

The making of photographic images itself has major political power which must be discussed. Through theoretical analysis of my work and craft of photographing performances, theatre plays (both set for theatre venues and for the streets) and gender performativities (such as *artistas da montagem*¹, drag queens, vogue and burlesque dancers in theatre venues and night clubs), I was able to observe in it the possibilities of a photographic creation that is more aware of the power dynamics in its making. Those reflections, though conceived within photography praxes in queer contexts, are in no way applied exclusively to that setting, and it is exactly through the broadening of this experience that they are consolidated into a proposition of thought about photographing performance art and performativities in general.

On the character of narrative creation and power shifts in photography, Vilém Flusser sets the discussion on the understanding that “every image contributes to the altering of society’s worlddivision” (FLUSSER, p. 21, 2008). Thus placing the responsibility for shaping and changing the social attitude about seeing on those who create and propagate images. In addition to stating the need for education in order to read images, shifting power and oppression dynamics through interpreting images and their constructs.

Susan Sontag is also significantly important to this debate when questioning the social value of war photography and how those narratives are both displayed to and apprehended by those who see them. She discusses the photographing of tragedies and consequences of the making of images of people in distress by photographers who do not share that same reality, for their work to be seen by more people who, themselves as well, do not live under those same circumstances.

She goes as far as proposing that:

“Even if incompatible with intervention in a physical sense, using a camera is still a form of participation. Although the camera is an observation station, the act of photographing is more than passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep on happening. To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged (at least for as long as it takes to get a ‘good’ picture), to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing - including, when that is the interest, another person’s pain or misfortune.”
(SONTAG, 2005, p. 8.)

1 “Montação” is a brazilian term, used mostly by LGBT+ community, that refers to the practice of dressing up with extravagant clothes, make-up, accessories, to perform as drag queens, burlesque dancers and vogue dancers or just to attend parties, contests, nightclubs, etc.

We understand, as a consequence, that photographing implies rapport. The photographer, particularly the portraitist, while making identities and expressions visible and validated, becomes as much part of that photography as the person being portrayed. The photographic process is an exchange.

Together, photographer and photographed person make fiction to several extents. Performance art photography can be perceived as fiction from the moment it frames someone who, being in a certain environment, has built some fiction into their body for it to be shown. One that is in itself an evidence of the characteristics possessed by the subject who is self-expressing.

Photography is still often referred to as a document in informal and formal instances in which image is discussed, but that particular use of the word holds a noticeable pattern when it comes to performance art and portrait photography. Public incentive programs for staging and touring with theatre plays often request that those are filmed in a still camera setting with a wide lens, and that there are no cuts throughout the performance. It happens so due to the notion that this way of filming would provide an unbiased documentation of the theatre play. Such structural view on photography is also observed by Sontag in war photography:

“What is odd is not that so many of the iconic news photos of the past, including some of the best-remembered pictures from the Second World War, appear to have been staged. It is that we are surprised to learn they were staged, and always disappointed.” (SONTAG, 2003, p. 44)

That is, we do not believe in photography's impartiality and are aware of its manipulative powers, regardless, we are still disappointed at photography for neither belonging entirely to reality as a category, nor to staging. Antonio Fatorelli remarks this phenomenon stating that photography “as a cut of time and space, associated with both the object it represents and the past, is founded upon a naive interpretation of photographic realism and upon a biased reading of issues surrounding representation.” (FATORELLI, 2016, p. 3)².

Rancière addresses the issue of photography as an unbiased platform when he asserts that “This is already true of the image that seems best able, and most obliged, to guard against it - the ‘naked’ image intent solely on witnessing. For witnessing always aims beyond what it presents.” (RANCIÈRE, 2012, p.

² The citations from texts in portuguese were translated for the this article.

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As part of its creative process, a photograph requires decisions - from the choice of camera setting, framing, further editing to displaying - that even when subjective or non-consciously designed are definitive to what the image might signify and points to how it could be interpreted.

Fatorelli reflects on the impartial photographing process:

“Photographs rely on the time demanded by different technical and thematic options adopted by the photographer and, equally meaningfully, on their perceptive activity - their intentionality, their way of seeing and their memory.” (FATORELLI, 2016, p. 10.)

And fiction is not only constituted by the photographer’s subjectivities but, as Flusser argues, the photographic apparatus itself limits the creative possibilities, determining the shapes fiction might take.

“Professional photographers seem to operate their machine so that they make images according to the artists’ deliberate intentions. Deeper analysis of the photographic process reveals, however, that the gesture of the photographer is developed, so to speak, ‘inside’ the device’s software program. It can only photograph images as they are provided by their device. Surely the device does what the photographer commands it to, but the photographer can only want what the device is able to do. Therefore, not only the gesture, but the photographer’s intentions themselves are programmed. Every image made by a photographer is, theoretically, ‘futable’ to the people who mathematically designed the device’s software programme. They are ‘probable’ images.” (FLUSSER, 2008, p. 27.)

However, despite the understanding that a photographic image - one that endures several subjectification processes in its making - is not a reliable opening towards “reality”, it is neither a production of fiction removed from the space and objects which are portrayed in it. After all, it is part of the photographic process in general that the object that captures the image and the object being portrayed are primarily in the same environment, even if the image is not the same as the one in the final photographic product. Presence is an important factor in the photographic process as Sontag notes: “ photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture.” (SONTAG, 2005, p. 3).

Teresa Bastos writes about the blurring of boundaries between performance photography and performativity, particularly on portrait photography,

that “when looking at a photographic portrait of someone, we tend to quickly form, based on that image, an idea of who they are. A portrait of an individual is a nearly undisputable attestation of their existence.” (BASTOS, 2014, p. 2).

Sontag approached that feature of photography as an “advantage” which is “contradictory”:

“Photographs had the advantage of uniting two contradictory features. Their credentials of objectivity were inbuilt. Yet they always had, necessarily, a point of view. They were a record of the Regarding The Pain Of Others real – incontrovertible, as no verbal account, however impartial, could be – since a machine was doing the recording. And they bore witness to the real – since a person had been there to take them. (SONTAG, 2003)

Such contradiction is what I here refer to as “blurring of boundaries”. It is an aspect of photography that sets photography in a context in which it is both one and the other, while being unquestionably none of them, raising the very issue of the need for definitions.

Rancière points to the way images are presented to their “audience” as a determining factor in shaping how they are perceived by the ones who engage with it. He proposes that

“‘image’ therefore refers to two different things. There is the simple relationship that produces the likeness of an original: not necessarily its faithful copy, but simply what suffices to stand in for it. And there is the interplay of operations that produces what we call art: or precisely an alteration of resemblance.” (RANCIÈRE, 2012, p. 6.)

The alteration of resemblance, in the context of performance photography, lies in the possibility that those two aspects of the photographic image coexist, the image itself carrying precisely the friction of possibilities between reality and fiction, the blurring of boundaries. The image depicts a performance that happened in the past, but as it fictionalises the happening, it raises questions about the actuality of a “truth-fiction” dichotomy and of the understanding of photography as an expression of truth.

In order to analyse performance photography, I relied on categories which will be undone throughout the very process of being analysed. The fragile following categories are relevant to this discussion: photographs taken on performances for an audience, others based on performances for the camera in order to be photographed, and photographing, in itself, as a performative act.

Those formats intermingle and intervene on each other, in objective and subjective terms. The presence of the person who is photographing a performance, in addition to the camera, interferes with the performance that is taking place. While, at the same time, the artists who are performing to the audience, aware of the presence of the camera, modulate their moves so that the images are made. Or, to an extreme, one might understand that people perform through photographing, emphasizing their presence as bodies that observe, changing not only the space being inhabited, but also the relationship that the subject being photographed will develop with the lenses pointed at them. To photograph a person engaging in a performance meant to be photographed, there are negotiations to be made between posing and performing. In one of my experiences, the performer struck a pose as I had instructed them to optimise the framing, lighting, etc. However, they did so howling while being photographed. The action of the performance itself - howling - was happening rather than being staged. The spreading of portraiture into performance art happens there, when the performative programme³ happens for the camera instead of only being played. The resulting photographs are as staged - since they record an event that would not occur in the absence of that photographic process - as they are testimonial, given that such performance happened beyond acting.



Figure 1 - "Mariah". Photography by the author, part of the project "monstrs".

Therefore, the blurring of categories that occurs when creating performance art photography presents itself as a source of power. Antonio Fatorelli,

³Concept proposed by Eleonora Fabião, "Very objectively, the program is the performance's enunciation: a set of previously stipulated actions, clearly articulated and conceptually polished, that will be carried out by the performer, by the public, or by both without any previous rehearsal. In other words, the program's temporality is very different from that of the show, of the rehearsal, of improvisation, of choreography." (FABIÃO, 2013, p. 4.)

when approaching moving and static images, points that “fascination and relevance of photography to contemporary culture arise from its fundamental ambiguity, its singular way of aggregating concept and perception, idea and presence, record and fabrication, art and science.” (FATORELLI, 2016, p. 8.)

As for the content of photography, Sontag also asserts:

“To photograph is to confer importance. There is probably no subject that cannot be beautified; moreover, there is no way to suppress the tendency inherent in all photographs to accord value to their subjects. But the meaning of value itself can be altered - as it has been in the contemporary culture of the photographic image...” (SONTAG, 2005, p. 22.)

If I photograph a scene, I do so because something in it must be looked at; if I show that image to others, it is a disruption of the commonness of all the other scenes that are not shown by myself. Choosing to photograph performances and performativities is a way of drawing attention to those performances and performativities, fostering the possibility of questions and protecting their existences.

Auslander suggests, in a radical posture, an analysis of performance art photography which indicates ways of thinking about that photographing action:

“I am suggesting that performance documents are not analogous to constatives, but to performatives: in other words, the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such. Documentation does not simply generate image/statements that describe an autonomous performance and state that it occurred: it produces an event as a performance, as suggests Frazer Ward, the performer as “artist”. (AUSLANDER, 2016, p. 5.)

“Framing” is precisely the term chosen by Féral when writing about the program a performer engages in when performing: “if the frame is an impossible result, the framing, on the other hand, is a process, a making, a production that expresses the subject as/through/in an act.” (FERAL, 2015, p. 94). and it is that process of framing, in photography, that will also define the discussion areas raised/activated/triggered by observing the image, it is the choice on the signification space that will unfold itself with each element in the image’s framing - and, when implied, beyond it.

Auslander, when musing on a performance by Vito Acconci in which the latter photographed an empty street with no witnesses to his action, looks to the interaction between performance art and photograph to find whether the

piece could still be a performance or a visual art object:

“...It is by virtue of presenting the photographs of their actions that the artists frame the depicted actions as performances and assume responsibility to the audience. As with the Acconci piece, the audience to whom they assume responsibility is the audience for the documentation, not for the live event.” (AUSLANDER, 2013, s.p.)

Acknowledging the “performative programme” in Acconci’s work, its context of creation is final to the piece. If we look solely to the photographs, unaware of how they had been created, we do not understand the power dynamics implied in that art piece, despite the fact that those photographs testify that such work happened.

This piece might be understood as a photograph-resulting performance or a visual arts work consisting of a photo collection, which can either be or not be contextualised in its process of creation.

Understanding the act of photographing as a performative one is yet another way of undoing the belief on objectivity when it comes to photography. Schechner claims that maps, for instance, are not neutral. “They perform a particular interpretation of the world” (SCHECHNER, 2006, p. 40). Photographs might also be seen as performing an idealised scene, as conceived by the photographer. Even though the ideal set is not as objective as in maps, the choice of romanticising even a horror scene is an idealisation and political choice made by photography.

Such choice takes new proportions when portrait photography is being discussed. Teresa Bastos correlates contemporary portrait photography to the concept of identity, contextualising the debate:

“Contemporary visual artists are making it possible for portrait to be deconstructed and for, the concept of identity, initially viewed almost as the genre’s only reading, to be alternated, questioned and investigated, so that the image seen in the portrait is something other than the social and psychological data of the subject portrayed; allowing it to be an aesthetic experience as well.” (BASTOS, 2014, p. 6.)

The eyes of the one who sees the photo wanders by all of the image, projecting power dynamics to the elements that compose it. That allows for more complex analysis of what is seen in the photograph, perceiving the context as an indicative of the photographed person’s subjectivities in addition to fostering reflections about them, pushing further than the immediate conclusions

drawn at first sight.

The performative action and the subject who does it, in relation to all the other elements in an image, are just another fiction element. And the wandering of the spectator's eyes can be yet another way of questioning photography's supposed objectivity and lack of bias, as well as of averting immediate conclusions on those being portrayed. After all, given that there is more to be seen, it is not about merely studying the physical traits of the portrayed person, but about exhibiting their condition against all that surrounds them: props, scenery, camera, etc.

When analysing north-american artist Diane Arbus' work, Susan Sontag speaks on photography's possibility of conveying that we are all equal or that we are all unique, the difference lying precisely in the way the photograph is executed. She says that "Arbus's work does not invite viewers to identify with the pariahs and miserable-looking people she photographed. Humanity is not 'one'." (SONTAG, 2005, p. 26).



Figure 2 - "Freaks", photography by Diane Arbus.

Also, in a broader sense, when comparing to USA's photographic practises at the time:

"Steichen's choice of photographs assumes a human condition or a human nature shared by everybody. By purporting to show that individuals are born, work, laugh, and die everywhere in the same way, "The Family of Man" denies the determining weight of history - of genuine and historically embedded differences, injustices, and conflicts. Arbus's photographs undercut politics just as decisively, by suggesting a world in which

everybody is an alien, hopelessly isolated, immobilized in mechanical, crippled identities and relationships. The pious uplift of Steichen's photograph anthology and the cool dejection of the Arbus retrospective both render history and politics irrelevant. One does so by universalizing the human condition, into joy; the other by atomizing it, into horror." (SONTAG, 2005, p. 26.)

The science of being photographed does not necessarily exempt the photographer from exoticising the person being portrayed. A powerful reference on producing images that make an impact, arouse curiosity and a more attentive view, fashion photography might be an objectifying output of the person being portrayed, even though models are actively performing to be photographed. Sontag speaks on photography that "photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed." (SONTAG, 2003, s.p.).

A path for performance and performativities photography which questions its own praxis might imply a sense of the tragic in photography. Teresa Bastos e Leandro Pimentel discourse on journalistic and documentary photography of accidents, catastrophes, etc.: "those images, to which we will refer as tragedy photos, were made aiming at recording the fleeting moment of those events or their consequences" (BASTOS, PIMENTEL, 2016, p. 218).

They then suggest that reframing the photos, withdrawing from the "unbiased" journalistic aspect attributed to them, might be a form of closeness of images to tragicness:

"The pursuit of mimesis or fidelity in image in relation to a happening, that is, the pursuit of information causes tragicness to distance itself from the image. And it is through the procedural operation, new circulation or survival of the file and the artist's use of the image that we believe it might be revived." (BASTOS, PIMENTEL, 2016, p. 226)

This becoming aspect of photography, this rhizomatic approach to the meanings that the photographic image can produce are relevant here as they foster the possibility of making a photograph which is not the "portrait" of a tragic situation or an intended evidence of the tragicness's existence somewhere, but an artistic object which can be comprehended as tragic in its ethic, aesthetic and political aspects, in conjunction; as Deleuze and Guattari propose about nomad art:

"...matter, in nomad science, is never prepared and therefore homogenised matter, but is essentially laden with singularities (which constitute a form of content). And neither is expression formal; it is inseparable from pertinent traits (which constitute a matter of expression). This is an entirely different schema, as we shall see. We can get a preliminary idea of this situation by recalling the most general characteristic of nomad art, in

which a dynamic connection between support and ornament replaces the matter-form dialectic." (DELEUZE, GUATTARI, 1997, p. 37.)

The tragic aspect of photography lies precisely where the need for both camera and object being photographed to be present converges in a final result which is necessarily a manipulated version of what was witnessed. It is not, in its entirety, an evidence, because it was manipulated even when it seems to be portrayed at its rawest. It would not happen either, on the other hand, without the actual presence of the elements being photographed, as dissimilar from themselves as they might appear in the final result. Bastos and Pimentel also speak on that power:

"For the image of tragedy to retrieve its tragic element, one that allows the emptiness of missing and the pain of absence, one must acknowledge that it is insufficient, as all languages are, but it is singularly powerful, since it carries traits of an existence that appears as absence." (BASTOS, PIMENTEL, 2016, p. 226.)

Photographing those elements in performers who are expressing their subjectivities is a way of researching the possibilities those performances offer of experiencing art while being free from the authoritative process of categorising and defining terms, in all their ineffectiveness, while being aware of the subjectivities implicated by the photographed subject's choices and also of what lingers in each image produced. A parallel could be drawn between the former and photography, upon reading Deleuze's and Guattari's note on writing: "Writing has nothing to do with meaning. It has to do with landsurveying and cartography, including the mapping of countries yet to come." (DELEUZE, GUATTARI, 1995, p. 19).

A question of the spectator and the way the image has been seen strikes me as essential to the consolidation of the notion of that would be theatricality in photography and, as a consequence, its creation of otherness.

theatricality would be, therefore, identification (when it is produced by another) or creation (when the subject projects onto things) of another space outside the daily life created by the spectator's vision, which exists outside of them. Such rift in space is the Other's space, one that sets an outside and inside of theatricality. It was the founding space of theatricality's alterity. (FERAL, 2015, p. 86.)

Such alterity, created by those who observe the image, remounts Auslander's discussion about the shaping of performance by the framing that photography causes to a scene. Silvia Fernandes, in her book "Contemporary Theatricalities", also places on that observation the responsibility for creating

theatricality.

Such placement is what I draw a parallel to, especially in performance for the camera, in which the images elements may or may not seem to be there for the performance, and it is the spectator's observation that will ponder on that.

"[...] theatricality is not only the 'density of signs and sensations' of which Barthes spoke, this kind of 'that ecumenical perception of sensuous artifice - gesture, tone, distance, substance, light - which submerges the text beneath the profusion of its external language'. In fact, it is the impossible conjugation of those signs before the spectator's eyes." (FERNANDES, 2012, p. 120.)

Placing responsibility over the image onto the eyes of those who look at it - instead of only onto who created it - strikes me as beneficial, then. The in-depth interpretation of a code language, such as textual, as well as its possibilities of multiple meanings are attributed significant importance, one that could be attributed to image interpretation. The ambiguity of the positions the photographic image can take in relation to performance can be of great use to discussion and movement of understanding photography's non-objectivity. If we can not conclude that an image belongs to a specific category of documentation or art, we are led to questioning the function it can have as a window to the world, to the "real".

The movement of blurring of binarisms in a work of art rises as power to the political questioning of the normatisation of subjective expression processes in general. If performance art photography and the evident theatricality in it question the current way of making images, the making of everyday images can follow in that direction as well.

When asked about society of control, Deleuze states:

"Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They're thoroughly permeated by money – and not by accident but by their very nature. We've got to hijack speech. Creating has always been something different from communicating. The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control." (DELEUZE, 1992, p. 221.)

Based on those thoughts about image creation processes, I foresee possibilities of a communication that is less attached to the normatisation of bodies, one that is engaged in showing rather than categorising or attributing qualities, one that proposes instead of stating to "recognize these monstrous metamor-

phoses of the flesh as not only a danger but also a possibility, the possibility to create an alternative society". (HARDT, NEGRI, 2012, p. 253)

After all, language, depending on how it is used, can be a barrier to understanding and create more spaces of power instead of sharing, in addition to being an impediment - among many others - to a transgressive education." (RIBEIRO, 2017, p. 28).

The manipulation of the camera by someone inserted into the context being photographed can be a defining factor to those alternative possibilities of image creation. Due to the character of the "blurring of boundaries" in photography, the latter is never solely art, but it always acquires the documental function - especially with passing time - and is inevitably seen as journalistic.

Therefore, it is important to pay attention to who makes art about others' images and how that art is made: "This journalistic custom inherits the centuries-old practice of exhibiting exotic – that is, colonized – human beings: Africans and denizens of remote Asian countries were displayed like zoo animals in ethnological exhibitions" (SONTAG, 2003, s/p).

The male gaze in cinematographic photography, despite being discussed often, is still majoritary in the media we consume. That is oppressive not only because of the lack of job opportunities for people in technical and directorial areas in cinema who do not abide by the white cis male heterosexual norm, but also due to its universalisation of a standpoint. Minimal exposure to other ways of seeing stimulates the belief of the white cis male narrative as an all-encompassing one, shared by everyone, of which other narratives would be less important derivations.

An issue to be considered about a photography which reflects about itself through creation is for it to be produced by people within that spectrum of power dynamics. The works I will analyse in the following pages were made by queer, pansexual, trans, black and female people. When those identities, so often portrayed by others, make photographs they create narratives that offer that standpoint, whether those experiences are in the core of their works or not. Portraying people whose experiences to which your own might be oppressive makes it necessary to be particularly more aware. When discoursing on Diane Arbus' work, Sontag states that:

"The photographer is supertourist, an extension of the anthropologist, visiting natives and bringing back news of their exotic doings and strange gear. The photographer is always trying to colonize new experiences or find new ways to look at familiar subjects - to fight against boredom. For boredom is just the reverse side of fascination: both depend on being outside rather than inside a situation, and one leads to the other. "The Chinese have a theory that you pass through boredom into fascination," Arbus noted. Photographing an appalling underworld (and a desolate, plastic overworld), she had no intention of entering into the horror experienced by the denizens of those worlds. They are to remain exotic, hence "terrific". Her view is always from the outside." (SONTAG, 2005, p. 33)

Thus, belonging to the photographed collective could be a path towards making photography less oppressive. There is not, however, an ideal subject who could speak for all those being photographed, especially when considering the overlapping of identities and oppressions. Mombaça further explains the question, when stating that "Therefore, it is not about 'who', but about 'how'. To its extreme, what standpoint speech activism is disallowing is a certain privileged way of enunciating truth, one singularised by cis-gender and white epistemic privileges of communicating and establishing regimes for political intelligibility, speakability and listening." (MOMBAÇA, 2018, s.p.)

That is, it is not about proposing to disallow anyone from making images and content about dissident existences, or to require credentials of whoever is making that, but to ensure that those structural hierarchies are taken under consideration throughout the creative process for an image. Thus, what is being pursued is a collaboration rather than a predatory movement of capturing photographed images. Sontag addresses such predatory movement when analysing war photography:

"Photographs really are experience captured, and the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood. To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge - and, therefore, like power".

That can be directly applied to fashion photography, and photography as an artistic expression as whole, after all, creating narrative is power, which is the very core of the debate on representativeness, as Ribeiro expounds by writing that "what is wanted to achieve through this debate is, fundamentally, to understand how power and identities work together depending on their contexts and how colonialism, in addition to creating, disallows or legitimises certain identities." (RIBEIRO, 2017, p. 33).

So, how could it be possible to dismantle this mechanism of legitimising

and illegitimising identities within this debate set in photography as a field?

Bastos says that “the performed image is to be thought of as being in the intersection of the points of view of the actor and the spectator, rather than a relationship between a ‘thing’ seen by a photographer and presented (reported) to the spectator as result of such sight.” (BASTOS, 2014, p. 7). Based on this notion, we can conceive photography as being constructed in collaboration between the person photographing and the one being photographed.

As for environments where performance art happens regardless of the presence of a camera - though modified by it, when it is there -, the concept of collaboration in the pictoric creation process is complexified. The collaboration set for this kind of image is much less objective than when making portraits from performances meant for the camera, but its outcome is still a collaboration between photographer and person photographed.

The conception of the performance act, bodily expressions and staging are a unilateral contribution of the person photographed, while other parts of the image’s creation are left to the photographer. The final result is, thus, a product of the artists’ joint creation. Such collaborations could be a counterpoint to photography’s predatory character. “To make it with” can be much more productive, in this sense, than to “make it about”.

By having agency over the image being created, the photographed person is allowed to hold power over the narrative about themselves that will be shared, an essential aspect for thinking representativeness. It is also a much-needed step for photography to rid itself from operating under journalistic logics, according to which the photographer, standing as legitimiser, ‘saves’ the causes it photographs by bringing it to privileged audiences’ attention. About such workings, Butler mentions Sontag’s writings

“But perhaps she was merely saying that in seeing the photos, we see ourselves seeing, that we are those photographers to the extent that we share those norms that provide those frames in which those lives are rendered destitute and abject, sometimes clearly beaten to death. In Sontag’s view, the dead are profoundly uninterested in us they do not seek our gaze.” (BUTLER, 2007, p. 28)

Thus, bringing to light a relevant feature of portrait to be considered, which is the willingness and consent of the person being photographed to the making of that image. In addition to previously-made agreements between

photographer and person being photographed, it is worth wondering if a photo taken of someone who was not aware of being photographed and who might not consent to or have agency over a photo can be an intentional form of photographic creation and, also, to what extent the power dynamics between the people engaged in the making of that image legitimises the motivations that drive predatory behaviour in photography.

After all, a journalist who reports news about tragedies in which he is not involved is different from Nan Goldin's photographing police officers in contrast with her main motive for those photos, her friends, dissident bodies.



Figure 3 - "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency, 1985". Photography by Nan Goldin.

Photographing oneself, as a mundane performer of dissident experiences, might be a way of conceiving the creation of images beyond the white male cisgendered straight narrative. Pointing the camera to one's own body and to those who live in that context is a possibility of creating the subjects own fiction about themselves, one intended to be shared with the world through an ambiguous format that is both art and evidence.

Evelym Gutierrez is the artist responsible for "Um beijo das travestis", an artwork in which she uses point-and-shoot and mobile phone cameras to make images out of her daily life and that of those around her. Self-portraits, staged and documental photographs are exhibited through slideshows.

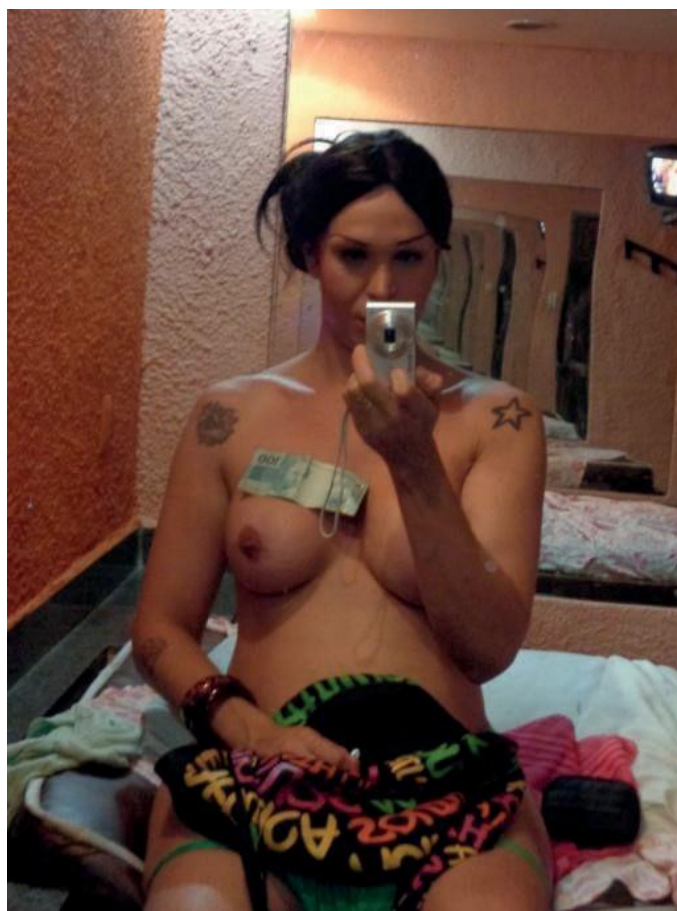


Figure 4 - “Um beijo das travestis”. Photography by Evelym Gutierrez.

Evelym creates a narrative about herself for the project, one that withdraws, from cis-heterosexual standards-abiding people, a sense of entitlement over producing discourse about her life, while also attaching importance to her own experiences, structurally neglected by the “cistem”.

In the photos we see Evelym’s naked body, the communal life at Casa Nem and the daily experiences of transgender people during the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. The adoption of lighter, subtler cameras which result in lower-resolution images is, in this case, a political choice that surpasses gender issues and proposes a disruption of the normativity in photographic praxis.

Sontag states:

‘Photography is the only major art in which professional training and years of experience do not confer an insuperable advantage over the untrained and inexperienced – this for many reasons, among them the large role that chance (or luck) plays in the taking of pictures, and the bias toward the spontaneous, the rough, the imperfect.’ (SONTAG, s.p., 2003.)

A core question to contemporary photography discussions, which has not been broadly addressed by professional camera usage technicians. I would like to highlight here, however, photography's advantage of making it possible for mundane experiences and the access to moments of intimacy and daily lives to upstage technique.

Allowing, then, for a quicker, lighter content creation based on what is spontaneously happening around the subject who is photographing. A different way of collaborating in performance art photography is when the performer asks the photographer to be portrayed.

The piece "Alice no Brasil das Maravilhas" by Rafael Bqueer properly illustrates such process.



Figure 5 - "Alice no Brasil das Maravilhas". Work by Rafael Bqueer.

Rafael, while dressed-up as a twisted, hairless, short-skirted Alice - the character from the book "Alice in Wonderland", by Lewis Carroll -, moves around spaces which were meaningful to her personal trajectory in several Brazilian states, such as Pará, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

In order to make this piece, she invites photographers to create images out of her performance, using the resulting pictures as both art work and evidence of the performative act it portrays. The debate is furthered, then, by the definitions of performance art and legitimacy of a work that addresses its own

recording.

There are views on performance art for which the staging for a photograph would invalidate the action's performative character, categorising it as a different kind of art.

The important aspect, for the artist, was for her performance's reach to be widened through photography. For her narrative to be told and for it to be engaging. The collaboration is roughly the same between photographer and subject being photographed, but the image authorship traditionally changes.

Bqueer's images do not take the photographer's name, for instance, as they are presented as the performer's art works. Therefore, another issue to be observed when considering the possibilities of a photography that reflects about itself is the displaying of images that were made: in addition to the photographer and photographed subject, who will see the pictures and in which context they will do so.

Will the exhibition of those images reach an audience unaware of that reality or will they be seen by those who recognise themselves in it? Will they work towards a shift in the narrative of photographed bodies or will they reinforce objectifying views or a "savior complex" attitude directed at those being portrayed? Will those images circulate freely, possibly resulting in excessive and, in some cases, dangerous exposure of the people photographed or will their circulation be controlled, which could prevent interested people from being reached by them?

As unable to control the reception of their images as photographers might be, it is necessary to discuss and consider new forms of looking at images. Flusser urges us for a new relationship between contemporaneity and technical images:

Não é de boa estratégia adorar as tecno-imagens, (viver em função da TV ou do cinema), nem se revoltar contra elas. Mais correto é tentar aprender a arte de fazer e decifrar tecno-imagens, o que implica a arte de repassar o discurso pela tecno-imaginação. Se os antigos tivessem aprendido a ler e escrever, teriam evitado a manipulação milenar pelo clero. Se não aprendermos a manipular tecno-imagens, não evitaremos o domínio exercido por burocratas e programadores. (FLUSSER, 2008, s.p.)

The resulting effort of those thoughts on photography, if they come to

happen, will be worthless unless there is an education as to how photography is read and understood by those who look at it. It is necessary to dismantle the approach of photography as representation of reality, at which we look attentively in order to change the situation before us. This logic is referred to by Sontag as unproductive, adding, however, the issue that “images have been reproached for being a way of watching suffering at a distance, as if there were some other way of watching. But watching up close – without the mediation of an image – is still just watching.” (SONTAG, 2003, s.p.)

Observing a catastrophic situation in a social context other than ours and being aware of it does not change the situation of those living it unless we mobilise to make changes. A starting point for that is highlighted by Ribeiro when saying that “Kilomba addresses a fundamental issue when discussing “standpoint speeches”: it requires listening from those who have always been allowed to speak” (RIBEIRO, 2018, p. 80).

One must be aware of all the structures that shape their actions and creations, in social macropolitics as well as in micropolitics. Possibilities of an extensive theoretical approach on daily creative practises is an undeniable opportunity to raise and undo those structures aiming at reducing oppression and to restructure our experiences and artistic expressions in more egalitarian ways.

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