

[More From This Issue](#)

[Current Issue](#)

[Back Issues](#)

[Guidelines](#)

Vol 7(1), November 1, 2007
mi40007000230

Art along the Path: Art, Society, and Constructions of Subjectivities

By Marly Chagas [\[Author bio & contact info\]](#)



The project *Searching for Paths Through Art* [1] was realized in a partnership between the Brazilian Conservatory of Music – University Center [2] and the State of Rio de Janeiro – Leo XIII Foundation [3]. It was carried out in its original format in 2002, being readopted with a few modifications, in 2003/2004. It was developed in adult homeless shelters – in the head offices of the Leo XIII Foundation in Greater Rio de Janeiro. The Project, aimed at the shelter patients and employees, offered musical activities, theatre, corporeal expression, storytelling and music therapy. In this program, technical supervision meetings and techno-theoretical seminars were held involving the professionals of the project and representatives of the foundation shelters. *Searching for Paths* can be understood as a facilitator of a few healthy practices, since it sought to produce subjectivity constructed in existential territories tested in different areas of culture. The establishment of an interchange between the teams of the Project and of the Foundation was fundamental to the success of this work. We confirm, in this experience, the potency of art as a producer of "affections that inundate the vitality of those that are touched by them" (Deleuze and Guattari 1992, p. 213). During the project, the connections between the people were substantially amplified, expanding the production of health in the institution in a significant way.

From the first moment, we perceived that what we were building had a unique richness. Working in the foundation shelters is like walking on the razor's edge. It means shockingly touching our own limits and that of society. It means rethinking the social contract that we rescind and another that we have not stipulated. It means wallowing in indignation, in courage, in utopia and in hopelessness...

Michel Foucault, who studied the constitution of the subject, proposes the following to understand power relationships in the society in which we live, "analyze power relationships through strategy oppositions" (1995, p. 234). That is why in order to discover what sanity means in our society, he investigated the history of insanity; to comprehend legality, he studied the way in which the prisons were constituted. Following the advice of Foucault, and traveling the opposite path in our practice at the Foundation, we come across the "opposite, of the opposite, of the opposite, of the opposite" [4] of this society that we are constructing. Inspired by the Foucault method we realize that through the work of the project *Searching for Paths Through Art* we can understand many mechanisms of the world in which we live. This society is seen by Deleuze and Guattari (1992, 1995) as a society of control – where everything and everyone is controlled – in the wide open, the control incorporated in our attitudes and our bodies that react in response to a bio-power extending in all directions; our society is understood by Guy Debord (2004) as a society of spectacle: everything, absolutely everything is turned into a spectacle and takes on media-like proportions; in this way of living we invent a consumer society which to Nestor Canclini (1997) interprets as the beings of the XXI century or ancient citizens of the XVIII century, were transformed into consumers.

For in the Leo XIII Foundation shelters, the bodies are docile, there is no spectacle, there is no consumption, nor are there complaints that can be heard beyond the walls, no one goes for a stroll, or goes on strike, many have no birth certificate, or an electorate card... Yet, it is there that we see – exactly as Foucault proposed – it is there that we observe those made into a spectacle, consumers, subject to control... We ask ourselves why the phrase hanging above the door says Social Rehabilitation Center, an objective that the foundation apparently does not accomplish. Apparently, because we are rehabilitating those people, the ill, those with dementia, the elderly, drug addicts, for which society? For which members? For whom? Rehabilitate them in this society is to leave them there, quiet, without actually disturbing everyone's consumer-spectacle-capitalist-savage dreams...

This Project, after all, does not do this. It does not leave anyone there, quiet, as if he or she were a statue, or a vegetable, or a "civilized citizen" [5]... Therefore, to understand the illnesses of the Foundation is to understand the bloody wounds of the world in which we live, it is to come in contact with our own agonies, to perceive this pedal note of social function, the figured bass that locks into as often as it disrupts our work. The shelter is transformed, into the house not identified as a home, into the place of passage that is frozen in time... The Project works with the recommendation of Rolnik and Guattari (1986) ". . . without the inclusion of desires and a reconstruction of an ethical and political sensibility, there will be no way to promote change. (41): We desire, oh how we desire... We simultaneously stimulate the expression of each one and of the whole group through songs, small theatre skits, the creation of artwork and participation in popular festivals experienced at the Foundation.

Thrush in the cage, made a little hole, flew away, flew away, flew away, flew away [6], the women sing. *Bohemia, I am here again, and pleadingly I ask you for my new ticket (of entry* [7]), the elderly men sing. *I cannot stay with you for one more minute*[8]... *When, you separated from me, my life almost ended* [9]... Everyone sings *I want a little white house with a porch* [10]. "I drew a princess, she is in a castle with a prince. She has no teeth, just like me," one woman says showing me her drawing in pre-schematic symbols.

The Project functions in a rhizome-like way. The rhizome is a type of root that inspires Deleuze and Guattari (1995) to propose a way of functioning that does not have a nucleus from where actions are perceived. There are multiple nuclei, with innumerable ramifications with several meanings and directions. Every Rehabilitation Center has its own dynamic, professionals, patients, artistic languages and nuclei where many different activities interweave. The Project supervision meetings, done at Conservatorio Brasileiro de Música – Centro Universitário (CBM-CEU) exemplify an ample exchange of work, questions, complaints, extraordinary cases, weaknesses, potentials. Everything and everyone working persistently with unpredictable consequences. The musical experiences were lived in several of the institutional environments: in the cafeteria, on the patio, in the infirmaries.

The Project seeks to construct a subjectivity understood in the sense given by Guattari as a "a group of conditions that makes it possible for individual and/or collective determinations to be in a position to emerge as self-referential 'existential territory', adjacent or in relation to limitation by an alter idem, itself subjective". (1992, p. 19).

The existential territories are constructed in different areas of culture, through diverse forms of expression and experimentation. The patients of the Leo XIII Foundation, employees, and the very professionals involved in the project, accomplished many things through art: textures, colors, forms, stories, sounds, participation in popular culture, *boi da boa nova* [11], *bloco da Leão* [12], the integration lunch, the skits, the songs, created by themselves or re-created, the instruments, the physical space, the personal integration. It is subjectivity viewed as social production, through ethical, aesthetic and self-poetic processes, where the possibility of the subjects to move and to create new transformations occurs (Guattari,1992).

In the panorama of the political situation, globalization, the promoter of neo-liberal shifts, interferes with the political structure of the State which, through its agents, turns its attention principally to economic aspects of the market, leaving important unaddressed issues such as education, health and housing to other social sectors. Through art we look to the effectiveness of micro-politics, those associated with social relations, subverting the political paralysis of the contemporary State that no longer takes responsibility for the well-being of its members.

It can be said that micro-politics constitute sources of pressure in the area of culture and politics. They provide a glimpse of alternative conceptions of old and new problems, in addition to framing the space in which civil society puts forth its demands and considers solutions. As a movement, its participation in the formation of new social players and in the redefinition of

spaces for citizenship is undeniable (Warren, apud Canello, 2004).

The micro-political strategy is engaged through the use of art with its affective potential. Affections that "inundate the vitality of those that are touched by them": their possibilities and limits (Deleuze, Guattari, 1992, p. 213). Connections expand through the very pulse of life. New situations are brought to light: we were able to get a wheelchair; harmonicas; at Carnival the youth drum ensemble from Mangueira (Rio shanty town and home of the *Estação Primeira da Mangueira samba school*)[13] provided an emotional generational integration and the boys' trip outside Rio offered the entranced *mangueirenses* (those from Mangueira) the possibility of crossing the Rio de Janeiro-Niteroi bridge for the first time; one long-term care infirmary sings a *samba* march about a leafy tree on the patio of the institution, the lyrical composition of which is theirs, the melody having been composed by the music therapists of the Project. An instrumental group is formed, a group of women go to the theatre, a group of men, aided by the employees, organized a music festival, another group a poetry festival. We danced *cirandas* (children's dance of Portuguese origin) and *forros* (musical style from northeastern Brazil) together. We created stories, we drew, we made instruments – in several senses of this term, we are here thinking, examining ideas, exchanging shared experiences. We heard exceptional stories, amazing stories!...

The final consequence of Guattari's thinking is that a society does not transform itself without the various micro-politics that join the molar to the molecular revolutions. "In the current stage of peripheral Brazilian capitalism the dynamic of overcoming the alienation of the masses requires more than clarifying the processes of capitalistic exploration, it means mobilizing the desire to construct a new society, the concrete-utopian"(1992, p 57). This is the utopia that moves us: to establish a project with the pretext of fostering opinions and of facilitating an artistic experience.

Notes

[1] Searching for Paths Through Art (*Buscando Caminhos Através da Arte*)

[2] Brazilian Conservatory of Music – University Center (*Conservatório Brasileiro de Música – Centro Universitário, CBM-CEU*). The Brazilian Conservatory of Music (CBM) is a 70 –year-old private teaching institution in Rio de Janeiro. In 1972, a music therapy training course was founded there in order to provide specialized training for professionals interested in using music as a therapeutic intervention. Today, CBM houses the Association of Music Therapy of the State of Rio de Janeiro (founded in 1968) and offers undergraduate and post-graduate courses in music therapy.

[3] State of Rio de Janeiro – Leo XIII Foundation (*Fundação Leão XIII*). The Leo XIII Foundation is a government run network of adult homeless shelters.

[4] *Sampa* (nickname for the city of São Paulo. Lyrics of a song by Caetano Veloso, composer and singer from the state of Bahia, leading proponent of the *Tropicalismo* or Tropicalist musical movement, late 1960's to early 1970's.

[5] Reference to *Bichos Escrotos* (Vile Animals) – song by the *Titãs* (formed in 1982, the Titans), rock band from São Paulo.

[6] *Sabiá lá na gaiola* (Thrush in a cage, 1946 – the thrush is symbolic of nostalgia for Brazil) – song by Hervé Cordovil (1914-1979), composer and pianist from the state of Minas Gerais and Mário Vieira.

[7] *A volta do boêmio* (Return to bohemia, 1957 – signifying becoming a bachelor again or separating from a spouse or lover) – song by Adelino Moreira (1918), composer born in Portugal. His family immigrated to Rio de Janeiro.

[8] *Trem das onze* (Eleven o'clock train, 1964) Song by Adoniran Barbosa (1910-1982) composer, singer, comedian and actor from the state of São Paulo

[9] *Quando* (When) – sing by Roberto Carlos, composer and singer from the state of Espírito Santo, leading participant in the Jovem Guarda or Young Guard movement of the 1970's, widely appreciated singer of romantic-pop

[10] *Casinha Branca* (Little white house) – song by Gilson and Joram

[11] *Boi da boa nova* (or bumba-meu-boi). The *Bumba-Meu-Boi* (literally "hit my bull") festival is

a type of popular opera. Basically, the story revolves around a rich farmer that has a handsome bull. The bull is the main character in the representation and is made from a wood structure, covered with embroidered or painted cloth. A colored skirt is attached to the structure to hide the person inside who is called the miolo do boi (literally "bull entrails"). All the characters are depicted in an allegorical manner, with brightly colored clothing and choreography. The Bumba-Meu-Boi games happen in front of the house of the host which invited the group, and that sponsored the party. The traditional Bull plot (Catirina, a pregnant woman who wants to eat the bull's tongue), was substituted at the Foundation by Auto do Boi da Boa Nova, with 70's music chosen by the patients. The Bull became a moving Christmas story in which the Sacred Family was composed of homeless people.

[12] *bloco da Leão* (literally "Leo block"). The Block is one of the oldest cultural manifestations of *carioca* (from Rio de Janeiro) Carnival. The Leo Block was a block that paraded inside the Leo XIII Foundation, hence its name. The patients and professionals composed a carnival march and an enormous allegorical lion head was made together with the patients for the parade. It should be pointed out that these giant dolls are very common in the carnival of northeastern Brazil.

[13] *Samba school*: Musical and recreational society composed of *samba* aficionados, parade participants, composers, musicians, costume designers, etc. Produces festivals, shows and parades throughout the year, especially during Carnival. The *Estação Primeira da Mangueira* (literally "First Mangueira Train Station") *samba* school is one of the oldest and most traditional in Rio.

References

Canclini, Nestor García (1997). *Consumidores e cidadãos, conflitos multiculturais da globalização*. [Consumers and Citizens. Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts] Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ.

Canello, Roberta (1997). *O Papel das micropolíticas na renovação da política tradicional*. Retrieved May 12, 2004, from <http://www.angelfire.com/sk/holgonsi/roberta.html>.

Debord, Guy (n.d.). *A Sociedade do Espetáculo* [The Society of the Spectacle]. Retrieved May 12, 2004, from <http://www.ebooksbrasil.com/eLibris/socespetaculo.html>.

Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix (1992). *O que é a Filosofia?* [What Is Philosophy?]. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. 34.

Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix (1995). *Mil Platôs. Capitalismo e Esquizofrenia*. [A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia] vol 1/.tradução de Aurélio Guerra Neto e Célia Pinto Costa. Rio de Janeiro: Ed 34.

Foucault, Michel (1995). O sujeito e o poder In: Rabinow, Paul e Dreyfus, Hubert, *Uma trajetória Filosófica. Para além do estruturalismo e da hermenêutica*. [Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics] Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1995.

Guattari, Felix (1992). *Caosmose. Um Novo Paradigma Estético*. [Chaosmosis: An Ethicoaesthetic Paradigm] Rio de Janeiro: Ed. 34.

Guattari, Felix & Rolnik, Suely. (1986). *Micropolítica - Cartografias do Desejo*. [Cartografias Del Deseo] São Paulo, Editora Vozes.

Siqueira, Holgonsi Soares Gonçalves (2000) "A Razão", Newspaper published in 31/8/2000 in the website "Pós-Modernidade" Retrieved May 12, 2004, from <http://www.angelfire.com/sk/holgonsi/>.

To cite this page:

Chagas, Marly (2007). Art along the Path: Art, Society, and Constructions of Subjectivities. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*. Retrieved from <http://www.voices.no/mainissues/mi40007000230.php>

Add your comments and responses to this essay in our *Moderated Discussions*. Contributions should be e-mailed to either **Joke Bradt** or **Thomas Wosch**

View contributions on this essay: [yet no contribution]

Guidelines for discussions



©2007. VOICES. All rights reserved