The spectator-passerby: suspending moments in daily life

O espectador-transeunte: momentos de suspensão da vida cotidiana

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ABSTRACT
The present text analyses the scenic presentation entitled “Transeuntes”, which took place at a bus terminal and that proposed as a scenic procedure the encounter/dodging of pedestrians, interactions with spectators previously invited and moves established with the urban space. In an environment in which various actions compete, the public is requested to dynamically construct the scene interpretation intertwined with daily life. As a result, the spectator, as a participant/observer, chooses what she/he will see, cuts and edits, establishing a selective perspective.

Keywords: Spectator-passerby. Urban space. Scenic procedure.

RESUMO
O texto analisa a proposta cênica “Transeuntes”, realizada em um terminal de ônibus, que propôs como procedimento cênico o encontro/desvio dos pedestres, interações com os espectadores previamente convidados e dinâmicas estabelecidas com o espaço urbano. Em um ambiente onde concorrem outras ações adjacentes, é solicitada do público a construção dinâmica de interpretação da cena mesclada à vida cotidiana. Desse modo, o espectador, enquanto observante/partícipe, escolhe o que irá ver, realiza cortes e edita, estabelecendo uma percepção seletiva.


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In the following text, I propose to analyze the scenic presentation entitled “Transeuntes” and its established relation with the public on the bus terminal “Guadalupe”, in the city of Curitiba. The work was developed in a discipline in the 2014' academic year, with students of the theater degree course at the Paraná State University (UNESP), in the class that I am responsible. For the purpose of this article, I will name the students actors/actresses or actor/actress. When arranging depositions, the criteria used to identify the participants was the following: each one of them was identified by a Wn code – W being reference to the actor’s name and n being his position in an alphabetic relation.

The analysis of the scenic presentation, occurred in November 2014, involved two audience profiles, the spectator-passerby and the guest spectator. They received a map of the area called a sensitive map that served as a guide for the scenes. Sensitive because the map did not direct the spectator in a specific route, but the graphic representation presented the geographic space of the terminal and identified the strategic acting spots, for example, the spot where the artistic creation began.

The human behavior is a result of sensory perception in addition to emotions, which stimulate reasoning with specific thoughts for the capability to judge/opt, as Damásio state:

“It is certainly not true that reason operates advantageously without emotion. On the contrary, it is likely that emotion aids our reasoning, especially when it comes to personal and social questions that involve risk and conflict. I suggested that in certain levels of processing emotions are probably indicators to the sector of space and decision making where our reasoning can work at maximum efficiency (2000, p. 63).”

Spectator’s autonomy was required, always keeping in mind that the decisions for where to go, which actor to follow and what to observe was a premise for promoting choices. Therefore, the sensitive map acted as clues to access the spectator’s sensoriality.
In order to intensify the audience’s sensations, the group invited them to read the symbolic dimensions and representations from an elaborate drawing that pointed reading possibilities of the space and aesthetic production. This strategy was proposed in order to sensitize the spectator in articulating between different elements used in the scenic space. Therefore, it was desired an apprehension of the scenic events and the way travelled through the whole extension of the bus terminal moved by organic involvement.

Individually, the actors arrived from different directions and gathered around in the determined space to begin the proposal. The meeting between them occurred through looking. In a circle, they exercised in order to develop energy in the space and bodies optimized for creation: attention, rhythm, presence and improvising. Then, the actors walked and ran in a delimited space, expansion and reduction of displacement with fast and slow movements. This routing caught the attention of the invited guests and specifically the pedestrians around. Some people stopped to watch, others noticed that something was happening but kept going.

I highlight that the mentioned procedures tangent the performance assumptions in which the spectator does not contemplate the final artistic creation; it is involved in a sensitive way affected by the poetic proposal of this process that allows to establish an intense communication between actor and spectator. The performance, by excellence, is a frontier art; the theatre, in the present contemporary stage, also presents itself in this frontier space, gradually becoming characterized by its vulnerable character.

The group elaborated scenes /interventions from experiences in interacting with the public space and its dwellers. Experience with perception, of the senses, of the materialization of meetings. In this approach, the power of this proposal is a hybrid form of artistic expression located in a frontier between theatre and performance. According Josette Féral (2008), the theatre was the art that most benefited from the acquisitions of performance, assuming that were adopted some determined elements founders of performativity that shook the theatrical genre.

The dissolution of frontiers between artistic languages, in flows of mutual influence, propitiates the spectator the chance to feel the presence, participating, therefore, of the creation and development of the artistic creation. That way, actors and spectators share the experience through the theatricality of
the actors associated to the present references of everyday life of each individual, searching for a space of intersubjectivity to achieve collective discoveries.

2. The pictures presented in this article were took by the photographer Cassiana dos Reis Lopes.

After the initial gathering, the actors dispersed in different directions throughout the terminal, strategy that imposed to the public to choose a role to follow. The choice to follow a determined actor makes the spectator responsible for what he sees, establishing a relation of equality between scene and spectator. In other moments, when the spectator-passerby observed and stopped in front of the scene, or even while watching from far away, the actor-spectator relation was formed and triggered alterations in the scenes.
An action diagram was previously rehearsed, but the effective composition occurred in the presentation, along with the spectators, the passerby, the architecture and random situations of the moment. I add that, in the analyzed aesthetic, the reactions of the viewers are capable of producing dramaturgy, and it is up to the actor to receive these impulses and associate them to the narration of the scenes. The scenic happenings presented both collective and individual situations along with the pedestrian flow, so the actors blend in with the local dwellers. In some moments, actors and passerby became confused.

This purposeful mix of actors and pedestrians was planned in order to make the public space more sensitive and cause a poetic detour in the pedestrians, highlighting that, like other metropolises, Curitiba slowly conceded space to a cold, devoid of incentives to feelings or emotions. This reflection brings me back to Duarte Junior, who ponders:

Very little we walk through our cities when devoid of any utilitarian goals, very little we exercise our senses of sound, colors and smell that aren’t the unpleasant sub-products of the urban degradation of our environment [...] And even so, this walk is guided by non-sensitive rules, but imediatist and pragmatic ones [...] the look directed to the floor or trapped in an infinite point, ignoring trees, flowers and birds that fill our surroundings with sensibility and beauty, as well as our ears obliterated by a walk-man or similar electronic device (2003, p. 88).

It is true that, during the walk, people tend to search for a relief of stress and resort to cellphones and music players, with their headphones, to minimize tension of everyday, ceasing to perceive the surroundings. Faced with this common behavior, how did this scenic intervention happen?

To a better understanding of the results produced in the urban space, I present a trajectory of each actor searching for poetic possibilities that extrapolate daily actions imposed by the bus terminal and the established relations with the spectators.
The image above refers to the acting of W1 in front of a church. To the construction of this scenic figure, the actress inspired in her previous visits to the church, especially in her observations to its goers and the writings on posters, crafts, thank you messages –from achieving grace– placed in the main entrance of the building.

In the pictures, it is possible to notice the pedestrians observing the scene. Some of them, even from afar, watched the actress’ walk, that literally and metaphorically, chewed on bible pages, incorporating it and making it into a body. Just like the religion, the actress imbued herself with signs, in action and clothing, that express religious and sociocultural values easy to assimilate. Below, you can read a description of the scene from one of the spectators:
— She took powder from her face and ate it, tore pages of the bible, licked and stucked it on a post, slowly walked inside the church. It was outstanding. She ran inside the church, arms open. One person inside followed her to the door to see what she would do next. Very strong, striking character! When you mess around with religion people tend to freak out. Especially that church, a landmark of the city (2014).

With her direct mode to expose, W1 involved the spectator in her slow and silent walk, chewing on sacred texts and inviting the public to think about religious institutions. In the exercising introspection, according to Flávio Desgranges (2012), the spectator is invited to think up its own path in relation to the scenic proposal and its relation to social life.

I understand that this scenic proposal consisted in an experience propitious to abstractions from the spectator, putting it in a direction towards sensitive processes. But in order to an aesthetic experience to happen, according to Beatriz Cabral: “[...] an interruption is required; the shock provoked by the tense daily basis of our modern lives, just like Freud’s traumas, result in a fracture in living and language, and invite to a stop to feel, perceive, think and reflect” (2012, p. 23).

Agreeing with the author’s idea, W1 provoked in the viewer perceptive divings by suspending the daily flux. By associating it to the flow between real and fictional, this experience blossoms different perceptions, starting from a narrative without rigid composition capable of maintaining the unusual element in its actions and lights the game of interactions. Therefore, the scenic development, with qualities in improvisation, requires from the actor to accept this unforeseen events as a condition inherent to its presence in scene, and from the spectator, a proximity and participation degree much greater in relation to normal theatre.

Thus, the outcome of this scenic experiment is expected to be a space for sensitive immersion in the perceptible body, both to actors and to spectators. From multisensory stimuli, visibility used by the actress, associated to noise from the location, guides an experience in another order, capable of propitiating in the passerby and invited guests poetic encounters. The attention is directed to the unpredictable, to the curious.
Working specifically with a common figure in the urban environment, especially in the public space of a bus terminal, the actress impersonating the homeless establishes a thin relation with the pedestrians/spectators between reality and fiction. The artist proposed to instigate a reflection in the passerby about people that very often remain hidden around that space. She unveiled real characteristics by means of the established relation with the viewers, promoting a perception of the social context mediated by sensorial interpretation. In this moment, I recur to the declaration of one viewer:
— Look, this is to represent the homeless that living here, to make us think! (2014).

With this line, it is possible to affirm that the scenic figure achieved aesthetic characteristics inspired in fragments of social space. The actress mentioned to the history of a person that actually live there, blurring the line between fictional and real. Our everyday ills, portrayed in a scenic proposal, can be spotted. In her silent walk, the actress searched, with her look, to communicate with people that embarrassed, looked away. This reaction can be associated with the stigma of the homeless person as an intimidating figure. The homeless becomes a mirror of what everyone wants to avoid: being excluded from the society.

Many times, the look of W2 expressed an appeal for those living on the streets, embarrassing most people that passed by there. The sensorial phenomenon was stimulated as the spectator saw a person stripped from human dignity. The narrative transcends the actor's actions to achieve sensibility rom those who watch the scene and identify with it.

These aspects, tensioned by a dubious relation – facts of everyday life and fiction – cross each other and amplify the referential of the public in relation to the reading processes of artistic productions. On the other hand, this same relation requires from the actor a dexterity to administrate diverse situations, since the danger of the streets, the uncertainty of life in this present moment on that public space, challenge the development of scenic action. I quote a fact that occurred with the actress and reported from one spectator:

— The character offered an apple to a homeless woman, but when she knelt down to give it, the woman misunderstood it and tried to punch her in the face, the actress dodged it, but it almost hit her. One actor quickly came to stick around. I kept thinking, what if the woman actually beats the actress, what would my reaction be? Interfere or not? (2014).

The reported episode puts the spectator's role in check, inviting it to feel and act for itself in the face of unexpected situations. The public is led to act in the presence of the events in which it shares the experience. The imminence of danger, for melding the place of the scene with the place of observation, promotes displacements of the usual state of the public, that ceases to perceive itself as only a spectator and starts to perceive
itself as an agent of change, capable of entering a scene in face of an unexpected event.

Even though the meetings addressed the questions about the danger of the streets, I acknowledge that none of the people involved were actually prepared to put themselves in danger for the proposal developed in public space marked by the scene/spectator relation. It is precisely in this territory that resides the tightening of ties, specially with pedestrians that become audience. In fact, the actor must play its role even when he is forced to care for the procedures that managed the proposed risks to the scenic actions.

The frame, formed by four parts, was constantly assembled and disassembled by the actress that walked through the space;
she often stopped to assemble it, action followed by scenic proposals. The described performance was repeated several times in different places and exploited by the actress. The act of putting together four pieces caused expectations to people around her, waiting for something to happen. Sometimes, the actress portrayed herself, other times, she portrayed other actors. As a weird element in the place, the provocative object created by W3 directed the attention of the audience to the “framed”.

By isolating a scenic figure, a cutout is performed, the intention is highlighted and caused a distancing of the common space, it is worth noting that the actress used a black costume and did not use makeup. From the framings, the artist produced images that provided the viewer the development of perception about the thin line between reality and acting field. It is also important to note that the described proposal kept the attention of many pedestrians, which stopped to watch and even take pictures of the scene.

In some moments, when proposing a mark in the images imposed by the frame, the actress presented visual centers, in different levels built and contemplated by herself, that positioned as a viewer of her own creation. The frame cutout space, specified a determined corporal expression, action that assisted in the purpose of making a reflective image of the spectator. One spectator declared:

— Beautiful, one must be an artist. Do you like the frame? But what will you frame? (2014).

In this experiment, the spectator felt comfortable to interact with the scene, completing the scene and contributing on its own way. During a conversation afterwards, the actress reported that in a moment, her act approached a line of women waiting for the bus. In action, with her sharpened senses, she noticed that there was no comment from the women about the scene; even though they looked, several times, they appeared to be bothered and kept the posture of someone who is in face of something normal.

— They expected me to do something, say something. Besides the usual noise from the bus terminal, in that moment everything was silent. After some time, when that situation was almost unbearable, two fellow actors appeared, they immediately looked at each other with relief, and one of them said: ‘I knew it was theatre!’ I looked around and left, also relieved. I was pretty uncom-
fortable around those women, my breathing was heavy and I kept observing, trying to hear the spectators. But they played the same game, doubled their attention on their own gestures and watched the proposed actions (W3).

Mutual influence did not take place directly between actress and spectators, but established relations between looks promoted the constitution of the scenic act itself. The spectators had the option to accept/reject and/or redefine their posture in face of the scene, whose poetic conception sought to destabilize the passiveness of the public. It is important to note, in this part of the research, to report the statement of one of the spectators about his perception:

People don’t stop. They run from side to side, run to get the bus. The character was standing inside the frame that was on the floor. One pedestrian stumbled on it and didn’t even look back. I asked myself why would someone stumble on something or someone and don’t even look back to check or apologize? (2014).

This line points out that the artistic production presented a new relation with the time of that context and interfered in the rhythm of the pedestrians to follow the internal logic of the poetic universe. Contemporary art questions and induces connoisseurs to the questioning of art/life. According to the same spectator cited above:

I also noticed several pedestrians slowing down when getting close to the artists, they looked, curious. The frame caught a lot of people’s attention. A new concept for me, I never saw anything like that, intervening (2014).

The actress’ proposal fostered the expansion of the look beyond the frames, towards the development of a critical-reflexive thinking, able to see new ways of seeing and perceiving the world, in this case, the bus terminal. The perception of place is modified. The sight changes, the scenes distort the urban space, interrupting the flow of daily life; different possibilities of interaction are thus formed.

However, interaction is a singular happening, the spectator interacts more or less with the scenes. Actors in play trigger processes of sensitive experience in the public, some are positively touched, others negatively; in some way, passerby are infected and provoked by public art.
A clown composed the scenic proposal. The red nose was the actor’s mask, the unquestionable ID of a clown. In general, this sign is immediately identified by people, and this identity certifies the costume, the fiction, explicits the occurrence of an artistic proposal. Using this resource, the actor facilitated the physical contact with the pedestrians, as shown in the images above, in which the clown placed the spectator on the scene. The actor states: “[...] with the nose, they seem to expect something from you. But I know that is it —the nose —, the passport that allows me to transgress in actions without being banned” (W4).

From this relation, the actor’s perceptive abilities are enhanced in the clown, as he develops his capacity to answer almost immediately to the audience. Thus:

The clown feeds from stimuli that comes from the spectators, interacting with them, in an action-reaction dynamic. This interaction with the spectators [...] means a possibility of alteration in the sequence of clown’s actions. That’s why we talk about codified improvisation, like the canovacci from commedia dell’arte, that is, a general structure in which the clown improvises his acts that change according to the established relationship with each spectator and/or one of his partners (BURNIER, 2009, p. 219).
The codified communication by the artist is instantly integrated in his actions. The clown reports, criticizes, busts, insinuates the ills of life, covered with humor and irony. According to the actor:

Without the worries to be obligated to make people laugh or cry, I made myself available at the Guadalupe terminal [...]. I believe in the clown's strength, as a being that underlines this space, denounces the condition of those who live there, and marks the spaces contained within this space, which is the Guadalupe terminal (W).

The clown acted like a homeless, dressed as a ragged clown and devoid of basic hygiene care. He often laid on the floor, using his briefcase as a pillow. But differently from the actress that portrayed the homeless, because of the nose, the clown separated himself from the homeless appearance. He caught the attention of a lot of passerby, that related him to a clown, even though he was marked by the settled image of an excluded being. This composition contributed to trigger the bystander's reflective potential moved by the symbolic elaboration of the scenic act associated with the exclusion of some social layers. This is reinforced by a spectator:

He stood for a long time on a dirty wall, a dirty floor, next to a street seller's tent, and he played with the saleswoman a lot. The interesting part was that sometimes people judged him as a homeless. Men that were drunk and/or ragged stood by him, after a while, they realized it was an actor and some got scared (2014).

The theatre can be a device to promote poetic experimentation in the urban space and create knowledge from aesthetic and sensitive experiences. The experienced artistic production, creating an effect of weirdness in daily life, is a creation that induces the public to a questioning participation. The impact of the scenic situations achieved contribute to reveal attitudes and facts of urban daily life made natural in life as a society, qualified by injustice and social inequality.

From a different and more sensitive perspective, the public took part of the creative and democratic process of the scenic phenomenon, in favor to develop a reading provided by the active participation in the scenic proposals and unfolding the formation of a critic, reflective and contextualizing spectator.
The actress sought to map the writings with crayons on the floor the paths of pigeons, frequents in the bus terminal. The artist selected a bird that lives among the pedestrians of the city, being one of the most visible animals in our everyday life in urban centers. However, these animals are associated with diseases and are commonly named as “rats with wings”. By simulating this childish play, the actress pursued pigeons as a problematic element.

In the picture above, the actress wrote “there are few pigeons here”, and it is true that a small number of pigeons was present that day. However, the literary marks were printed and promoted an investigative and relational attitude amongst the public. To a better understanding, the statement of a spectator: “—I didn’t quite understand her goal, I understood the others, but not her, I kept questioning myself” (2014).

In this perspective, the artistic creation triggered in the audience an autonomous and critic thinking, both for creation and questioning. It is up to the spectator to track connections, for the fragmented structure of the scenic actions is an invitation to creative imagination. However, Silva Fernandes (2010) emphasizes that the artist knows about the risks of the unspeakable, specially in function of the scene’s subjectivity that, for its characteristics, allows the spectator to resize and reset the meaning of the received stimuli.

In this dynamic, the viewer energizes its potential creativity to play a role in the thoughts about scenic texture and develops a perception of the creative process. By enjoying a poetic proposal, it
resorts to its experiences and employs the creative capacity, relating them. This inventive impulse allows him to deal with new and unexpected situations, internalizing them.

The scenes performed by W5, as well as those elaborated by other actors involved, acquired the dimension of a huge stage on the daily traffic. The reception required from the connoisseurs to expand their sight and assume the role of viewers of the scenic events and usual events of the bus terminal. Little by little, the amplification of their repertoire is effective, in light that “[...] the artistic object invades the spectators, hitting them deep inside, making them feel affections, sensations, perceptions, images amongst other productions that appeal to a personal and social experience of the participant” (DESGRANGES, 2012, p. 182).

In this way, the spectator relates the facts according to its knowledge and develops the ability to describe and analyze poetic conventions about the perceptions of the work being observed. At the same time, develop the capacity to identify and compare each scene being watched with the previous ones. Such aspect means that, when imbued with ideas, sensations and hypotheses about the artistic experience the connoisseurs produce knowledge about contemporary theatricality. Therefore, its expectation's horizon is traversed by new methods of understanding the scene, by creating and amplifying perceptive layers in function of unpredictability of improvisational creation procedures.

Figure 8.
Final act of “Transeuntes”: group picnic
At the last moment, a picnic was put together with all the actors, each one in their roles. A symbolism was established from this ritual, from the food-body relation, an important symbolism in offering recreation and social interaction. The actors brewed coffee, ate bread, biscuits and fruits. Several times, they interacted with people around them, for example, offering food. The picnic is a practice that allows the emerging of new sensibilities, by means of experiencing senses, capable of building and reassuring social bonds.

When thinking about cultural patterns, meals in public spaces are common in several communities. However, the proposal of a meal in a bus terminal inhibited some people, that avoided the scene. Except for some passerby, that participated, the spectator in the yellow shirt, for instance, that shared the picnic. With the coffee already brewed, another pedestrian that walked through the bus terminal with a supermarket trolley accepted a cup from that same spectator, who remained seated, it is worth mentioning his availability, which was comfortable in the scene game.

In the scene described above, the passerby-actors interrupted other people’s trajectories. Keeping in mind that some of them ignored while other looked stealthily or played the role as the main character of the scenic phenomenon, by interacting with the actors. One woman argued:

— This must be a theatre thing, because they’re doing this right here, I’m gonna film and show it to my family, because if it’s not theatre you can’t do it amongst all this filth (2014).

After that speech, the clown offered that same woman a coffee, she rejected, because she was on her way to perform a blood test. Investigating scenic procedures provided a proximity between spectator and scene. The established relation with the spectators activates sensitive layers that allow an affective approach. This relation provided a crossing between reality and fiction, scene and public fed each other. According to Claudio Cajaiba:

The world, in its usual celerity, seems to demand more of our senses, faster. The information, especially art, are more and more “condensed”, with meaning. [...] Who approaches art now watches itself, not only other, transforms the presented aesthetic into autoaesthetic. Acts as spectator/ author. The act of fruition is being more and more recognized as a productive act (2013, p. 122).

Therefore, through a process of constant reorganization, the actors, along with the public, establish a relation of dialogue and share moments of improvisation, creation and composition...
spontaneously. The pedestrian, as a co-author of the scene, present and absent, due to the manifestations of the usual environment of space, watches, elected, led the time and direction of the representation.

The miscellaneous of voices on the surrounding space, along with the sensations emerged from the scene/terminal relation, required from the residents a constant reassuring of space. Thus, the geography of the scene absorbed interferences provoked by the architecture of the place and the pedestrians. Moved by this conception, I understand that the occupation of public spaces becomes part of the spectator’s experience, in which the scene is an open game, flexible, because the audience chooses where to move, elects images, remembers personal events. In fact, it composes, interprets and establishes its logic in what it sees and feels. Physical proximity with the actors stimulates the audience’s sensitive abilities to organize the received stimuli, which provide poetic experiences.

The contemporary society, by imposing a sensitive reorganization in function of new technologies, especially digital ones, shapes the way the audience organizes thought and knowledge. The scenic production, fragmented, inserted in a tridimensional acoustic space, filled with the sounds of Guadalupe terminal, provided a direct experience, immersing in the sensations. An experience that built a synaesthetic space, locked specific relations in time, in the “here and now”, a time away from the daily order, from the normal experience.

It is needed to activate the sensitive mechanisms to perceive your own body, the other’s body and the established relation with space, relations in which the body is put to test, experiments and reflects. The artist is constantly learning; that why it is essential for it to understand that perception is an open system in permanent exchange of information and that the scenic drawing of its practice congregates and regroups influence.

In the initial perception, by means of visual, immediate and sensible, the invited spectators and passerby captured the shapes of urban space, from the architectural set and propositions. The visual perception, just like the other senses, gradually interacts with the emotional and psychic phenomenon, while sensations are produced and constituted in the body.

At the same time, the spectators perceived the rhythm of people, the proportions, the smell, the weather; by hearing, noises from vehicles, voices, birds, the walking; through palate, the flavor of food and drink offered at the last scene, and why
not, the taste of the wind and pollution. Actually, the skin can also be considered a long range receptor, given the body can feel shivers, tensions, temperatures, to present alterations in the texture of the surface of the skin, without the proximity of a physical contact. So, the set of impressions motivated by the diversity of spaces, associated with the scenic provocation, promoted sensorial qualities, constituting meetings of pleasure, of aesthetic effect, or even of unpleasant sensations.

Through small gestures or huge actions, the poetic act in the Guadalupe terminal provoked sensations in the invited public and in pedestrians, promoting encounters, detours and collisions that generated moments of daily life suspension. The interactions between scenes and public exceeded expectations amongst the involved, with significant exchanges between actors and spectators.

The actors took the risk of experimenting by sharing an artistic action in a public space, from a non-definitive relation with the audience. The scenic game elaborated happened in an intermittent form, while the poetic logic affected the daily walk of the passerby significantly. The dialog with the artistic work was effected by intervals, constantly ceasing and resuming; the scenic atmosphere was crossed by possibilities of reinvention in a bold and provocative way.
REFERENCES


