for *Innendienst (Internal Services)*, as part of the exhibition *Aussendienst (External Services)* held at the Shedhalle, an experimental project space in Zurich. The exhibition brought together artists working with foreign culture as an artistic material. "Instead of proposing a project where foreign culture entered the work, that is, a

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<sup>16</sup> The notion of "unguaranteed" was proposed by different tendencies within Autonomia, a movement which unfolded in Italy in the 1970s. They "produced a reading of an undeniable fact: the emergence of a new kind of working class, especially in its marginal strata, the irreversible development of a considerable quantity of the population that, by definition, did not fit into the processes of guaranteed work. They were what those tendencies called the 'unguaranteed,' 'precarious workers,' 'black workers,' 'student workers.' They were *i marginati*, those who had no occupation in terms of work or student activity." For the Autonomia movement, the notion of the "unguaranteed" included workers and students who, on ideological principle, situated themselves deliberately outside the guaranteed circles of education and production. This meaning of the term has not been used in the present essay. Cf. Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Micropolítica: Cartografias do desejo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986; English translation forthcoming from Semiotext/MIT).

‘service’ which would be ‘external’ to this culture,” Dias & Riedweg sought to “bring the artistic culture inside the foreign culture (an ‘internal service’).” The aim was to create an inter-world with the protagonists of that culture, which finally would come to form the work itself.

The project consisted of workshops carried out over the course of a month in twenty-five “integration classes” of the Swiss public school system, with 280 foreign children and teenagers who had all arrived recently in the country. The artists used what they described as “association exercises” between the sense of smell and memory: “on the basis of a repertory of smells and objects from everyday life, such as chocolate, toothpaste, disinfectant and coffee, among others, games were played and questions asked to stimulate the imagination and memory of each one.”<sup>17</sup>

Later the students were invited to participate in an exhibition that would be mounted in the Shedhalle, composed of things they were to bring from their homes. The artists asked them to contribute a pair of objects or images and two small bottles, each with a smell. The choice of the objects, images and smells was to be carried out by associating one half of each pair with Switzerland, and the other, with their home country. The exhibition, which came to exist even as it was visited by the students, consisted of a kind of classroom which the artists installed in the gallery, using the furniture of a public school and a blackboard that covered the entire surface of one wall. Hundreds of gradually accumulated objects were placed on the desks set up in rows in a corner; in the center were placed a video camera, a microphone, a television screen and several chairs. Various school groups came everyday to the Shedhalle and sat in the center of the gallery/class. With closed eyes, each student described the smells, images and objects that s/he had brought, recounting the associations that went with them. Their words were directly recorded by the children themselves in videos that were then exhibited in the space along with the objects. To inscribe these fragile and intense moments, the students were invited to write words with colored chalk on the gallery walls, which had also been transformed into blackboards. “At the end of the exhibition one could read a single, enormous network of words running across the entire perimeter of the gallery, in more than forty different languages and various alphabets whose meanings intertwined,” recall Dias & Riedweg.

One may suppose that through these sensorial experiences, as carried out in the schools and in the installation-in-progress in the gallery, it must have become

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Dias & Riedweg*, catalogue of the exhibition of the work of Dias & Riedweg, *O outro começa onde nossos sentidos se encontram com o mundo*, curated by Catherine David, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (Rio de Janeiro: 2002), p. 25. All quotes from the artists’ descriptions of their proposals were taken from this catalogue. Henceforth these quotes, translated in English, will be presented in the text between quotation marks, without any further reference to the source in the footnotes.

evident to some of the children that both the perception of a single thing and the associations to which it gives rise tend to change, depending on the person who perceives it. This experience reinforces the likelihood that these kids will discover the freedom of perception and imagination, helping them to feel authorized to exercise this freedom and to constitute and express their singular interweaves of sensation. Such a freedom, generally absent from the dominant mode of subjectivation under integrated world capitalism, is even rarer for these children and adolescents whose expression is disqualified on principle. For in addition to belonging those levels of society classified as trash-subjectivity on the established maps of their countries of origin, they find this stigma aggravated in their situation as new arrivals to Switzerland.

A second example of a workshop is the one the artists carried out for *Question Marks*,<sup>18</sup> a project they worked on with groups of prisoners who up to that point had no contact whatsoever with each other: a group of ten adult prisoners in the Federal Penitentiary of Atlanta, one of the largest American high-security prisons, and another group of thirty adolescent prisoners in a correctional center for convicted minors, the Fulton County Child Treatment Center. Every day over a period of three months a process of communication took place between these groups, through exchanges of videos which they created in workshops.

The workshops carried out in *Question Marks* were of four kinds, concerning smell, touch, hearing and the body. In the first three, sensory stimulations provoked by objects brought by the artists,<sup>19</sup> but belonging to the participants' frames of reference, formed the basis on which the latter were asked to make associations with memory and imagination. To mobilize these associations, the artists asked questions such as: "What is the smell's color? What is the smell's weight?" The inmates were asked to associate a given odor with a place or situation, and to create drawings with these images, expressing texture, color, size, light, temperature. The workshops on the body were carried out on the basis of

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<sup>18</sup> A public art and multimedia installation carried out at the invitation of the project "Conversations at the Castle," curated by Mary Jane Jacob, Art Festival of Atlanta (Atlanta: 1996). Subsequently presented at the Centro Cultural Candido Mendes (Rio de Janeiro: 1997); in the Kunsthalle Bern (Bern: 1998); in the Momenta Gallery (New York: 1999); in the Kunstbunker Nuernberg (Nuernberg, 2000); and in the Sesc Pompéia (São Paulo, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> In the smell workshop, the artists used bottles with everyday scents such as "disinfectant, soap, toothpaste, aftershave lotion, shoe polish, soil, lemon, cocoa butter, honey, mint, grass, cinnamon, yeast and tobacco." In the hearing workshop the artists brought recordings of everyday sounds—"somebody washing dishes and using the bathroom, a radio playing, birdsong, dogs barking, a ringing telephone and a ringing bell, passing cars, someone singing in the distance, children playing, doors closing, keys opening gates, footsteps in the sand, on the sidewalk, in the house... waves of the sea breaking on the beach"—sounds referring to a past life outside the prison. In the touch workshop they used fifteen cardboard boxes containing different kinds of materials (feathers, felt, satin, sponges, flour, ice, jam, vaseline, soil, bark, dry leaves, sand and metal). The boxes had a hole through which the participants were invited to reach their hand and feel the content without seeing it, then develop their associations.

performance and theater exercises which brought the body into relation with space; for example, touching one's own body and that of others, or feeling the architecture of the prison. At the same time as they had these experiences and formulated these descriptions, they sketched plans of the different places in which they had lived, including objects and personal possessions,<sup>20</sup> and while they sketched, the participants told stories and recounted events that were related to these places. In all these activities, the idea was to encourage reflection on the situation they were living through and on artistic practice as a means of personal and political expression. In parallel to all this, thematic discussions were held where the teenagers formulated a certain number of questions to be directed to society, which they wrote out by hand on pieces of sheet metal resembling license plates. Everything was recorded on video and brought from one institution to the other.

The choice of the license plates as a support medium to convey the prisoners' questions to society was hardly arbitrary: first, because the official license plates of the entire country are fabricated in the state prisons, by prisoners under a forced labor regime.<sup>21</sup> But also because they made possible a broad and effective strategy for the communication of the work. In three actions carried out in the streets of Atlanta<sup>22</sup> the license plates were distributed to the public, who took the prisoners' questions away with them and attached them to their automobiles and bicycles. "Are you who you say you are?" "Who should I be afraid of?" "Am I a threat?" "What do you want to know about me?" "What is the first thing you see when you open your eyes in the morning?" These are some of the questions that the prisoners asked of the city, questions which began circulating through all its streets.

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<sup>20</sup> The participants sketched their room, their house, their neighborhood, the courtroom, the prison, the cell, etc. It became clear that they had no mental representation whatsoever of the city of Atlanta, the location of the prison where many of them had been for over twenty years.

<sup>21</sup> "The corrections industry [North American system of forced labor] in the State of Georgia is a public institution that has existed for 36 years and produces automobile license plates, furniture, street-name signs and military uniforms. In this structure, which functions as the right hand of the penitentiary system in almost all the State institutions, work approximately one thousand five hundred prisoners, simply in exchange for educational or social services inside the prisons (the current pay for each prisoner is only 44 cents per hour)." Rhonda Cook, in: *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Atlanta, June 7, 1996.

<sup>22</sup> The first action was carried out in the street, in front of the Castle, on the opening night of the exhibition. The second took place on a Saturday in a poor neighborhood of Atlanta, home to many of the kids with whom Dias & Riedweg worked in the correctional center. The third occurred in the central park of Atlanta (Piedmont Park), where a large number of the city's inhabitants spend their weekends. Dressed like auto repairmen, the artists spread the 365 license plates on the ground and addressed themselves to the passers-by, explaining the action and the process, and inviting them to put one of the plates on their car or bicycle. Some were sent by mail to people indicated by the prisoners participating in the project.

Also created during the course of the conversations maintained in these workshops was a kind of collective nest over two yards high and a yard and a half wide, made of coco palm fibers and thin strips of shiny transparent acetate wrapped around an enormous metal structure. The inspiration came from a certain kind of African bird, whose nests are made and lived in collectively. On every strip of acetate were written a number of other questions directed to society, such as: “How many times can you go in and out of your room?” “Do you have children?” “Are you patient?” “Does your mother make you Christmas buns every year?” “Do you feel guilty sometimes?” “Did you put me inside to leave me outside?” The nest was later incorporated into one of the two video installations included in the proposal.

The device composed by the full set of workshops, video installations and public actions generated a recognition of the prisoners’ existence, which normally remains completely ignored, banished from the imaginary through their elimination from the visual field and their confinement in prisons. By imposing the presence of these lives in public space, it provoked reactions of all kinds, making explicit the tensions implied by their coexistence with the city.

In two of the above-mentioned works (*Serviços Internos* and *Question Marks*) we have examples of devices where the strategies of the various phases are combined: the communication from the work to the art world is not an exhibition of frozen products exported from the process in which they were created, but rather forms part of that process, as one of its elements. There would be many other examples of workshops and of the different compositions that can be carried out with the other strategies, but we have sufficient material with the works described here to draw out certain considerations.

The kind of question that Dias & Riedweg posed to the workshop participants (“What is the smell’s color?” “What is the smell’s weight?” etc.) could refer us to a phenomenological reading of the senses and their relation to sensation; but the contribution of such a reading to an understanding of the two artists’ proposals is debatable. In phenomenology, as Gilles Deleuze remarks, “the levels of sensation will be considered as sensible domains referring to the various sense-organs; but each level, each domain, will have a its own way of referring to the others, independently of the common object represented. Between a color, a taste, a touch, a smell, a sound, a weight, there will be an existential communication constituting the “pathic” (non-representative) moment of sensation.”<sup>23</sup> Yet for Deleuze, the notion of sensation is not to be situated within the scope of the phenomenologist’s “lived body,” or *corps propre*, which is the locus of sensoriality. Rather, in the work he did together with the psychoanalyst Félix Guattari, sensation would be localized within what the authors, inspired by Antonin Ar-

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1996).

taud, called “Body without Organs.”<sup>24</sup> Sensation is the immersion of the body into the intensive: into the chaos of becomings, into the frictions between heterogeneous potentials with their disruptive effects, which disarticulate certain forms of existence and force the creation of others. In short, sensation has to do with the active violence of life. The twist that Deleuze & Guattari give to the question, by comparison to the phenomenological approach, consists in conceiving life beyond the organic and the dichotomy of organic/inorganic, but also in conceiving it beyond its current forms (Zoe). For them, sensation has to do with life as a power of creation (Bios or “naked life”), an intensive field in which new forms are engendered, which are in no way related to the inorganic. For these two thinkers, phenomenology has maintained an excessive familiarity in the encounter with the other, an absence of estrangement—in short, a kind of harmony that remains ignorant of the friction and violence of life.<sup>25</sup>

Seen from this perspective, the oblique approach to the senses in the questions that the artists address to the participants of their workshops appears as a strategy that keeps the subject away from confinement within a purely sensorial realm, obliging him or her to appeal to other potentials of subjectivity. To answer these questions, the participants must find an access to their resonant (or intensive) body, in which sensations are presented; and they will have to activate their creative potential to decipher these sensations, to process them, or in other words, to embody them.

If we accept this reading, we can then say that the sensorial exploration or sensitization undertaken at the outset of the workshops does not constitute a goal in itself, but only a pathway toward the memory of the body—and not just any memory or any body, for it is precisely in this respect that we can distinguish the artists’ approach from other practices of sensorial expression. The memory to be convoked here is that of the resonant (or intensive) body in which sensations are registered; and their processing, stimulated by the questions, is meant to produce words, images, objects and actions between the questioner and answerer, with which a social fabric can be woven and subjective consistency can be generated. It is like Proust’s *madeleine*, whose remembrance by the narrator/character is not exhausted in a mere evocation of the of the taste, nor of the associated pleasure; rather it is the means of a search for the complexity of lived experience, a search

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<sup>24</sup> The notion of “Body without Organs,” created by Antonin Artaud and taken up by Félix Guattari, can be found in innumerable texts by the latter and in various works he wrote together with Gilles Deleuze, among them *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*, “28 novembre 1947—Comment se faire un Corps sans Organes?” (Paris: Minuit, 1980).

<sup>25</sup> Concerning the notions of life and vitalism in Gilles Deleuze, in addition to the texts he devoted to Nietzsche, Spinoza and Bergson, see: *Pourparlers* (Paris: Minuit, 1990), p. 196, and in collaboration with Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*, op. cit., p. 512. I would like to thank Luiz Orlandi and José Gil for their valuable contribution in a discussion of the conceptions of life and vitalism in phenomenology, as seen from a Deleuzian viewpoint.

for time lost or wasted in a somnolent state of subjectivity, dulled to the living reality of the world. A quest to bring the past to life and to lend greater density to its texture, in its composition with the present. The *madeleine* is a sign to be deciphered, an object through which intensive threads of memory can be drawn out, and interwoven with threads of presence—so as to create worlds and unleash processes of subjectivation.

Creating the conditions to draw out the threads of such a disparate other's intensive memory is part of the intelligence of Dias & Riedweg's devices in their third phase, not only in the workshops but also in the staged encounters. An example is the work *Voracidad Máxima*.

Invited by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona to create a new proposal that would be added to a retrospective exhibition of some of their works, Dias & Riedweg decided to develop a work with the *chaperos* of Barcelona, with whom they would mount a video installation. As a strategy to create the conditions of a shared experience, they chose staged encounters. In a room in a cheap hotel, rented specially for the occasion in the Barrio Chino—a former working-class district in the midst of urban transformation, where prostitution is a powerful presence—a series of meetings were held between the artists and the *chaperos* chosen to participate in the project. In these encounters, the artists conversed with the *chaperos* and asked them questions about their lives in Spain and in their countries of origin. The duration of the encounter varied according to the density of the stories, and the interviewee received the hourly rate for *chapa* (paid sex). The scene was always the same: the protagonists were a *chapero* and one of the artists. They lay back on the bed facing each other, the *chapero* at the head of the bed and the artist at the foot; both dressed in a white bathrobe as they would normally be in the sauna where sex takes place. The *chapero*'s face was covered with a rubber mask reproducing the face of the artist doing the interview, whether Dias or Riedweg. The scene was always filmed from the same camera angle, multiplied by the reflections of mirrors in strategic places.

By hiding the *chapero*'s face, the mask removes his identifying features, shielding him from the possibility that his clients or family might recognize him, which would put him in a difficult situation. But this is only the most obvious effect of—and reason for—the use of the mask. The signs that the mask hides are also those composing the image of his belonging to the world of the trash-subjectivities in the official division of places and their respective values—a stigma-identity that clings to the *chapero*'s skin as though it were his essence. What is more, the mask does not reproduce just any face, but that of the client, since in the staged encounter the artist occupies the place of the client, and outside that encounter he also belongs to the world of the luxury-subjectivities who consume the trash-subjectivity of the *chaperos*. The similarity of the faces seems to blur the dissimilarity that separates them on the immaterial map which fixes



their phantasmagoric positions, and all of this is intensified by the intimacy of a conversation that would normally never take place during this kind of encounter.

What was lived there, and what we also see recorded in the video, is the reproduction of a scene of paid sex where the mask and the kind of conversation proposed bring in something dissonant: the identity-reference is silenced and the rigid borders between the world are dissipated. On the *chaperos'* side, the covering of their identifying face liberates them of their own identification with the trash-subjectivity, which they tend to adopt in a submissive and/or aggressive form in the relation with their interlocutors, who belong to the idealized and/or hated world of luxury. The possibility of shifting away from this position creates the conditions for a living speech to be embodied. On the side of the client/artist and, subsequently, of the spectator, hearing the *chaperos* without the visual interference of these signs seems to inaugurate the possibility of listening: and so an entire universe uncovers its inherent wealth and vitality, its conflicts and anxieties, while at the same time, inevitably, uncovering the poverty to which this world is reduced, when it is apprehended by way of the identifying image with which it is associated.

As Dias & Riedweg observe, the very meaning of the concept of “identity” is thrown into question here. The concept is stripped bare in the reduction it carries out on subjectivity: first, grasping it only as a representation; second, freezing it into a strictly determined representation taken as an essence; and finally, attributing a devaluation to this essence. What is revealed is the close association between the concept of identity and a politics of subjectivation inherent to a perverse regimen of power. In sum, the reproduction of the sex-scene—into which a dissonance has been introduced—opens up an access to the intensive body, and it is on the basis of the latter that speech with the depth and dynamics of a life can be constituted.

The staged encounters do not begin, like the workshops, with an oblique sensorial experience, but instead with a script that is staged; yet the estrangement mobilized by the dissonance they introduce fulfills the same function as this oblique relation to the senses which we examined above: a zone of noise in the usual map of perception, potentially opening up a breach for access to the intensive. This objective, which the workshops and the staged encounters hold in common, depends on the same attitude: a kind of listening characteristic of a subjectivity that desires to approach the other, so that the intensive threads of both can be drawn out and woven together.

The fact that the other whom one desires to approach belongs to the world of the trash-subjectivities makes this attitude even more incisive. In this phase of the work, what is sought is to weave the fabric of a border-territory between the two worlds. A territory that would no longer be that of one world or the other, nor the sum or the convergence of both, since that would mean that each becomes merely the same. What is sought instead is the possibility for the device to unleash a

double line of subjectivation in non-parallel directions. A poetic-erotic potential is liberated in these existences which are normally confined to the phantasmatic sewer of trash-subjectivities and arrogantly considered poor in their very being, when they are not awarded humanitarian trophies as victims of injustice. “Poetry and eroticism are found in all the contexts of life, independently of economic conditions,” insist Dias & Riedweg.

This is the event that will be recorded: the memory of the other as a living existence in the process of elaboration, a memory called up by the dialogue with the artist/interlocutors. The recording remains in the videos, and if there had been workshops as well, it would also linger in the objects. Impregnated with sensations and with the way they have been processed, the objects and videos have the potential to provoke other events. The video recording of this event will become the raw material of the documentary dimension of the artists’ works, and therefore, together with the objects, it will also be the raw material of the various phases whereby communication with the art world and the larger world beyond it can take place. The challenge of these phases will be met when an experience that has so far been restricted to a small milieu starts reverberating in a wider social network.

We will see how this operates in some of their proposals, first in the means of communication circumscribed to the art-world public, and then in more diffuse means of communication propagated through the meanders of the social field.



An example of the first type is *Devotionalia*. The project began in 1994 as a mobile workshop for street kids and teenagers in Lapa, in the center of Río de Janeiro. Later, social workers and NGOs working with these populations were integrated to the proposal, forming a larger assemblage. This contributed to a first expansion of the work, which, in 1995, was carried out in eighteen places, all located in different carioca streets and favelas. The work proliferated through the city until 1997, the year in which it was considered finished, after having involved more than two thousand persons.

The workshops were documented in over fifty hours of video. In these workshops were created 1,286 ex-votos, white wax casts of the hands and feet of over

six hundred children and adolescents who participated in the project. At the moment of the casting of their hands and feet, the children expressed a desire that was recorded on video and also remains imbued in the ex-votos (a word to designate that which literally “emerges from a wish”). The videos and ex-votos formed the object of an exhibition in R o, with three thousand people at the opening, at least half of whom came from the favelas and from underprivileged communities—mostly children and teenagers who entered this space for the first time. The exhibition generated various levels of public discussion between the different milieus of culture, politics and social work in R o.

Five exhibitions of *Devotionalia* followed in different cities in Switzerland and Holland and at an International Conference on Art/Education organized by Unesco and carried out in Germany. All of them consisted in installations including videos and ex-votos from the workshops carried out in Rio. For each of these exhibitions, the artists did workshops with European children and teenagers, who were asked to respond, with objects they either created or brought from home, to the desires expressed by the ex-votos and videos made by the carioca children.

The artists then brought the material produced by the children and teenagers in Europe back to R o, to take up the project again with the same people who had participated in Brazil from the very outset. In September of 1997 two events were carried out simultaneously: a final exhibition of the ex-votos, organized by Dias in the National Congress of Brazil, where an exhibition was mounted in the Black Room that serves as the main entryway to the Congress, through which the deputies and senators must necessarily pass; and another event organized by Riedweg, with the street kids in the eighteen R o communities and with all the people who had participated in the project, including the social workers and the members of the NGOs who were involved. Two Internet terminals were installed: one permanent and fixed in the Congress in Brasilia, the other with a mobile telephone attached to a notebook computer that circulated through each of the eighteen communities in R o. During the eighteen days the exhibition lasted, video conferences were carried out every day between eighteen federal deputies and senators speaking from Brasilia, and the children and members of the NGOs speaking from R o. On the last day of the exhibition in Brasilia a happening was created in the Arcos de Lapa in R o, where all the communities got together, and on this occasion they distributed the objects they had accumulated during the exhibitions. They then carried out a final video conference exhibited on a screen in Arcos de Lapa, in which a deputy involved with the official Statute of Children and Adolescents announced a program of one hundred permanent scholarships for minors, to be awarded by the S o Martinho Foundation in a program financed by the federal government in exchange for the donation of the installation of the ex-votos to the Ministry of Culture, where they would form part of a public collection. Six months later the scholarships were suspended and the ex-votos were

placed in a storage chamber; the pieces have not yet come to form part of the promised public collection.

In 2003, for an installation at the With de With in Rotterdam, upon invitation by the curator Catherine David, Dias & Riedweg did a re-edition of the same videos, in which they tried to record what had happened with the children over the course of the eight years that had passed since the beginning of the project. To this end the artists sought out all the street children and adolescents who had participated in the project and then filmed their declarations, which made it established that 50% of the participants had died, with detailed accounts of who had died, and how and why.

Simultaneously, the artists created a compilation of news items from the carioca medias about the street kids of R o during the same period, based on an investigation using newspaper archives accessible by Internet. With this material they also put together a video, interspersing the children's stories with quotes from the media confirming what they said, but subtracting all the vital consistency of the events. The video editing emphasizes the contrast between the cool, anesthetic language of the media and the warmth of the traumatic experience in the children's stories. At the same time, the ex-votos remained—as they remain today—in the storage room, just as the lives of the surviving children remain without a destiny, while they live in the streets—relegated to a kind of storage chamber beneath the open sky—awaiting the likelihood of a premature death. Yet the documentation is still alive, for it can always be reactivated. The video was later brought to the Havana Biennial and to the exhibition of Dias & Riedweg's work in the MacBa, in Barcelona.

The project *Devotionalia*, by following these children and teenagers over the course of eight years, documented in real time the consistency and fugacity of their lives, destined for extermination. The exhibition at the MAM which now lives forgotten in a storage room in the Ministry of Culture is the installation of an immense collective wish (ex-voto), appearing retrospectively as testimony of the lives of these children with their wishes for the future, but also of how this future, by its very principle, does not come to fulfillment.

A first example of what stands out in the communication strategies of Dias & Riedweg in *Devotionalia*, as in various other works by the two artists, is the fact of including in their objectives the art-viewing public, through the exhibition of their works in museums and galleries (the fourth stage). For them there is no question of inverting the signs, of attributing a negative value on principle to the spaces traditionally destined to the public communication of art works. The artists do not engage in any moral reading of such spaces, which for them are neither good or bad, but depend rather on the forces that invest them and on how they are invested. For both artists it is a matter of putting these spaces to work, of making them function in favor of the problematization that the device carries out, incorporating them as one of its components. This is what differentiates their

proposals from other works in which supposed “trash-subjectivities” and particularly “street kids” are brought to the museum, in a kind of happening whose potential is exhausted with the event itself. By connecting the museums and galleries to the larger social assemblage produced and activated by the device which puts a specific context to work, projects like *Devotionalia* tend to avoid the supposed neutrality of such spaces, which corresponds to their status in a regimen that isolates art as an autonomous sphere. The integration of these spaces to the process can potentially bring in other elements and redeploy the existing ones in different directions, opening up new horizons of communication. Additionally the objects, as exhibited in these spaces by Dias & Riedweg, are treated as full-fledged elements of the device, which in itself has the power of avoiding their condition as fetishes, i.e. the condition that corresponds to their status in the traditional art space. This is especially clear in the videos, utilized a great deal in the works by these two artists, whose deployment demands a more careful reflection to which we will return later on.

In *Devotionalia*'s itinerary through Europe, this kind of communication was concretely fomented by the strategy of the exhibitions themselves, which asked the European children to react to what they saw and heard from the kids in R  o. These reactions in their turn were recorded and incorporated in the work, mobilizing other reactions in this ever-expanding network. In a work like *Servi  os Internos*, the exhibition in a gallery (the Shedhalle) was not limited to the production of the creative process of the workshops carried out in the schools. It consisted in a communication of the process itself and, more importantly, it was integrated to it as one of its components. The installation took on the consistency of an accumulative process that grew and transformed because of the fact that the workshops—whereby new testimonies were fixed on video and new objects were added to the installation—took place in the exhibition space itself. From the opening of the exhibition, with the classroom/gallery empty and the backboard still blank, to the closure, more than a thousand objects were accumulated and endless numbers of words in the most diverse languages covered all the walls, a “work in progress” in the most literal sense. The idea is to “maintain the complexity of the problem in the very form of the presentation,” Riedweg writes: to maintain the living character of the work in all its facets and doublings.

The exhibition is thus a strategy that participates in the process of contamination and meaning-production. The objective of a project like *Devotionalia* being to establish dialogue, it is never exhausted or concluded, it can always be reactivated, even by means of an exhibition which, in this case, is a form of dialogue between others inside a process, and never its final result. For Dias & Riedweg, the question of the exhibition is not how to present the product of a process—because, precisely, the products that generate the processes of their artistic actions are neither final nor reifiable—but how to reactivate, within this type of

context, the objective that orients the project. An open work that is actualized and reactualized, each time in another way.

Finally, it is worth noting that in the devices of Dias and Riedweg, the occupation of the spaces destined for the communication of works to the artistic milieu is made concomitantly with the invention of other forms in which to make them public, to make them reach other milieus. This is the case with the video conferences of *Devotionalia*, carried out between the “street kids” in Rio and the deputies in Brasilia. In other words, by reinserting the museum and the gallery into the living network-in-process, the device encompasses them instead of submitting to the logic of its official status: it activates their condition as a public place, and the sphere of art is contaminated with the world. This aspect of Dias & Riedweg’s devices reinforces the idea that public art is not necessarily art outside the museum, since what is outside can be more invulnerably white and suffocatingly cubic than the museum itself, even if it is a trash scenario or a heap of ruins. What makes the museum into a white space without marks, unattainable by the forces of the world like a hermetically sealed cube, is the omnipotent pretension of the forces that make it into a neutral place, dissociated from public life.

This becomes quite clear in the device that Dias & Riedweg invented in their proposal for the 48th Venice Biennial, and which they called *Tutti Veneziani*.<sup>26</sup> Over the course of two months preceding the Biennial, the artists identified thirty-six Venetians from different places and segments of the city: “A gondolero, a gynecologist, an artist, a priest, a commander of the Arsenale,<sup>27</sup> a Senegalese street vendor of fake brand-name handbags, the rector of the university, a hotel doorman, cleaning people from the Biennial, a vice-*intendente* of Venice, a 97-year-old blind woman, a trainer, and so on.” The artists proposed to film these people at the moments of their daily lives when they changed clothes, in their homes or at work. They asked them to imagine they had died at some point on the future, while having a drink at a table in a bar with the artists who then inquired as to how they had died and what the experience was like for them. The recordings of these stories were dubbed in voice-over onto the images of the videos where you see the same people changing clothes. In addition to these films a final scene was recorded in the Arsenale with all the participants, at the same place where the installation was to be carried out. They placed three cameras on the roof pointing to the ground, which was covered with a black cloth. All the participants were invited to parade by on this “passageway” looking upward.

For the installation three video projectors were placed beneath the roof, exactly at those points where the cameras were located during the filming. The im-

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<sup>26</sup> A public art and video installation carried out at the invitation of the 48th Venice Biennial, curated by Harald Szeeman (Venice: 1999); subsequently presented in the Kunsthalle Liestal (Liestal: 2000).

<sup>27</sup> The “Arsenale” is the Arsenal de la Marina in Venice, a space used for the exhibition of the experimental works included in the Biennial.

ages of the Venetians walking, life size, were projected on the central passageway of the exhibition at the Arsenale over which the Biennial's visitors walked. In two naves on either side of the passageway, four large screens were placed on which one could watch the scene of each of the thirty-six participants changing clothes, to the sound of the stories concerning their own deaths.

Venice lives off the staging of the image that the media invent and that the city sells to the tourists. All the Venetians are protagonists of this staging. It is the stage where the spectator-tourists frequenting the Biennial circulate. The living presence of the Venetians in these periods is doubly invisible: to their normal role in this theater of historical tourism, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, is added another semantic layer that makes them into protagonists in a theater of modern cultural tourism, which recycles itself with passing time, incorporating elements of a contemporary script.

The device invented by Dias & Riedweg to put this context to work consisted in bringing the presence of the Venetians inside the scene, but as phantoms, to recall to the spectators that the inhabitants of the city where they are enjoying their cultural tourism are dead. The spectators were invited to listen to them telling how they died and what the passage to this existence as protagonists of an eternal commodity-scenario was like, while looking at them in the privacy of their day-to-day existence as they change clothes to go out on the street again and play their secular role once more. In addition to this the device inverted the relation and for a brief moment the Venetians were the spectators who saw the stage acted out by the tourists of art, like phantom apparitions from a drowned city, wandering around at their feet, observing them from below. The medieval storehouses of the Cordeleria of the Arsenale, dark and deteriorated by time and moisture, distanced from the romantic postcards of the city, created a propitious environment for these phantasmagoric images that brought a dissonance into the scenario of cultural tourism. A kind of staged encounter between the spectator-tourists of art in Venice and the inhabitants of the city, which for a brief moment cut through—at least for some people—the opaque layer of images separating them.

But it is not only to the art audience that Dias & Riedweg communicate the works. The fifth and final stage of the artists' devices consists in highly precise strategies for broader distribution, whose objective is to infiltrate the pores of society with the problem that the project puts to work. From the outset, as we saw, the device of *Devotionalia* extended its radius of distribution beyond the art space: even before the exhibition at the MAM, the projects involved social workers and NGOs; then, children in various European countries; finally, the National Congress, which did not rejoin the assemblage at just any moment of the process, but precisely after the work had been presented at an International Conference on Art/Education mounted by Unesco in Hamburg. This event interfered with the relation of forces in the national arena, since it lent international visibility to the

response that the Brazilian state would give to the problem that the work transmitted.

Another example of the invention of broader communication strategies is the device of *Question Marks*, in which the license plates of automobiles served as a support medium for the painting of the questions of convicted minors addressed to the city, and as a communications medium for their broad distribution. The artists took advantage not only of the fact that cars in Georgia only bear the plates on the rear end, allowing the front to be used as an advertising space; and they equally took advantage of the fact that these plates were the product of the low-cost work carried on inside the prisons. They seized the potential of divulgation latent in the very symbol of confinement and lack of autonomy of those existences, making it a vehicle for their penetration into public life. Derailed against itself, the so-called “labor therapy”—a system of poorly paid work euphemized by the idea that labor heals—was transformed into a vehicle of emancipation: it is not the forced and badly paid work that “cures,” but the possibility of existing for the other, participating in the construction of the collective nest; like the nest of African weaving birds, which inspired the prisoners to create the object included in the installation set up in the context of the project “Conversations at the Castle.” Invisible to the inhabitants of the city, confined in the prison and in their stigma-identities, the prisoners became visible through their incisive questions, circulating through the public space in 365 mobile points, asking the city to answer them, to react to their presence. “The license plates are supports that transport, they transport the messages of these detainees outside the prisons and beyond our control, beyond Art. They cease to be objects of art and become political space, public space. They are questions for all of us. Provocations. Complaints. Question marks,” wrote Dias & Riedweg.

Another proposal in which the strategic understanding of communication in Dias & Riedweg’s devices becomes particularly visible is *Dentro e fora do Tubo (Inside the Tube)*. Among the 120 residents of the Reception Center for Political Refugees in Adilswil, where this project was developed over the course of two months, the artists worked most intensely with a group of twenty. Completely deterritorialized, refugees from countries embroiled in conflicts form a kind of contemporary race whose numbers swell every day. Of all those who seek political asylum in Switzerland only 0.5% receive it, while the others are sent back to the countries they came from, which, in the quasi-totality of cases, is equivalent to a death sentence. What is more, while awaiting they are lodged in the containers of the Reception Center, without the right to work and without any tie to the local community. They live in a kind of limbo between the territories of origin which have shifted, and the impossibility of creating new ones, either temporarily, because it is not yet possible to do so while waiting for an answer in Switzerland, or definitively, if their destiny is to return to a country where what awaits



them is most likely to be death. It was in this state of anguish, exhaustion and fragility that Dias & Riedweg met them, to develop the project together.

The project consisted in a series of daily sensitizing workshops. As in the majority of Dias & Riedweg's workshops, they began with the senses of touch, smell, hearing and sight, so as to bring into play associations which in this case were basically related to the memory of the journey taken by each one. The themes suggested by the artists followed the path taken by the refugees from their countries of origin to their exile in Switzerland: "Home, family, the moment when public life and war intervened in private life, what happened, the decision to leave, the escape, saying goodbye, the last thing they thought upon leaving, the sky at that moment, the trip, the duration of the journey and the duration of the inner journey, arrival in the new place, the first thing they saw in the new place, the first meeting with a Swiss person, the smell of that moment, arrival at the Reception Center, waiting, the fear of the future, but also hope." The conversations were recorded on digital tapes, in the different languages of the refugees. "Everyone worked on the translation... from Ethiopian to Arabic, from Arabic to Italian, from Italian to German. In this way the final recordings were produced, on which the voices accumulated in a chorus of testimonies in various languages until slowly, the German voice rose above all the others to make understanding possible for the general public in Switzerland." Twelve CDs were made with these recordings.

In these workshops, beyond the sensorial explorations, the participants developed sculpture projects with industrial heating tubes of metal, doing drawings based on catalogue photos of these pieces. Each participant chose a public place that s/he considered important in the everyday life of the city, to install a sculpture that was already sketched to fit that space.<sup>28</sup> The emplacement of the tubes in public places entailed negotiations that necessarily involved interaction between the participants and the inhabitants of the city.

The installations were assembled in the Reception Center while the CDs were being made, for playback inside the tubes. The sculptures were then installed in the chosen places, from which emanated the voices of the refugees. "An invitation and a flyer in a newspaper displayed an itinerary through the small city, inviting the population to participate. For the first look at the sculptures, a guided visit was organized with the 120 inhabitants of the Reception Center, various authorities of the police immigration department, a few federal politicians, TV stations, radios, various support groups and also opposition groups.... The installations polarized those for and against, in relation to the most divisive problem in contemporary Switzerland. For a month they withstood the stormy

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<sup>28</sup> The places chosen by the refugees were: "the city's two supermarkets, the post office, the cigarette and magazine kiosk, the public library, the train station, the town hall, the immigration department of the police, the main square, the roof of the Reception Center itself and the interior of the train that links Adliswil to the central station of Zurich."

March weather and various attacks of vandalism by far right and neofascist groups, reaching the end of the exhibition period marked by kicks and dents, on the one hand, and by a broad and solid discussion of the problem in various social circles, on the other.”

The installation of the tubes in the city functioned simultaneously as an exhibition and as its own medium of distribution. The tubes, as Dias & Riedweg write, “are elements to transport energy, to transport something and communicate, between one thing and another.” The same tubes transporting the air that brings heat to the population now transport the warm voice of the refugees to the city’s ears. A voice of otherness warmed up in the encounter with the artists who wished to hear it, against the grain of the majority’s indifference, which chills these voices. To exist with the value of a life in full dignity, the individual, whoever s/he may be, needs to come to a position where the flow between self and world is guaranteed, so that one’s existence can share in the construction of reality, in the creation of maps of meaning. Without this, vital movement runs the risk of stagnation. The refugees left their isolation in the containers to circulate everywhere with their stories of war, flight, conflict. A flow of voices expressing what it means to be awaiting the decision whether or not one will be accepted in one’s urgent need of asylum, duly translated into German so that everyone can hear it, was disseminated through the city from strategic points with busy traffic. The aim was to reach the entire population, the press and the authorities, so as to interfere in the relations of power involved in the legal decision.

The urban installation functioned as a kind of staged encounter on a broader scale between the refugees and the population of the city. To produce an interference in the typical landscape, and therefore, an estrangement in the current map of representations, the sound sculptures were bearers of the possibility of opening gaps to access the intensive body and to provoke a relation of a different nature with the problem that had been put into circulation, a relation that went beyond the stereotypical representations, including those of the support groups.

The traditional media used to publicize exhibitions, such as articles in the newspapers, mailing-list of invitations to the opening and the opening itself, were also part of the process of this work. The mailing-list of invitations included names of other milieus, political ones in particular, which joined the art-world names. Being at the opening in response to the invitation and the page in the newspaper meant passing through all the points in the city forming this megainstallation, and listening together with the 120 refugees to the live expression of their existence in all their original languages, as well as its translation into German. The very medium of communication thus partook of the conditions created by the device to sensitize the public to the problem that was being put to work, the essential aim of the project.

As in all of Dias & Riedweg’s devices, the support medium of the artistic creation and the medium of this work’s communication were conceived on the

basis of the material available in the context at work. Not just any material lends itself to this end, but only those which hold the potential to increase the density of the negotiations surrounding the specific situation problematized by each device. In the case of the refugees, the tubes and the sound pouring out of them have the potential to include and give responsibility to other sectors of society, beyond the traditional administrative agencies involved and officially responsible for the decision to grant asylum, and these other sectors found no way to evade their response, even if only by displaying their rejection.

It is interesting to note that video was not used in this work. This is because video does not have any value in itself for Dias & Riedweg, but is only a support medium, whose use also depends on what is being put to work. In the case of the refugees, for questions of concern and security it was decided not to use video, because it was absolutely necessary that the faces remain anonymous. But in other works, where it was also a matter of maintaining the anonymity of the participants—as in *Voracidade Máxima*—the choice was, on the contrary, to use video but to blur the identifying features. In that case the strategy consisted in hiding the faces of the *chaperos* with the mask of the artists, so that their voices could be heard with no association to the visual signs of their faces. Such signs are part of a deck of marked cards which would condition the way one listens, and this was precisely what was to be deconstructed. While in other proposals, the circulation of the image and voice of the participants is the very objective of the work and video, in this case, is one of the best media for fulfilling this objective. An example is the work of *Devotionalia*, in which video could produce a dissemination of the living presence of the children in environments to which they would never have had access, in addition to recording the tragic experience of those lives in juxtaposition to the indifference of the state and the news media.

Dias & Riedweg's videos fulfill a twofold function, whose aspects are inseparable: they act both as documents and through what we might call "videotransversality."<sup>29</sup> In this second function, a process-dimension is activated within the documentary nature of the videos: they are vehicles of the problem at work, but outside its immediate environment, bringing increasingly varied circuits into communication. First, they are a recording of the experience shared between the artists and the participants in the work, in which a prolonged and careful encounter takes place. Then, when their circulation begins, the videos elicit different responses that express the way the different publics are affected by

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<sup>29</sup> The concept of "transversality" was coined by Félix Guattari in the 1960s in the context of psychotherapy and institutional analysis. According to the author: "Transversality is a dimension that tries to overcome both the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality; it tends to be fulfilled when there is a maximum of communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings. It is the very object of the search for a subject-group." Félix Guattari, "La transversalité," in: *Psychanalyse et transversalité* (Paris: Maspero, 1972), p. 80.

what they hear and see. Such reactions are incorporated to the video, eliciting new responses, and so on indefinitely. The video is diversified as it enters other worlds, which react to the signs recorded in the preceding ones. Both the problem it circumscribes and the network-in-process it elicits become increasingly complex and dense, as its coefficient of transversality<sup>30</sup> increases through this continuous composition.

To achieve such communication, either the videos go forth concretely to meet the various worlds (*Devotionalia*); or those worlds come to meet the videos in their stable place of installation (*Serviços Internos*); or again, the communication between two worlds can take place in real time, through video conferences (*Devotionalia*). Sometimes an initial contact is established between two portions of the same world, which are confined in different places and have no relations with each other; then later the communication that took place within this world is brought outside, strengthened by the emergent network of internally established dialogue that made possible new steps in the processing and formulation of a problem (*Question Marks*, with the initial interchange between the groups of prisoners). The videos of Dias & Riedweg are bearers of vital consistency, and this is the quality that gives them a potential power of intensive communication, which constitutes their primordial function.

The way that video is used in the two artists' work allows them to avoid the status of fetish that the medium has acquired on the contemporary artistic scene. In video-fetishes, the work is only the result of a formal or technical investigation marked by a fascination with technology and divorced from any problematization of the established maps of meaning. This has the effect of cutting short the process of creating new maps, whereas such creation is essential to give passage to the new diagrams of sensations arising from the affects of everyday experience. Yet Dias & Riedweg's work also avoids the cases where the video-fetish results from a relation with reality but is restricted to its dominant representation, while no account is taken of the problem that brought this representation into crisis, unleashing the entire process of creation. To the contrary, video in their work

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<sup>30</sup> The "coefficient of transversality," also a concept coined by Félix Guattari in the 1960s, in the circles of psychotherapy and institutional analysis, refers to the degree of recognition or blindness in relation to otherness that predominates in the context where one seeks to intervene. It is the degree to which subjectivity in context allows itself to be traversed by the singularity of universes different from its own, reshaping itself and the world on that basis. Guattari offers an image to circumscribe the notion: "Inside an enclosed field let us place horses with adjustable blinkers, and let us say that the 'coefficient of transversality' will be precisely the degree to which these blinkers fit. Let us imagine that at the point where the horses are totally blind, a certain kind of traumatic encounter will happen. As we open up the visors, it is possible to imagine that the flow will take place in a more harmonious way." The coefficients of transversality define politics of subjectivation, in which the author believes it is possible to intervene: "Our hypothesis is this: it is possible to modify the different unconscious coefficients of transversality at the different levels of an institution." ("La transversalité," op. cit., p. 80).

establishes a relation around the deciphering of signs emitted by the reality in question. It is used to carry out a process of collective interpretation orchestrated by the artists. If it is true that there is a vigorous technological exploration of video as a medium in this work, that investigation always acts to give body to the signs that the project attempts to decipher; and the success of this deciphering depends in its turn on strict technical and formal precision.

In Dias & Riedweg's work, video also enters the process as one of its means of micro and macropolitical action. From a micropolitical point of view, video injects a force of belief in the existence of the radically different other with whom the artists interact, a belief in the other's powers of resistance and creation. These powers are amplified by the device, against the grain of the medium's fetishization, which tends rather to neutralize them. From the macropolitical point of view, the singular voice of those considered as trash-subjectivities resonates through video just as it also does through other elements of Dias & Riedweg's devices. It provokes a production of the social fabric and the cartography of meaning, at a broader scale than was ever possible from these people's places as refugees, street kids, etc.; and in this way it subtly interferes with the dominant relation of forces.

The media that Dias & Riedweg invent in their devices, in order to achieve their self-broadcasting—the videos, the tubes, the license plates, but also the invitations and flyers with the map of the points of contagion/communication, etc.—take their distance from the habitual mass media of broadcasting and communication. These tend to promote a homogenization that merely covers up the variety and singularity of the different worlds, pasteurizing the frictions between them, and even more, mobilizing a general and undifferentiated identification with the proposed model or pattern, so that it will be desired and will tend to be adopted by the receivers. In this politics of communication, what is cut short is the intensive recognition of the others' existence, the polemic generated in the friction with their differences, and the processes of creating singular cartographies of meaning to give body to these inter-worlds with their accords and disaccords. To the contrary, in the media invented by Dias & Riedweg communication forms part of the weaving of this collective fabric.

But it is not just any communication that is at stake here. The concept of communication that can be extrapolated from Dias & Riedweg's work—whether in the strategies directed at the restricted world of art or those aiming at a more diffuse milieu, which correspond respectively to the fourth and fifth phases of the devices—has the meaning of a transmission of living otherness, bearing a power of infiltration and contagion that is sought throughout the work. This “intensive communication” is totally the contrary of what is today understood and practiced as communication: that is to say, the transmission of an *a priori* representation of the other which, even when politically correct, confines him or her to an identity position and neutralizes any potential of disruptive contamination. In short, a

politics of the relation to otherness based on a dissociation of subjectivity from the resonant (or intensive) body.

The dissociation of the resonant body is no small matter, as it constitutes one of the chief characteristics of the dominant politics of subjectivation under integrated world capitalism, together with an intense mobilization of the potentials of creation and resistance. These potentials are mobilized in subjectivity when a territory shifts and its cartography loses meaning as a result of the pulsation of sensations provoked by the encounter with otherness, sensations that create dissonance with the established references. This paradox and the resulting tension is what summons up the need to create territory and map, in the attempt to give body to the change that has taken place in the intensive, an attempt which depends on the force of invention; yet the same process also implies struggling for the inscription in reality of what is created, a struggle which depends on the force of resistance. The fact that contemporary subjectivity is confronted with an extremely varied and rapidly variable otherness makes it frequently experience the fallibility of its references; and for this reason, its potentials of creation and resistance are continuously mobilized. Meanwhile, the dissociation of the resonant body prevents subjectivity from locating the cause of this mobilization—the problem to be deciphered—and also impedes it from glimpsing what is to be created and struggled for. The potentials of creation and resistance, dissociated from the resonant body, remain disoriented and dissociated from each other. The destiny of the creative potential, when it is dissociated from the access to the sensations that call it up and separated from the political affect, is to form a wellspring of free invention power to be instrumentalized by the market and transformed—as Toni Negri<sup>31</sup> and his collaborators have shown—into contemporary capitalism’s major source for the extraction of surplus value.<sup>32</sup>

Now, the devices invented by Dias & Riedweg intervene precisely within this double dissociation: they develop a political-poetical operation that directly interferes in the dominant macro and micropolitics. This important facet of their

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. in particular Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> Concerning the way that Toni Negri’s idea about the relation between capital and invention power is redoubled on the level of subjectivation processes under integrated world capitalism, cf. Suely Rolnik, “El ocaso de la víctima: La creación se libra del rufián y se reencuentra con la resistencia,” “The Twilight of the Victim: Creation Quits Its Pimp, To Rejoin Resistance,” lecture delivered at *São Paulo S. A. Situação # 1 COPAN* (São Paulo, November 2002; curated by Catherine David). Reworked and published in different versions and under different titles in Portuguese, in “Caderno Mais!” *Folha de São Paulo* (São Paulo, 2/2/03) and in *GLOB(AL) 0* (Ed. DP&A, January 2003); in Spanish, in *Zehar 51*, an issue dedicated to the discussion of the text by invited authors (San Sebastián: Arteleku, Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa, 2003) and in “Radarlibros,” *Página 12* (Buenos Aires, 2/3/03); in English and French, in *Parachute Art Contemporain\_Contemporary Art 110*, “Économies bis,” (Montreal, 4-5-6/2003); in French, in *Chimères 49*, “Désir des marges,” (Paris, Spring 2003).

work inscribes it in a certain lineage of contemporary art in Brazil, whose outstanding figures are Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. Let us begin by examining some of the ways their work resonates with that of Lygia Clark.

The workshops and the staged encounters of Dias & Riedweg's devices evoke her art, especially from the so-called "sensorial" proposals<sup>33</sup> to her final work, which is officially labeled "therapy."<sup>34</sup> In these pieces too, the work with the sensorial body functioned as a means of access to the intensive body which, in combination with a kind of staged encounter between the artist and the participants through whom the work came into being, held the potential power to move the participants away from their position as "spectators." And if in the artist's final work the participants were termed "patients," it is because the fact of calling upon the intensive body in order to produce subjective and existential density came near to the borderline of a clinical practice. Such a practice, understood from the perspective of this border, lends the primary emphasis to a reconnection with the resonant body, and to an exercise of the potential of creation, on the basis of exactly this reconnection. And if an interference in the psychological environment is indeed necessary for a "curative" process, this exercise of creativity is what allows one to define the focus of the interference, and thereby banish from the scene the phantasms that command the relationship with the other as a living reality—a pathological process which psychoanalysis has designated as "neurosis," and which in reality corresponds to the dominant mode of subjectivation under capitalism.

Yet in relation to this precise facet of Lygia Clark's work, which is broadly shared by the work of Dias & Riedweg, there are clear differences between the strategies, conveying the singularity of their respective artistic itineraries, but also of the meaning of their strategies in the historical moment in which each of them is inscribed. Let us first examine the concrete differences. While Clark also used smells, touch, sounds, temperatures, etc. to evoke the intensive—not only with her "sensorial" objects, but also with the *Objetos Relacionais* [Relational Objects]<sup>35</sup>—she did so quite differently from Dias & Riedweg. They provoke associations by using questions, while Clark released the other to silence and free imagination during the experience, only opening up the possibility of conversing on what had been experienced and/or imagined at the end of her "sessions." A second difference is that the objects used by Clark to stimulate the process in her

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<sup>33</sup> The so-called sensorial proposals begin with *Pedra e Ar* (1966), which, not by chance, inaugurated the phase that the artist later called "Nostalgia of the Body" (1966-1969).

<sup>34</sup> *Estruturação do Self* (1976-1988).

<sup>35</sup> *Objeto Relacional* is the name that Lygia Clark gave to the objects included in her final proposal, *Estruturação do Self*. Some of these objects were specially created by the artist, while others had been created earlier and were simply included in *Estruturação do Self*.

sensorial works, in her collective proposals<sup>36</sup> or in *Estruturação do Self (Objetos Relacionais)*, were always objects created by the artist herself or everyday objects and materials that she selected, with the exception of a few that the participants brought quite sporadically and that she incorporated to the specific experience with that person, and only in a very few cases to the proposal as a whole; whereas the objects used to promote the process in Dias & Riedweg's workshops are always references to the everyday world of the participants, to their present and past, and they can be brought by the participants themselves or by the artists. A third difference is that in Clark's devices, the objects themselves were never created during the experimental practices. Whereas the strategies of the third stage of Dias & Riedweg's devices include the creation of objects during the process (the videos, in the majority of cases; the ex-votos of *Devotionalia*; the automobile license plates and the nest in *Question Marks*; the tube sculptures in *Dentro e Fora dos Tubos*, etc.). What is more, these objects always result from the individual or collective authorship of the participants.

The differences that we have just mentioned are not only concrete, but also refer us to a difference in principle between the proposals. In the first place, it is no accident that in Clark's case the objects used for sensitization were brought by the artist herself, whereas in Dias & Riedweg's, not only are they contributed by the participants, but they also came from the participants' repertory. While in both kinds of devices it is a matter of transposing the abyss that separates us from the other into an experience that develops in direct relation to the artist, in Clark's case the other with whom the experimental proposals were carried out belonged, in general, to the world of the luxury-subjectivities—particularly in cultural circles—whereas for our two artists, the other generally belongs to the world of the trash-subjectivities. This means that the barrier separating the artist from the other, in Dias & Riedweg's case, has the particularity of being imbued with the images of the perverse map that divides up the phantasmatic places of luxury and trash; and the artists and the participants each find themselves on their respective sides of this dividing line. This is why it is important that the objects brought to the work belong to the others' worlds of reference, so that the other can take on subjective consistency in the context of a relation, creating subjectivity and at the same time, weaving the social fabric.

In this specific aspect of the type of other with whom Dias & Riedweg interact, we can draw a line that joins the devices of the two artists to a certain attitude in Hélio Oiticica's work: the attitude of broad and audacious relation to otherness that marked his life and art. Oiticica also had an intense interaction with this supposedly so dissimilar other, marked by the way the other affected him in his

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<sup>36</sup> Lygia Clark's collective experiments fit into three phases of the artist's trajectory. The first, from 1967 to 1969, was named by herself "The House is the Body"; the second, from 1968 to 1970, was called "The Body is the House"; and the third, from 1972 to 1975, was given the name "Phantasms of the Body" or "Collective Body."



resonant body. Many of his proposals are the more-or-less explicit deciphering of signs that emanated from the other, through the encounter—even though it was never Oiticica’s objective, as it was for Clark, to make the work into a means of access to the resonant body in the subjectivity of the other with whom the artist interacted.

It is in exactly this aspect of Lygia Clark’s proposals that a second difference of principle can be indicated in relation to Dias & Riedweg’s devices: if in their case there is a creation of objects, while there is not in Clark’s, it is because the latter’s devices were fulfilled with the liberation of the other’s access to the intensive body, a liberation carried out in the direct relation between the artist and the participant, and mediated by the objects that she created for this reason. This strategy moved the spectator away from the art scene and opened up the possibility of establishing a relation with the objects on the basis of the intensive body, which had the power to strip the objects of their fetishization and return them to life. Clark never exhibited the stories and elaborations developed by the participants of her experimental proposals, like those whom she “treated” in the sections of *Estruturação do Self*, nor the objects that she created as a part of her device; for outside the staged encounter for which they had been conceived, these objects totally lost their meaning. Making them public did not form part of the strategy of the artist’s devices; on the contrary, not making them public in places destined for art was a deliberate choice. The reason is that at that moment, in the 1960s and 70s, the force of creation was still confined to the artistic sphere and the issue was contaminating this sphere with the world, which meant creating an extraterritoriality. And from here arises the difficulty of finding strategies for communicating these practices today. Communicating them in spaces traditionally destined for the presentation of art works runs the risk of wounding them in what was most essential, of draining them of all their vitality, since part of their very logic was their non-communication outside the strict sphere of experience—and above all, not to the spectators of art.<sup>37</sup>

In the case of Dias & Riedweg’s devices, the work does not reach its conclusion at the scale of an experience shared between artist and other, as it did in the proposals by Lygia Clark, but instead they generally encompasses strategies for

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<sup>37</sup> The experimental artistic practices of Lygia Clark were long ignored—when not disqualified—by the art system, even after the artist’s death. For some years now, and particularly after the exacting retrospective organized on the initiative of Manuel Borja-Villel, then director of the Antoni Tàpies Foundation, these practices have been integrated to exhibitions of the artist’s work. Yet in general they are presented either by means of the objects that composed them, exhibited as art-works and sundered from the staged encounters for which they were created and in which they gained their meaning, or by reproducing the scripts of her staged encounters in the contexts of museums or biennials, where the artist is replaced by an actor who plays her role. Both of these strategies for the communication of her projects tend regressively toward a reduction to the strict plane of representation—precisely the plane that Lygia sought to escape, and succeeded in escaping, by creating her experimental practices.

amplifying the radius of the other's reverberation, as one of their most important characteristics. This is the objective of the two final phases of their devices, which involve the public communication of the work. Such strategies capitalize on the third phase of shared experience, to empower the other's inscription in the social field. Hence the need to generate products whose function is the dissemination of living otherness—whether videos with stories told by the participants, or objects created by them. Not just any object will be communicated here, nor in just any place. What is more, these are not mere testimonies of the supposed trash-subjectivities, to whom many existing documentaries claim to give voice. Because the problem of such documentaries is that their subjects are still marked by the imaginary map that assigns the other an identity-mask, even when they attribute a positive value to it. As we have seen, Dias & Riedweg's objects record the effects of the vital encounter between the artists and the other, an encounter in which, on the contrary, the established map was stripped of its power of truth, removing the immaterial obstacle that separated them and freeing up a process of subjectivation and fabrication of the social tie. It is the image of this interacting subjectivity, with all its dense complexity, that will be placed in circulation in the networks produced by the devices, between worlds chosen for this end. The circulation of this image of living subjectivity exerts a subtly corrosive power on the perverse map that normally renders it invisible. Projected into the social field, the living existence of the other become present, causing unease and calling for a response.

An essential part of Dias & Riedweg's devices is the propagation of this line of flight from the established maps, in search of a possibility to acquire powers of resistance, and not just to die in limbo. It is clear that this kind of strategy has been invented today and not on the 1970s, because it was precisely at the end of that decade and throughout the 1980s that capitalism took upon itself to produce an implosion of the walls that had confined the potential of invention within the sphere of art, transforming it instead into its major source of value. Artistic practices were mingled with the world and began unfolding in many different directions. On this new art scene, where any proposal can be incorporated and reified by the market, the strategy of Dias & Riedweg, in opposition to Lygia Clark's extraterritoriality, consists in situating themselves deliberately within the field of art—"but definitely without fetishes, and instead with presence," as the artists themselves put it. What they put into circulation is this concentrated block of vital presence conveyed in their videos, with its power of propagation and contamination.

If we confront these different artistic strategies with the double dissociation that marks the processes of subjectivation in contemporary capitalism, what emerges from Lygia Clark's devices is that they worked on the subjectivity of the other, developing proposals that affected the dissociation of the intensive body. These proposals interfered micropolitically with the status of the spectator in his

or her relation to the work of art, which moved away from its reduction to the plane of representation. At the same period, Hélio Oiticica carried out a traversal of the rigid layer of social prejudice that governs relations in Brazil, and created work from this traversal. In both trajectories there is a powerful micropolitical action: each in their way, Clark and Oiticica participated in the inauguration of contemporary art in Brazil, by liberating art from the white neutrality of the enclosed cube and contaminating it with the world. The gesture of their works pointed forward to the problem that would have to be confronted in the following decades, when capitalism deconstructed the art scene as a separate sphere, and liberated the potential of creation—but only to instrumentalize it perversely, at the exclusive service of its own interests.

This is the ground upon which it was possible for Dias & Riedweg to take what is now a necessary step, although it did not even appear as a problem in the 1970s: the invention of devices that interfere, on the one hand, with the dissociation between the powers of creation and the intensive body, and on the other, with the dissociation between the powers of creation and resistance. A connection between the power of creation and the resonant body has a chance of reestablishing itself when Dias & Riedweg, in the third phase of their devices, incite the other to create objects on the basis of their intensive reading of the signs of the oppressive situation in which they live, and to do so in the framework of an interaction with the artists. A step further has been taken in micropolitical action. Meanwhile a connection between powers of creation and resistance has the possibility of reestablishing itself in fourth and fifth phases of the devices, when in their subtle and incisive way they infiltrate a dose of live otherness into the interstices of the social fabric, so that the tensions such a presence implies are exposed, provoking polemics and interfering with the balance of forces. With this, a step further has been taken in macropolitical action. In Dias & Riedweg's devices, micro and macropolitics are articulated into a single action driven by political and artistic affects, which are activated inseparably. It is exactly at this point that a specific concept of the "public" takes body and stands forth from their work.

"Public life," according to the idea that can be derived from Dias & Riedweg's work, is a human machine which, on the basis of confrontations between multiple and variable worlds, fabricates differences which are made simultaneously and inseparably by the social fabric, subjective consistency and the maps of meaning.

Understood from this perspective, public art is art that participates in this collective production. And this can happen in many ways and in any kind of space, even inside a museum. It is in this context that the proposals of Dias & Riedweg take their place, with a singularity that stems from their insertion at highly specific points on the planet, which are chosen precisely for their level of disparity between worlds, and also for their potential coefficient of transversality

and production of difference. Intensifying this coefficient is the aim of these devices. A micro and macropolitical machine that acts in the extensive and intensive simultaneously.

We are before a poetical-political laboratory. The ground work developed here partakes of a collective investigation on a planetary scale that is now being realized by different cultural, social and political initiatives, whose aim is to create a vaccine against the virus that dissociates the subjectivity of the intensive body, and in the same blow dissociates this body from its political and artistic potential, generating the separation of these potentials as one of its effects. Among the worst symptoms of this disease is the limitation of political actions to the doctrinal and ideological plane, and of artistic actions to the formal one.

Maurício Dias & Walter Riedweg know this well. In an intimate message, mailed through the net in the early hours of a carioca morning, Maurício wrote these lines: “The attempt to separate subjectivity from politicization is just the hypocrisy of the intelligentsia, a tic that was characteristic of Lygia’s time and is (quietly) beginning to be unmasked today, for which we say our prayers, not very loud, but very clearly.”<sup>38</sup> And they’re not alone.

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<sup>38</sup> E-mail sent to me by Maurício Dias in September 2003, while I was writing this essay.