

The Museum is Us All (*O Museu Somos Todos*), Odemira:  
community, place and memory in a site-specific  
participatory art project

Catarina Barata  
(CRIA/ISCTE-IUL)



## WORKING PAPER 13

### **The Museum is Us All (*O Museu Somos Todos*), Odemira: community, place and memory in a site-specific participatory art project**

Catarina Barata (CRIA)

[catarina.barata@tutanota.com](mailto:catarina.barata@tutanota.com)

2016

This article refers to the film from the installation *Hidden Fragments* (or. *Fragmentos Escondidos*). Available at: <https://vimeo.com/174606082/f837614bf1>

**ABSTRACT:** Based on the author's field experience from the participatory art project "The Museum is Us All", the article focuses on the paramount role that art can play in the creation of collective memories and sense of belonging to a place. Having as a starting point a door found in the municipal collection, the conception of this art program, closely entangled with the scientific Conference "Ignorance and Oblivion", held in 2013 in Odemira, promoted the collaboration of artists with people from the community, in a cooperative work for the creation of site-specific art pieces that reflected on some of the region's features, echoing past and contemporary realities. Mapping of cultural agents proved in this process a useful start-up tool for further curatorial work.

Through the creative transformation of collective and individual patrimonial elements into art pieces, and through the embodied lived experiences and sharing of affective memorable

moments, the transformative power of the arts is a privileged means to create senses of communal commitment and to elaborate imagined realities.

However the obvious positive results of this kind of project in the collective self-esteem, temporarily creating a feeling of community and sharing, the one-off nature of this kind of project, depending on the opportunistic agendas of public political institutions, inevitably bears inconsistent results. As participation is appropriated by social inclusion discourses, current debates about the instrumentation of participatory art in the context of neoliberal acts of governance cannot go unaddressed.

KEYWORDS: Site-specific art, participatory art, community, place

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Arte *site-specific*, arte participativa, comunidade, lugar

The museum will thus be a place of creation and revelation, scientific and artistic; a place of exploration of the inherence of both creations to each other and a place of cultural projection of both.<sup>1</sup> (Prista 2014: 11)

Dance is an art form that, through the force of its energy, is able to ignite a place with its glare. Then, it knows how to put itself out using the water from its sweat, leaving on that place's floor the scars of happiness.<sup>2</sup> (Victorino 2013: 523)

For, as art enters life, the question that will motivate people far more than What is art? is the much more metaphysically relevant and pressing What is life? (Thompson 2012: 33)

---

<sup>1</sup> My own translation from the original: "O museu será assim um lugar de criação e revelação, científica e artística; um lugar de exploração da inerência de ambas as criações uma à outra, e um lugar de projeção cultural de ambas."

<sup>2</sup> My own translation from the original: "A Dança é a arte que, com a força bruta da sua energia, é capaz de incendiar um lugar com o seu clarão. Depois, sabe apagar-se usando a água do seu suor e deixando nos sulcos do chão desse sítio as cicatrizes da felicidade."

## **Participatory Art projects in 21st century society of spectacle**

“Who needs to worry about art, when the world is literally a stage?” (Thompson 2012: 30). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the problematisation behind the provocative question posed by Thompson in *Living as Form*, one cannot set out to talk about participatory art projects without bearing in mind the current debates about the issues arisen by this creation paradigm in disciplines like art history.

Bourriaud’s (2002) claims in his seminal work *Relational Aesthetics* that relational art is essentially more democratic have been fundamentally contested: besides the fact that collaborative practices themselves are built on mechanics of exclusion, Bishop (2004, 2012b) argues that participation has now merged with the spectacle that the historical avant-gardes to which participatory art owes its lineage to so much criticised. Spectacle, as Guy Debord conceptualised it, is a pervasive form of social relations (under capitalism as well as totalitarian regimes) with its expression in cultural production, wherein “individual subjects experience society as atomized and fragmented because social experience is mediated by images” (Bishop 2012b: 36). In the context of contemporary society of spectacle, the constant production and consumption of images not only conditions our perception of the world, but the way we enact our own presence in it. In the last twenty-five years, since the fall of the Berlin wall and the rise of a “powerful neoliberal economic order dedicated to eliminating all forms of collective or public resistance (institutional, ideological, and organizational) to the primacy of capital” (Kester 2011: 5), the commodification of all realms of reality has made it difficult to escape being captured by market or institutional logics. Participation is not the exception and can be deployed by market forces and dominant powers for the production of their own meaning and advertising. “On a political level, participation is increasingly considered a privileged medium for British and EU government cultural funding policies seeking to create the impression of social inclusion” (Bishop 2006: 17). Thompson notes that “using the same symbolic manipulation and design methods that have long been the bread and butter of artists, the growth of «creative industries» have become part of the cultural landscape” (Thompson 2012: 29).

As an art dependent on first-hand experience and demanding more on-site time commitment, Bishop suggests that imbrication is a fundamental condition for a fruitful analysis of participatory art projects (Bishop 2012a). Taking advantage of my participation both as an

anthropology researcher for the conference (Barata 2013a) and as a filmmaker who created a video installation for the occasion of the cultural program (Barata 2013b), I propose a description of the development of the works regarding the whole process, focusing on methodological issues. In order to account for the conception of the work implied in *Hidden Fragments* video installation, there follow some notes on creative choices and subjective motivations on a more personal tone.

### *Museum of Odemira – Context of a project*

The creation of a museum of the territory in Odemira, a rural area in southwest Europe with low density and high rates of illiteracy, is an old idea that has been intermittently activated by the political power according to the changing cultural agendas. The last episode in the life of this inexistent museum was the assemblage of a group of specialists from a diversity of disciplines in 2012, in order to prepare a museological program within one year, for public presentation before the elections.

Aware of the lack of relevant physical collections that would justify the creation of a museum as well as of the importance of such institutions as cultural activators, this museum should be, according to Prista a meeting place for people, instead of an “orphanage of pieces”:

a place of contact, transit of borders and overcoming of limitations. As a «museum of society», it is a museum centered in the cosmopolitan dimension of all social life today, instead of fixed in the vertigo of traditions, local memories or identity mirages.<sup>3</sup> (Prista 2014: 11)

This universal vocation, calling for extra-local connections, should constitute the institution as a central piece of the cultural life of the place, with strong community participation, effecting, in the process of its action, a real social transformation. The openness of this purpose resounds with Belting’s attempt to broaden the semantic definition of the museum, mapping it as, among other things, a way of seeing, public sphere, learning place, playground and dreamland (Belting 2013).

---

<sup>3</sup> My own translation from the original: “um lugar de contacto, de trânsito de fronteiras e de ultrapassagem de limitações. Enquanto «museu de sociedade», trata-se de um museu centrado na dimensão cosmopolita de toda a vida social, hoje, e não fixado na vertigem das tradições, das memórias locais, e em miragens de identidades.”

From the start, art was acknowledged to play a paramount role to play in the whole process.

### **The Museum is Us All (*O Museu Somos Todos*)**

*A certain door recalled...*

Despite the poorness of the existent municipal collections, one object in the ethnological collection stood out as particularly interesting for its communicative capacities. It is a broken door. A door which speaks, through its story, of hunger and tyranny, but also of courage and solidarity, in an episode of local history that, not many know, would have repercussions on a national level.

The year was 1918 and on the general strike on 18<sup>th</sup> november a group of people in Vale de Santiago assaulted a barn full of cereal for exportation. It was a time of hunger and social misery. The National Guard soon arrived and a local man who hadn't been involved in the assault, José Júlio da Costa, served as intermediary between the revoltors and the armed forces. He negotiated that no harm would come to the men upon rendition. However, the guard's promises weren't kept and the men were automatically incarcerated and deported to Angola, without judgment whatsoever.

Costa, feeling responsible for the men's fate and out of revolt for the treason, headed to Lisbon and shot dead the then President Sidónio Pais, putting an end to the dictatorship of the New Republic (*República Nova*).

*... all kinds of doors opened*

The challenge proposed to choreographer and specialist in community-based art Madalena Victorino was to take that door as a starting point and design an artistic project that would call for community engagement and participation. Victorino (2013: 523) explains:

The aim was to fill in with artistic, physical and communitarian vitality a cultural field that could complete and live with the scientific program of the **Ignorance and Oblivion** Conference, designed and coordinated by anthropologist Pedro Prista. This program had

the intention to serve as a foundation for the project of a future museum in Odemira in a paradigm of contemporaneity and organic confluence between Science, Art and Society.<sup>4</sup>

Held in April 2013 in Odemira, the Conference was a gathering of scientists from a diverse range of fields, from the natural to the social sciences, to discuss the state of the art of studies about the region, whose conclusions would serve as a basis for the scientific foundations of the Museum. Vocationally restricted in the kind of audience this kind of event summons, the idea was to invite the population to be a fundamental part of the cultural project that would run entangled to the Conference.

### *Methodology*

#### Stage 1: Mapping people, places and stories

Stage one was the mapping of the cultural agents and institutions in the region, individual and collective. Cultural mapping here pertains more to a method of inventory of cultural assets than to UNESCO's widely recommended technique of cultural mapping as an exercise of representing a worldview or knowledge system for greater intercultural understanding and dialogue (Havana Communiqué 2006; Crawhall 2008). It is instead in line with Strang's cultural mapping as an ethnographic tool, a scientific method for the systematic collection of social data. Local heritage, tangible and intangible, being the raw material of this cultural project, mapping of "cultural landscapes composed of ideas, categories, knowledges and values; social and spatial arrangements; economic and political practices; and religious and scientific cosmologies" (Strang 2010: 133) proved a valuable starting point.

An outsider to the region, Victorino relied on the team of two anthropologists (including myself), one archaeologist and a local development technician who worked on the museum project and know the field intimately as a first source of information. An incomplete inventory of cultural agents and associations was also provided by the municipal services, which compile that kind of information in a more or less thorough way, although not updating it regularly.

---

<sup>4</sup> My own translation from the original: "O objetivo foi o de preencher com vitalidade artística, física e comunitária um campo cultural que pudesse conviver e completar o programa científico do colóquio **Ignorância e Esquecimento**, desenhado e coordenado pelo antropólogo Pedro Prista. Este programa teve como intenção alicerçar o projeto de um futuro Museu para Odemira num paradigma de contemporaneidade e confluência orgânica entre Ciência, Arte e Sociedade."

However, the daily presence of Victorino in the village was the most important factor. There was a mixture of structured and unstructured approach to the field. On the one hand, we would make appointments with people we defined as target and scheduled visits to places, on the other, we allowed for a level of free happening, relying on chance. Impromptu conversations, walkabouts, day-to-day living and performance of common tasks (shopping, going to the hairdresser, the market, the café) proved a rich source of information. The people we would meet would also have suggestions on whom we should contact, providing that kind of information at our meetings. “Have you already met this or that person?” was a common question.

A note should be added at this point about the importance of word of mouth for a process of this nature in a small place like Odemira. The news about the artist, recently arrived in the village, interested in the place and its history, as well as its stories, spread in a way we hadn't foreseen. Soon some people would be expecting Victorino to contact them, others wouldn't even wait, actively looking for her instead.

What followed the first stage of cultural mapping was curatorial work: the selection of subject matters, individuals, groups and sites for the artistic creation. The aim of the mapping was never the collection of data for conservation purposes, as is many times the case, nor for corporate or public planning, as in many others. The strategy was not asset-based community development, although the process of asset mapping as “a process of identifying and listing the institutions and formal and informal associations within a neighborhood, as well as unique facilities, programming, capacities, and goals these groups provide for the community” (Borru 2006: 238), was a part of stage one of our method.

However, the goal was to make original art creations in a process that bears some connection to McLucas' statement about *Deep mapping*: “Deep maps will bring together the amateur and the professional, the artist and the scientist, the official and the unofficial, the national and the local” (McLucas n.d.).

Stage 2: Curatorial work - Selecting Who, What and Where

Of the whole program created, I will focus solely on the Installation's Night.

On finding Who, Victorino (2013: 524) recalls:

I met many of the artists who live in the territory. I was surprised by their diversity, internationality and quality. Coming from the theater, visual arts, cinema and music, we needed to find the right role for each.<sup>5</sup>

We also met embroiderers, carpenters, hairdressers, students, cooks, cheese makers, nuns, teachers, doctors, inmates... On finding What, Victorino (*Id.*) explains:

I began by studying the phenomena, looking for them in the live people that carry them on their bodies, on their living. I looked for the people. I wanted them to talk, to tell me about their interests, their lives, their ways of looking at this land and what lies underneath it and river Mira.<sup>6</sup>

From the talks with local intellectuals and inspired on themes found in historical, anthropological and archaeological studies, as well as in the literature that mirrors local stories and mythology, a set of relevant themes that concur for the region's imagination and sense of belonging started to appear.

On finding Where: We also mapped places. As the cartography of the village became more familiar to Victorino, she had the idea of opening forgotten places – places that everybody knows and inhabit the communal imagination, but are closed or abandoned – in order to open them to fruition for the occasion. She affirms she kept “looking systematically and without giving up for the places that would be «under the river», i.e., hidden by the silence of time and that could revive and have pulse once again, enlivening the village.”<sup>7</sup> (*Ibid.*)

Stage 3: Creating a new map for a night

Victorino (*Ibid.*) explains the concept behind her work:

---

<sup>5</sup> My own translation from the original: “Conheci muitos dos artistas que vivem no território. Fiquei surpreendida pela sua diversidade, internacionalidade e qualidade. Vindos do teatro, das artes visuais, do cinema e da música, era preciso encontrar o papel certo para cada um.”

<sup>6</sup> My own translation from the original: “Comecei por estudar os fenómenos, procurando-os nas pessoas vivas que os transportam no seu corpo, no seu viver. Procurei as pessoas. Queria que me falassem, me contassem sobre os seus centros de interesse, a sua vida, a sua forma de olhar esta terra e aquilo que jaz debaixo dela e do rio Mira.”

<sup>7</sup> My own translation from the original: “(...) procurando de forma sistemática e sem desistir os vários locais que estivessem debaixo do rio, ou seja, escondidos pelo silêncio do tempo e que pudessem reanimar-se e voltar a ter pulsação, dando vida à vila.”

This is how I imagined this small festival: throughout the night, a gigantic moving human landscape, coming from all streets and alleys, thirsty for the happening that awaited it.

Through the legs, body and mind of the visiting public, the program took shape, got design and content. It would gather in front of the doors of places pulsating with action, musical, visual, cinematographic fictions, unique performative moments created in the crossings of the history and intangible heritage of this place, the artistic matter and its inhabitants, transfigured in nocturnal characters. I imagined that, through the installations created by all, the strength of the transformed image of their moving bodies would be clear to the public. I imagined an experience of fusion with those who, inside the houses so long ignored, made music with work tools, embroidered texts and images of the local fictions, mined imaginary ore... And that it would all touch the public... that the whole village would drown in the magic of this river and would come back to the surface transfigured, renovated, jubilant.<sup>8</sup>

For the Installation's Night described above, resident artists were invited to develop performances, the whole program being designed in a triad. Each artist was thus suggested a theme (what), a focus group from the community to work with (who) and a presentation site (where). As in a wide range of collaborative projects, the work was developed as a workshop comprising several sessions, in which the artists introduced the volunteer collaborators to the respective art forms. The workshop has emerged as a significant method of creative production (Kester 2011) and has arisen some questions as to what concerns some operational dichotomies. Crehan points to the fact that:

“a workshop format in itself, does not define either the nature of the nonexperts' contribution or the power relationship between expert and nonexpert (...). Nonetheless,

---

<sup>8</sup> My own translation from the original: “Assim, imaginei este pequeno festival: Pela noite fora, uma gigante paisagem humana em movimento surgia de todas as ruas e ruelas com a sede do acontecimento que a esperava: Pelas pernas, pelo corpo e pela mente do público visitante o programa ganhava forma, desenho e conteúdo. Acumulavam-se às portas dos lugares que palpitavam de ação, ficções musicais, plásticas, cinematográficas, momentos performativos únicos e inventados do cruzamento da história e patrimônio imaterial deste lugar, a matéria artística e os seus habitantes, agora transfigurados em personagens noturnas. Imaginei que através das instalações por todos construídas saltasse para os olhos do público a força da imagem transformada dos seus corpos em movimento. Imaginei uma experiência de fusão com aqueles que, dentro das casas por tanto tempo ignoradas, faziam música com instrumentos de trabalho, bordavam os textos e as imagens das ficções locais, escavavam minério imaginário... E que tudo isso emocionasse o público... que a vila inteira se afundasse na magia deste rio e viesse à superfície transfigurada, renovada, jubilante.”

workshops can be seen as having at least the potential to provide spaces in which experts and nonexperts can work collaboratively on identifying problems and coming up with solutions, and nonexperts can learn specific skills.” (Crehan 2011: 182)

The structure of the several installations could be summarized according to the following organizational scheme (table 1), in which the numbers stand for the performances as follows: 1- Hidden Fragments, 2- Sound Planers, 3- Mining Clown, 4- Embroidering is Writing with Blood, 5- True Photographic Studio.<sup>9</sup>

	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Art form(s)</b>	<b>Professional Artists</b>	<b>Collaborators (volunteers)</b>	<b>Place</b>
1-	Hidden people and places	Cinema + Dance	Filmmaker + Technical Assistant + Choreographer	Penitentiary Inmates + High School Students + Cleaning Ladies	Church
2-	Manual work	Music	Musicians	Carpenters	Flour factory
3-	Mining	Clown (Theater)	Clown	Assistant + Students	Bus station
4-	Of suicide and other stories	Painting + Literature + Theater	Painter + Choreographer	Embroiderers + Actors	Manorial house
5-	People	Photography	Photographer	Photographers + Everybody	Manorial house

*Table 1 – Installation’s Night – Summarizing organizational scheme*

Note that the division hereby assumed between “professional artists” and “collaborators (volunteers)” are not absolute categories. They are operative categories that enable us to understand how the work was structured in terms of organization and logistics, revealing a hierarchy based on the creative authorship and responsibility, with implications in the artistic quality of the outcome, the time each person dedicated to the project and reflecting on the payment options. It doesn’t mean there weren’t professional artists among the collaborators, as the opposite was actually the case. There was also a professional production assistant and a lighting designer who collaborated in every performance.

<sup>9</sup> Original names in Portuguese: 1- Fragmentos Escondidos, 2- Aplainadores de Sons, 3- Clown Mineiro; 4- Bordar é Escrever com Sangue, 5- Verdadeiro Estúdio Fotográfico.

Thus, for that night, an alternative map of the village was handed out to visitors, who moved freely from site to site, experiencing the different performances created.

People were curious to see the inside of places they pass by everyday without ever having entered, they were proud to see their daughter, nephew, neighbor or friend perform, and they were thrilled to see their everyday realities transformed by the magic of the arts. Victorino (*Ibid.*) states:

That's what I proposed to do in the two months that I worked in Odemira: to stitch a huge fabric of relationships that I managed to gather through testimonies, landscapes, the discovery of places and institutions, encounters with many people in taverns, cafés, schools, at the countryside, health center, prison, church, and make together with them a big happening in which the people themselves and their stories would be the protagonists and interlocutors in building **a great narrative of movements that would set Odemira on fire for one night.**<sup>10</sup>

Odemira was indeed on fire for that night. The fire of artistic creation, of the social encounter, of communal celebration. The village saw itself through a mirror that had the power to ignite the sparkle of dream and creation, if “what matters are the ideas, experiences and possibilities that result from these interactions” (Bishop 2011: 9), that night was meaningful in the life of that place. “A night of culture, but also of affection”, someone would later describe. The common feeling was of a space out of time.

*“Hidden Fragments” – Notes on the making of*

### Opening doors

Besides my close involvement from the beginning in the work related to the construction of the whole program, as a filmmaker, I was invited to work on a film piece about hidden places and people. The idea was to open the doors of realities from this place that are usually

---

<sup>10</sup> My own translation from the original: “Foi isso que me propus fazer nos dois meses em que trabalhei em Odemira: Coser um grande tecido de relações que fui arrebanhando através de testemunhos, paisagens, descoberta de lugares e instituições, encontros com muitas pessoas em tabernas, cafés, escolas, no campo, no centro de saúde, na prisão, na igreja e fazer com eles um grande acontecimento em que seriam as próprias pessoas e as suas histórias as protagonistas e interlocutores na construção de uma **grande narrativa de movimentos que se incendiaria numa noite em Odemira.**”

unnoticed to most people, even to those living here, and make them noticed to public awareness. These undisclosed realities would be the subject of a film to be shown on the white lining of long black coats, worn by performers. Victorino would be responsible for the movement and dramaturgy of the performance and we would work together on the development of the concept.

We soon arrived to the subject matters that interested us: the greenhouses, the prison, the long-term care center and the dance classes attended by the nuns. After making the initial contacts with the institutions implied, the religious order didn't authorize filming the nuns. I was pregnant by that time and it made all the sense to me that the fourth hidden fragment would be the baby inside the womb.

The door we physically wanted to open for the night was that of *Igreja da Misericórdia*, a church in the center of the village that has been empty and closed for the last decades.

## Greenhouses

Hidden Fragments, the motto that Victorino suggested for inspiration, automatically reminded me of the hundreds of immigrants that work at the greenhouses along the coast, producing berries and greeneries. The mere existence of those greenhouses are a puzzle to me that can only be explained by a close look at a certain economic organization and lobby associated to it: situated in the middle of a national protected area<sup>11</sup> where there is a tight control regarding any kind of construction, these extensive plantations are a dominant in the landscape, as strange as it might sound – and their existence is legal. As explained to me by the operative director in charge of one of those companies, it was discovered not so long ago that the soil and climate conditions here are ideal for the plantation of berries, as in California, certain areas in Morocco and not many other places on the planet. As a consequence of these findings, some multinationals have been installing their production here for the last two to three decades.

The correspondence between certain nationalities and the hierarchic positions of the staff of these companies is what strikes me as a sign of a paradigmatic organization of the contemporary economic world order. By looking at that distribution, one is able to read the

---

<sup>11</sup> South West Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park.

stratification resulting from a globalized order built on colonization and western white dominance. In fact, when looking at those facts, one can see a pyramid where American, Dutch, Spanish are on top (companies' owners and directors) and the people working daily at the production are Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Thai, Nepalese.

Most of those manual workers don't speak Portuguese at all and don't have much contact with the world outside the working structure. It is common that they live together in facilities provided by the employers, which is especially the case of the Thai. The payment for these workers is the minimum wage of the country, which, as we speak in 2016, is as low as 530€, plus the possibility to add on according to the weight of fruit collected each day. There are few Portuguese performing these tasks due to the low payment and other work conditions, such as the demanding schedules, which in certain periods include Sundays and holidays. The few Portuguese at these companies are usually working at the office, performing administrative tasks.

A great part of the production is to be exported and when one thinks about it, it is impossible not to have the impression that these companies are implemented here without much benefit for the place.

I was granted permission to film the work at the greenhouses with one condition: that the faces of the workers wouldn't be visible, due to practical reasons (image rights and permissions).

The first day of shooting, aware that I would have to avoid any explicit reference to any worker, I realized this film couldn't be about the work there. Ideally I would want to film a certain week when, due to stock prices, all production is simply thrown away, the picked fruits rotting on the floor. I didn't have the time to wait for that occasion though, nor to wait that the fruits would mature and the picking season would start, so I decided to turn to another aspect instead: the massive repetition of the greenhouses in the landscape. I did a long sequence shot of the greenhouses as we drove along them.

Penitentiary

On a privileged position on top of a hill, the only thing that reminds us of the nature of that institution is the barbed wire. Most of the people from the village have never entered and will never enter that place. What goes on inside is a total mystery, for no connection between both worlds is ever made. I had never been inside such a place before myself.

I couldn't help recalling Michel Foucault (2009), when writing about systems that are officially egalitarian, but use discipline to create non-egalitarian power relations, each time I would go there. Each time, a strong encounter with the evidence that our society is not functioning properly, that it is based on mistaken principles and is using ill-designed strategies to keep it going.

When confronted with all my doubts and constant anguish towards such an institution, Victorino insisted our encounter with those ladies should be one of sharing, of dance, of music. Where could we go together? We decided we didn't want to make a documentary or learn about the misfortunes that had brought the five women we would be working with to such a place. Discussions about the mechanisms of the principle of punishment or state strategies for the "docile bodies" (Foucault, again) were beyond the purpose of this specific collaboration.

Each visit was full of experimentation and fun. We would propose movement, rhythmic or mimic exercises and they would respond with eagerness.

Once we asked each to write on a piece of paper the first word that came to their minds. Someone wrote "freedom", the others all wrote the same: "children". All were mothers, separated from their children – and I, pregnant of my first child, a mother-to-be – found myself crying behind the lens in the next exercise, in which we asked them to find gestures for words, like love, freedom, children, and then compose sentences with those gestures.

The whole experience was highly emotional for me. I didn't know how I would bring fragments of what was going on in there between us until I sat at the editing table.

A very important thing for us was that these women would come out of prison for some hours and be our performers at the Installation's Night. The authorization's process was long and difficult, it kept us in doubt until few days before the performance. When their participation was finally authorized, it was restricted, they had to be back by 11 p.m..

To get the show going after that time, Victorino organized a second group to perform after. She teamed up five cleaning ladies together with two middle-class high school students. It was an improbable group and we didn't have much time to rehearse, but in the end they too were perfect.

### Long-term Care Center

The Long-term Care Center is on top of another hill, visible from many points in the village. It lies so high it cannot go unnoticed, yet not many know the works going on and existences taken care of inside the green walls. Most patients there are elderly people who need assistance to fulfill the most basic needs, but there are exceptions, like a young man who became disabled in consequence of a motorbike accident. I didn't meet him personally, only through his wedding photograph, next to his little daughter's, at his bedside table. I made a still shot of that.

The first day we visited the installations, we spoke to some inmates and someone even sang. The shooting sessions were silent, though. I wanted to be as invisible as possible. Some existences seemed so fragile, it was as if I could be disturbing and making things even harder, if I would try to interact. Each single gesture at the physiotherapy session or at mealtime meant such a big effort, I felt that anything that I could do would be tiresome for those people.

The experience at the Long-term Care Center was an encounter with human life's frailty and shortness: the body and its limitations, its precarious nature. It reminded me on the finiteness of all things known and, above all, of human life's. *Ars longa, vita brevis...*

*Vita brevis* were the words I had in my mind once as I was driving, coming from the Care Center, when the title theme on the radio announced "A vida breve" - The short life (Caetano n.d.), a poetry program I am very fond of. The small excerpt of "Schubert's Piano Trio D 292: Andante con moto" (Wiener Mozart-Trio 2011) made me recall two memorable scenes from two totally different films, by two very different but extremely inspiring directors: "The Piano Teacher", by Michael Haneke (2001), and "Barry Lyndon", by Stanley Kubrick (1975).

The sound wrapped me up in such a way, it echoed so perfectly all the emotional challenges of this project, life, death, slavery, freedom, punishment, that on that moment I knew that would be the soundtrack of the film.

### Baby in the womb

During the time of this project I felt divided between two realities: all that was happening around me and all that was happening inside of me. This was sometimes an origin of tension, for the world that I was generating inside me demanded a lot and sometimes I found it hard to respond to the outside world's solicitations. I recall certain moments when I would feel the baby move, and what was outside, no matter how serious or important the situation I was in, would simply vanish. I would feel pushed to an interior dimension that only me and the baby would be aware of. It was our hidden reality.

The whole pregnancy was an overwhelming process for me: I felt I was on the verge of the deepest change in my life. I realized we, humans, owe the existence of our species to the untiring invisible work of women who selflessly nurture their babies. A work so much more difficult in a society that doesn't value human relationships above all other things and can be extremely unsupportive towards the ones performing the demanding task of nurturing human lives, it was as if I was suddenly aware of an imaginary chain of mothers, all who had come before me and who would come after me.

I decided I wanted to pay homage to all mothers and their hidden precious worlds. Feeling a baby move inside one's body is an indescribable feeling only known to those who have felt it. The ultrasound is the contemporary possibility of a visual representation of that unseen world and its undefined, black and white characteristics only make them more faithful, in my opinion, to the whole matter. Because I knew I wasn't alone in this journey, I asked my friends who are mothers to send me the ultrasounds of their pregnancies. I edited those images with the ones from my own ultrasounds and used the sound recording that my partner had made of our baby's gallop-like heartbeat.

I kept this part of the project as a secret and made a surprise to Victorino, who is also a mother.

## **Closing Ideas**

For the second year now, a local visual arts group held an exhibition in the church where we had performed *Hidden Fragments*. The night when the doors of that place were opened to new usages for the first time might well have inaugurated a new cycle in the life of that building and its surroundings and, thus, the village's.

On the Installation's Night, all kinds of doors were opened. Through the transformative power of the arts, a new light was shed on the place, celebrating its uniqueness, but also its universality. A whole village was put on display and the protagonists, in the role of performers or audience, were mainly (although not only) its own inhabitants. The participants were moved by a feeling of communal commitment and civic motivation. "As art enters life, one must consider the powerful role that affect plays in the production of meaning" (Thompson 2012: 32). Promoting the sharing of affective memorable moments, creative interactions and transformative sociabilities, the arts have the capacity to activate communitarian feelings and create new values.

There is still a vivid memory of that special night, at least it has been a recurrent theme in my encounters with people (and not because I introduce the theme, it seems people are aware of my close involvement and want to let me know how much they appreciated the whole event). But as the production and reception of the arts is reshaped within a political logic in which audience figures and marketing statistics become essential to securing public funding (Bishop 2012), and electoral schedules organize cultural agendas, one has to ask who in fact is that community in the name of which development discourses are designed.

## Figures



*Figure 1. The door on exhibition at Sousa Prado Square*  
© Luís Guerreiro/ CMO



*Figure 2. Helder Guerreiro, Madalena Victorino and Pedro Prista. Opening speech at Installation's Night*  
© Cláudia Freire



*Figure 3. Mining Clown, rehearsal*  
© Luís Guerreiro/ CMO



*Figure 4. True Photographic Studio*  
© CMO



*Figure 5. Embroidering is Writing with Blood*  
Still from video  
© Eva Ângelo



*Figure 6. Sound Planers*  
© Cláudia Freire



Figure 7. *Hidden Fragments, second group*  
Still from video  
© Eva Ângelo



Figure 8. *Hidden Fragments, first group rehearsing at the church*  
© Cláudia Freire

## References

ÂNGELO, Eva, 2013, O Museu Somos Todos – Um pequeno festival para Odemira [video: HD], in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSwwpw0Z2JE> (Accessed 07/05/2014).

BARATA, Catarina, 2013a, "Antropologia", em Pedro Prista (org.), Atas do Colóquio Ignorância & Esquecimento. Odemira, Município de Odemira, 163-188.

-----, 2013b, Fragmentos Escondidos [film installation], in <https://vimeo.com/174606082/f837614bf1>

BELTING, Hans, Andrea BUDDENSIEG, and Peter WEIBEL (eds.), 2013, The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds. Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press.

BISHOP, Claire, 2004, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *October*, 110: 51-79.

-----, 2006, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents", *Artforum*, 44 (6), february: 178-183.

-----, 2012a, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London and New York, Verso.

-----, 2012b, "Participation and Spectacle: Where are we now?" In Nato Thompson (ed.). *Living as Form. Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*. Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 34-45.

BORRUP, Tom, 2006, *The Creative Community Builder's Handbook: How to transform communities using local assets, art, and culture*. Saint Paul, MN, Fieldstone Alliance.

BOURRIAUD, Nicolas, 2002, *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon, Les Presses du Réel.

CAETANO, Luís (Prod.), n.d., *A Vida Breve* [radio programme]. Antena 2, Portugal.

COLÓQUIO IGNORÂNCIA E ESQUECIMENTO/ O MUSEU SOMOS TODOS, in [http://www.cm-odemira.pt/PageGen.aspx?WMCM\\_PaginaId=47870&page29809=1](http://www.cm-odemira.pt/PageGen.aspx?WMCM_PaginaId=47870&page29809=1) (Accessed 05/05/2014).

CRAWHALL, Nigel, 2008, The role of participatory cultural mapping in promoting intercultural dialogue. UNESCO, in [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/37746/12197593145The\\_role\\_of\\_participatory\\_cultural\\_mapping\\_in\\_promoting\\_intercultural\\_dialogue.pdf/The%2Brole%2Bof%2Bparticipatory%2Bcultural%2Bmapping%2Bin%2Bpromoting%2Bintercultural%2Bdialogue.pdf](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/37746/12197593145The_role_of_participatory_cultural_mapping_in_promoting_intercultural_dialogue.pdf/The%2Brole%2Bof%2Bparticipatory%2Bcultural%2Bmapping%2Bin%2Bpromoting%2Bintercultural%2Bdialogue.pdf) (Accessed 24/03/2015).

CREHAN, Katherine, 2011, Community Art: An Anthropological Perspective. London and New York, Berg Publishers.

FOUCAULT, Michel, 2009, Vigiar e Punir: nascimento da prisão, 36th edition, Petrópolis, RJ, Vozes.

HANEKE, Michael (Dir.), 2001, La pianist [feature film], Arte France Cinéma et al., Austria/France/Germany. 131 mins.

KESTER, Grant, 2011, The One and the Many. Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context. Durham, Duke University Press.

KUBRICK, Stanley (Dir.), 1975, Barry Lyndon [feature film], Peregrine/Hawk Films/Warner Bros., UK/USA/Ireland. 184 mins.

KUNST, Bojana, 2015, “What has Participation to do with Precarisation?, lecture and discussion”. Bunker, Ljubljana, in <http://www.bunker.si/eng/bojana-kunst-what-has-participation-to-do-with-precarisation-lecture-and-discussion> (Accessed 23/04/2015).

MCLUCAS, Clifford, n.d., There are ten things that I can say about these deep maps, in <http://documents.stanford.edu/MichaelShanks/51> (Accessed 23/03/2013).

PRISTA, Pedro (org.), 2013, Atas do Colóquio Ignorância & Esquecimento. Odemira, Município de Odemira.

PRISTA, Pedro, 2014, Museu de Odemira. Programa Museológico – Documento base. (Internal document).

SHOLETTE, Gregory, 2011, Dark Matter. Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture. London, Pluto Press.

STRANG, Veronica, 2010, “Mapping histories: cultural landscapes and walkabout methods”, in Ismael Vaccaro, Erica Alden Smith, Shankar Aswani (eds.), Environmental Social Sciences: Methods and Research Design. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 132-156.

THOMPSON, Nato (ed.), 2012, *Living as Form. Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*. Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press.

UNESCO, 2006, Havana Communiqué on Cultural Mapping, in [http://www.spore-subs.org/pla54/docs/hav/havcom\\_en\\_acfb67.pdf](http://www.spore-subs.org/pla54/docs/hav/havcom_en_acfb67.pdf) (Accessed 23/03/2015).

VICTORINO, Madalena, 2013, “O Museu Somos Todos, Um pequeno Festival para Odemira – Ideário, construção e conquistas”, in Pedro Prista (org.), *Atas do Colóquio Ignorância & Esquecimento*. Odemira, Município de Odemira, 523-532.

WIENER MOZART-TRIO (Perf.), 2011, “Piano Trio D 929: Andante con moto”, Franz Schubert Piano Trio in E Flat Major D 929 [music track, online download]. Preiser Records, Austria. 9mins 22secs. <http://www.apple.com/uk/itunes> (accessed 3/4/2013).