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НЕТЕРОТОПИКАЛЬНЫЕ ИСКУССТВЕННЫЕ ЛАБОРАТОРИИ

Аннотация. В статье анализируется новая область «исследования-творчества», находящаяся на пересечении ряда дисциплин между искусствоведением и другими гуманитарными науками. Автор рассматривает художественную лабораторию как развивающийся концепт, как формат, как пространство и как рабочую зону, связанную с междисциплинарным художественным, микрополитическим и социальным экспериментированием. В рамках определенного времени и пространства группа-лаборатория занимается философией в действии, выходя за пределы дуалистических и дихотомических парадигм в отношении как тела, так и мышления, языка, знания и культуры. В статье предлагается теоретическое обоснование проблемы на материале конкретного кейса. Танец, перформанс и физический театр (движение) анализируются как инструменты активизации коллективных практик. Цель исследования — активировать поле, в котором субъективность и материальность воспроизводятся в их особенностях во время творческого процесса. Художественные лаборатории являются частью более масштабного феномена современного мира искусства, в рамках которого экспериментальные художественные языки взаимодействуют в разного рода коллективных практиках. Эти тенденции резонируют с расширяющимися понятиями (со)авторства, взаимозависимости, политики восприятия и зрительности, которые служат развитию творческого участия уже не просто пассивного зрителя (как это было в традиционном театре), а нового главного героя-участника.

Ключевые слова: художественная лаборатория, телесность, субъективность, исследования движения, исследование-творчество

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HETEROTROPICAL ARTS LAB

Abstract. This article explores the innovative field of ‘research-creation’, on the threshold of multiple disciplines, between the arts and humanities. It focuses in on the artistic laboratory, as an evolving concept, format, space and processual zone dedicated to trans-disciplinary artistic, micro-political and social experimentation. In this time-space a group engages in a philosophy in action, shifting beyond the dualistic paradigms that persist both in relation to the body and in relation to thought, language, knowledge and culture. This article zooms into and offers a theoretical foundation for a practice-based nomadic performing arts laboratory that we have been developing, where we investigate dance, performance and physical theatre as complementary tools for activating collective practices and open artistic processes. The intention is to activate a field of exchange where subjectivity and corporeality is co-produced, in their singularity, during the artistic process. Artistic laboratories are part a larger phenomenon of the engagement of experimental artistic languages in social, collaborative and collective practices in the contemporary art world. These tendencies are in resonance with the broadening notions of (co) authorship, the politics of perception and spectatorship, which all work towards cultivating the creative agency of a new protagonist-participant, shifting away from traditional notions of the passive spectator.

Keywords: artistic laboratory, corporeality, subjectivity, movement research, research-creation

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Within the contemporary arts, on the thresholds and borderlands of the performing, visual, conceptual and media arts, the artistic laboratory is an evolving concept, format, and process that is in collective multi-directional and multi-generational development. It is a processual zone dedicated to trans-disciplinary artistic, micro-political and social experimentation, what we will refer to in this article as ‘research-creation’¹. The range of organizational and improvisational structures that sustain and characterize each arts lab that is generated vary depending on the epistemological and artistic fields that its proposers depart from and evoke throughout the process (be it dance, theatre, media arts, visual arts, performance art, live art, anti-art etc). In this sense, we are interested in looking at the kinds of thought apparatuses that are employed (empirical/theoretical) throughout the laboratory: the methods, modes, structures, tools and technologies for perceiving, embodying, co-creating, composing, inventing, and communicating. The theoretical reflections discussed in this article are directly and indirectly influenced by my PhD research-creation project, “Sensing Bodies. Fields of Presences in Motion: Laboratories of Dance and Collective Practices”, that enters into a dialogue with a concrete dance arts laboratory that I developed, carried out and documented in Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, Brazil, and now continue to work with in my artistic and pedagogical practices in Europe.

It is important to reiterate that the arts lab is part of a larger phenomenon, a global call for the growing engagement of experimental artistic languages — visual and performative — in social, collaborative and collective practices in the contemporary art world. It is a time and space dedicated to questioning, studying, testing and rehearsing how the collective production of presence and meaning [Gumbrecht 2004] can potentially be expanded and amplified towards a field of action, resistance, re-existence and care. This is part of a relatively new ethical aesthetic paradigm, which Felix Guattari defines and explores in his book *The Three Ecologies* [Guattari 2000]. These tendencies are in resonance with the broadening notions of (co) authorship, with the politics of perception and spectatorship, as well as cognitive and epistemological justice, all of which work towards cultivating the creative agency of a new protagonist-participant and artist-proposer (facilitator), and shifting away from the passive spectator. As a result, they have been provoking epistemic, ethical and aesthetic changes in the formats of artistic creation and validation, no longer based on a model of consumable, spectacular products but on immersive, multi-sensory, durational, collective processes that have the capacity to shift the value of things, due to an increasing commitment to critical thinking and micro-political engagement. According to Hélio Oiticica, an important artistic experimenter and reference for research-creation processes both in Brazil and internationally, the function of art is not to yield to the production demands of the work, but to change the value of

¹ Research-creation is an emergent category, a complex intersection of experimental art practice, theoretical concepts and research. In particular, some very important and innovative investigations in the field of research-creation have been developed within the context of the SenseLab in Concordia University, directed by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi. This work is discussed in depth by Manning in the text *Ten Propositions for Research Creation*. Research-creation is in dialogue, yet not interchangeable, with the concepts of artistic-research as well as practice-research, part of a diversity of interrelated terminology and trans-disciplinary methodologies that have been developed between and on the thresholds of the arts and academic spaces.

things. Thus, Oiticica, alongside the Neo-Concrete art movement, challenges many of the foundations of art with new categories, like the visual experience in what he refers to as the “Penetrables”, the object or the public intervention in “Parangolés”, giving rise to an artistic practice based on an alliance between awareness and sensation, relationships and experience [Oiticica 2015].

In resonance with and inspired by Oiticica’s proposals and philosophy, this article, which derives from my PhD research, is in response to a need of contemporary society to displace the centrality and elitism of the artistic field and provide strategies for activating alternative modes of being together creatively, and other possibilities of social communication. The artistic orientation towards the social and experimental has flourished cyclically over the last century (this last phase from the 1990s on) in various geographical locations. Along with other theorists, philosophers and artists, Claire Bishop, in her book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, offers extensive research and as well as a problematization of what she refers to as the ‘social turn’ in art, which could also be described as an ‘experimental turn’ in art. Bishop refers to this as the growing engagement in social, collaborative and collective practices, shifting from product- to process-based formats [Bishop 2012].

Moving between the sensing body and heterogeneous corporealities

The arts laboratories that I, as a dance and performing artist as well as an academic researcher, have been following, participating in and facilitating internationally (between Latin America, Europe, USA and Russia), investigate body- and movement-based arts and visual culture through dance, physical theater and performance practices as interdisciplinary thought apparatuses and tools to instigate collective processes and generate new artistic languages. In the arts lab space, through collective exercises and games, we use diverse parameters of improvisation, scores and tasks, enabling constraints, techniques of automatism, experimental multi-sensory walking (inspired by the Surrealist and Situationist movement), and techniques of defamiliarization in order to trigger, reveal and play with our ordinary and extra-ordinary habits, survival tactics, histories and lingering unknowns. With this material, we construct, deconstruct and question reality through poetic and micro-political proposals in the safety of a studio space, as well as then framing and transforming these experiments, so as to share them as interventions in public spaces. In the process, there is an interest in dissolving a binary logic of good and bad, right and wrong, object and subject, freedom and limitation. What appears paradoxical, in fact reveals the complexity, interconnectivity and complementary opposites that characterize our relations, systems, and organisms.

The utopian, dystopian and heterotopian qualities of our subconscious are intertwined in a ecology of experience, just as the clarity, ambiguity and shape shifting that permeates and colors our dreams reveal other modalities of processing space-time. The arts lab is a space dedicated to challenging ourselves to notice, unlearn and expand the way we relate to the world, ingrained in everyday interactions (with the self, with things and with others) and habits. This is done by playing with, disorienting and complicating familiar encounters, actions, and associations. It is accompanied by exercises that guide us to return to and engage the senses (vision,

hearing, touch, kinesthesia etc.), noticing and responding to features and actions in both our inner and outer environments: that is, a sense-action. The senses guide and diversify our orientation, which depends on our attention in relation to (self, other, world). Our attention is in flux, and where we choose or allow it to be and move to, becomes a central theme of interest.

There are multiple forms of ‘attentionality’: giving attention, living attention, healing attention, oscillating attention, peripheral attention, spatial temporal attention. Noticing where our attention is and goes, allows us to play with it, oscillate it, and maybe even confuse or surprise it. Yet, to reach a state of disorientation that is constructive for the creative process and the participants, we must first orient ourselves in the senses and the contours of our kinosphere. This way, as constant containers and generators of imagery, thoughts and feelings [Manning, Massumi 2014], we begin to have a wider range of access to both the conscious and subconscious material at the surface and depths of our psychosoma (the mental and physical organism as a functional unit).

Applying tools from the fields of dance and performance, we explore and expand our attention through tuning and somatic practices. An example is the tuning scores developed by Lisa Nelson that we used as a point of departure. These tuning practices are considered pre-techniques, maps to follow, with feedback systems to help observe one’s patterns, process, strategies, and appetite for becoming physicalized. That is, these are tools to observe and taste one’s creative body before entering into preconceived forms and figures, as well as disorienting these forms and figures. With the tuning scores, Nelson proposes that we inquire into: 1. How do we look at things; 2. How do we sense and make sense of movement; 3. How do we expose opinions about space, time, action and desire; 4. How do we provide a framework for communication and feedback; 5. How do we play with desire to compose experience and make our imaginations visible in the act [Little, Nelson 2006]. These elements are all part of an ecology of perception, the senses considered as a perceptual system. Moreover, the movement of the body and sensory organs is both exploratory and performatory. We are able to revise and play with our basic orienting, vestibular system (auditory, haptic, taste, smell, visual). We have the capacity to loosen the bonds of our perceptual conditioning by way of play, visualization and improvisation, revisiting childlike and pre-naming states, animal and pre-vertebrae states, states attracted by things and forces [Ibid.]. Thus, we develop a more flexible, heterogeneous, direct and dialogical construction of and with reality.

The exploratory behavior of our senses plays a central role in shaping and sculpting our opinions and aesthetic appetite, that is, how we move and what we see. Nina Little refers to this as a politics of attention, referring to touch as a sensory foundation of giving as well as the possibility of shifting self-sense and time sense (slow experiential generous time) through embodied practices. Thus, by way of structured improvisational practices, we expose social values and forms of relationality and reciprocity, revealing an ethos of giving weight and attention [Ibid.]. This allows one to singularly and collectively work with the dimensions of subjectivity and corporeality. That is, an attention to the exploration and development of the subjectivities and corporealities of the participants-performers of the arts labs.

Yet what does corporeality actually mean and why introduce it here? André Lepecki, dramaturge and performance studies scholar, discusses the notion of cor-

poreality in an important lecture on the subject, pointing us towards expanding the notions and perceptions of the body and shifting away from a stable notion of body as a ‘vessel for a self centered self’ or a ‘well-defined, self-contained body’ [Lepecki 2014]. He speaks about the move towards ‘corporeality’, proposed in 1995 within the field of Performance Studies, to confront the complexities and challenges that were surging in relation to a questioning of the body in the live arts. Here the body is in a constant ‘formation, deformation, transformation’, gesturing towards other fields of meaning. Corporeality refers to and confronts the body’s permanent transience — its simultaneously persistent and unstable nature — revealing its ‘shear transitivity’ [Ibid.], creating a bridge to other disciplines and themes (approaching bodies gendered, political, racial, aesthetic resonances). It deals with a central theme that reappears in my arts labs: orientation, disorientation and reorientation of the body-mind. In the arts labs, we explore and co-create known and unknown corporeal and subjective territories of existence, discovering what else the body is capable of when it is in relation, moving beyond traditional boundaries and dichotomies that separate the body from itself, the world, others.

Moreover, to further trace the contours of the artistic lab discussed in this article, as a complementary framework, Merleau Ponty’s [2002] phenomenological approach can help guide us towards an experiential vision of ‘being-in-the-world’, being a body (vs. having a body). This lived, sentient, sensuous body is a core source for bringing forth meaning and exploring the world, and is primordially expressive and revealing of one’s lived life with its communicative potentials, and its socially, historically, culturally, and individually formed complexity. Phenomenology of perception focuses on the primacy of perception, our primordial contact with the world, and calls us towards embodiment and experimentation. We are bound to the world as bodily sentient beings, in communication with the world and others through the senses which make our experiences and points of view [Merleau-Ponty 2002: 110–111]. Inspired by this vision, we inhabit the arts lab space and the arts lab space inhabits us, the body and the arts lab are physical and living structures. Our own flesh and the flesh of the world are the core materials and sources of the arts labs that we discuss. Furthermore, we are engaging a body which ‘daily rehearses and performs’ civil obedience, resistance, citizenship, gender, ethnicity — the performance and aesthetic of every day life in the public sphere — according to the performance studies scholar Diana Taylor [2003]. The performance of everyday life is in dialogue with ‘rehearsing and performing’ on the fringes, thresholds, blurry and hybrid boundaries between what in performance and theater anthropology and studies is referred to as the daily and extra-daily (ordinary and extraordinary) known and unknown. The artist, performer and philosopher Vera Mantero describes the role of the laboratory as a space for this experimentation and subversion of the daily and extra-daily. It is a space for perceiving, practicing and digesting how life, or some parts of life, could be, otherwise, acknowledging the challenges that this may present us in the process:

Knowing that I do not know what life is like otherwise, it is necessary to try out and see how it could actually be otherwise, in practice, through the experience and in relationality, minimally, as it could be perceived in a laboratory and not in ordinary life [Feitosa 2014: 2].

Thus, in the arts lab there is an urgency to the task of collectively researching, rehearsing, experimenting, creating and performing ‘operations and acts of re-existence’, ‘gestures of resistance’ and extra-dailyness. Likewise, the space and its participants are committed to elaborating modes of generosity and care, in response to the structural and physical violence that has traumatized and continues to traumatize the body with its individual and collective imaginary. In spite of, and in response to the normalizing and oppressive vision and training of the body both in daily life and in certain performing arts practices, the choreographer Boriz Charmatz offers a reflection on the attraction towards the genesis of unknown heterogeneous bodies and the extra-daily:

It is much more gratifying to think that work in dance, far from being a quest for an ideal body, invents heterogeneous bodies, bodies that are more desiring than in everyday life, bodies that are more decisive, more clumsy, more abandoned, more virile, more feminine, more vegetable, more mineral, more ‘machine-like’, more childlike, more aged, etc. or all this at the same time. It is not a matter of establishing a panoply of different bodies, but of opening up different modes of occupying the body [Peeters 2004: 68–69].

The task is, through the arts labs, to share embodied practices that allow one to manifest and try out one’s subconscious and imagination collectively, to experience how life and self could be otherwise, elsewhere, through aesthetic experiences that move between action, kinaesthetic and visual imagery and languages, exploring the functional, metaphorical, symbolic and poetic. The fields of critical thought, performance, dance and gender studies, as well as indigenous, black and cultural studies, amongst others, offer us theoretical tools to accompany, articulate and generate dialogue within and about the practices and open processes.

One key task proposed in the arts labs that I have been facilitating and leading is to access one’s embodied knowledge through “experiencing the imagination”. The Brazilian anthropologist and critical thinker Viveiros de Castro clearly differentiates this from “imagining the experience” [Viveiros de Castro 2002: 484]. A point of inspiration for both Viveiros de Castro and for this article, are the French anthropologist’s Lévi-Strauss’s reflections in *The Savage Mind* on the potential of a wild, insubordinate, and sensorial side of our minds and bodies [Lévi-Strauss 1966]. He reminds us that the science of concrete mythical thought is prior to scientific inquiry, and that both thought forms are valid and should be given the space to develop themselves. As he puts it, mythical thought is based on observation of the sensible world in sensible terms, while science forges new systems of knowledge. Art and philosophy for Lévi-Strauss lie between magic and science, balancing structure and event, engaging between the mythical and scientific thought, between the practical and theoretical, the material and immaterial, the metaphorical, symbolic and poetic, the visible and invisible [Lévi-Strauss 1966: 26–30]. The arts lab is nurtured, in part, by our wild, insubordinate and multi-sensory states of mind-body.

Towards a HeterotRopical Arts Lab

Within the field of performing arts, with a particular focus on contemporary dance, theatre and live art, the laboratory format allows a group to engage in a practice as a research process and a philosophy in action. Both empirical (sensory apparatuses — all our empirical knowledge is grounded in how we see, hear, touch, smell and taste the world around us) and philosophical inquiries are engaged in the process of experimentation, moving beyond dichotomic paradigms in relation to the body as well as in relation to language. The arts laboratories that are referenced in this article are founded on an elliptical method, that is, a multi-voiced and cyclical structure which develops within a process that circulates between action, reflection, speech and writing (naming, embodying and observing). Experimental dance, performance and theater tools are used in conjunction with the social sciences.

The philosopher is constantly on the road like someone who wanders through the woods trying to find the way, or his way out. Heidegger says that the word [Holzweg, literally means wood path or trail] refers to overgrown paths that become lost somewhere in the middle of nowhere in the untrodden <...> off the beaten track, or to loose one's way. They are roads that lead nowhere and for that very reason evoke what has not been thought or questioned before. This wandering way of thinking through labyrinths, which is reminiscent of Nietzsche, leads to a line of argument that is circular rather than linear. Ariadne's thread is picked up again and again; thinking is constantly resumed <...> One needs to stray from the straight and narrow, so to speak, and follow him [Heidegger's philosophy] on his cul-de-sac to unexpectedly stumble on subtle and often far-reaching insights. Or, as Nietzsche explains in his 'Epilogue' to Nietzsche contra Wagner, the labyrinthical thinker rises up as a different person after having lost himself "with more questions than before — in particular with the will to ask more, deeper, sterner, harder, maliciously, quietly than has even been asked before on this earth (Nietzsche 1964) [Van den Braembussche 2009: 202].

The attempt to activate a labyrinthic methodology, and a 'wandering' transversal mode of thinking, leads the co-creators, proposers, and participants of the arts labs to construct and respond to ethical and aesthetic principles and tools that sustain and structure the arts laboratories. This unconventional way of researching and creating together also allows for the destabilization and questioning of diverse binary relations that appear throughout the artistic and academic process.

The artistic laboratory is reconfigured back and forth between experience and reflection, in dialogue with its relevance in today's contemporary world. Like the notion of dance itself, it is in constant evolution, involution and reconfiguration. Inspired by a variety of texts and reflections on the subject, such as 'What is an artistic laboratory?' by Peter Stamer [2007] and 'The Doing of Research' by Martin Spånberg, along with my diverse laboratory experiences in the past years, I seek to provide a reflection on possible formats, understandings and potentialities of this concept. The artistic laboratory combines and explores artistic, pedagogical, social, ecological, cultural, political and economic questions. What formats and principles

of research guide the work? What are the potential intentions, goals and objectives? What tools, structures, and dispositifs are used? What kinds of participation, collaboration, organization, co-creation, leadership, guidance or mentorship are used?

The following are multi-directional principles that we have been clarifying within the context of our artistic laboratory, in order to collectively create a contour and working definition for the work.

The artistic laboratory mobilizes aesthetic experiences. This takes into account the reflections that John Dewey provides us with on an experience, not as something self-contained within the self or mind, but rather as an ‘intrinsic connection’ and ‘linkage’ of self with the world through the ‘reciprocity of undergoing and doing’ that leads us to change and develop through the Exchange [Dewey 1934: 247]. Furthermore, we must consider the notion of aesthetics in the sense of aesthesis, as described by Claire Bishop: “an autonomous regime of experience that is not reducible to logic, reason or morality” [Bishop 2012: 18]. Therefore, the structure of the experience of the artistic laboratory generates a singular interchanging environment in which what is considered to be conventional divisions between the intellectual, the sensory, the emotional, the ideational, the imaginative and the practical is overruled and blurred. Simultaneously, conventional regimes of logic and reason are stretched and destabilized.

The artistic laboratory is a format for dialogic, meta-logic, polyphonic, unpredictable and uncertain knowledge production and practice. It has a tendency to question what is knowledge, engaging the multiplicity of its logics and fields, in the possibility of being able to know otherwise. Peter Stamer writes that the dialogue form is similar to an artistic laboratory in its approach to producing knowledge, a constant exchange of questions. Dialogue is a knowledge format, and in its drifts and wanderings the serendipity principle appears, meaning that the laboratory cannot be measured by immediate efficiency or productivity, but rather by long-term effects [Stamer 2007: 68]. The conception, design, criteria, implementation and philosophy of an arts lab depends on the context and field within which it happens, whether that be an urban or rural space, in the university or cultural center, whether it is guided through the framework of experimental dance, visual arts, or mixed mediums, etc. It demonstrates that knowledge production is inherently a relational process, a social interweaving: questions that are relevant for social processes are likewise relevant for artistic processes, and are affected by the culture in which they originate.

The artistic laboratory has become an important tool for research in contemporary dance, when research began to flourish at the end of the 1990s and externalize the knowledge produced to other areas of the arts and social and hard sciences. Departing from the framework of contemporary dance and performance practice, we must ask ourselves what research paradigms exist in these fields. Working in and around experimental dance, the knowledge strategy we insist on is not to find an answer or an expert to solve a question; rather, our emphasis is on the search, knowledge in motion, transformation and circulation. This results in a generous, mobile and contextualized form of knowledge. The researcher’s body perceives through its social and corporal filters and nervous system. This means that laboratories renegotiate, integrate and deal with social orders in their work. As Peter Stamer points out, in these artistic laboratories we look for answers that the questions do not take into account: that is, we look for further collective questions to make sharper tools for seeking knowledge.

Laboratories are meant to be ‘truly free spaces’ for artists, amateurs, individuals to ‘breaks down the boundaries between production and presentation’ [Stamer 2007: 65]. The notion of ‘free space’ is metaphorical, in that the spaces where research occurs are always attached to and situated in a specific locality: this context becomes central to the research. The laboratory provides a thinking space amongst bodies that enter into negotiations, just as the body serves as a parallel laboratory and thinking space where the research process flows into and out of. The questions that occupy our minds inform the way we see the world, determine our behaviors and how we deal with knowledge. There is a constant discovery of what you do not initially set out to discover, which could make the research be considered unfocused and to generate flawed experiments. Yet within our research paradigm we are interested in the generation and asking of questions, opening up new worlds of possibilities and unsuccessful answers, accepting that sometimes we will only understand the value of answers in the long run. There is a social interweaving of the production of art and knowledge. Knowledge here is performed and performative. We often find possible answers to impossible questions. The pedagogical approach involved works through training the patient acceptance of the perpetual failure in sight (of true seeing) and being receptive to the inevitability of misunderstanding as generative and hopeful. Misunderstanding provides us with opportunities for conversation and exchange [Phalen 1993]. The research process is interdependent with the allowance of questions to be asked and creating the conditions to sustain, solicit and stimulate them.

An artistic laboratory is a space for exploring the infinite potentials of artistic and social research, accompanied by the construction of unique methods that serve the process. An artistic laboratory tends to generate and reorganize its own methods, tools, and structures within the process of the laboratory. It questions what it is and what it becomes in the doing. It imports a diversity of tools, concepts, practices, ideas and knowledge from the outside, from trans-disciplinary fields, through the participants who bring their own baggage and experiences. Throughout the research processes it mixes, combines, recycles, fragments and reinvents tools and concepts. In this process, it invokes and convokes the collective production of singularities [Stamer 2007: 67].

The artistic laboratory generates both dialogic and polyphonic unfinished concepts of truth and a plurality of the mind, as Bakhtin refers to it. Bakhtin considered that truth is not simplified to a statement or a phrase. Rather, for him truth is a number of mutually addressed, contradictory and logically inconsistent statements and exchanges. Truth requires the presence of a multitude of living voices — multi-voiced bodies — not held within a single mind, nor expressed by ‘a single mouth’. “The consciousnesses of other people cannot be perceived, analyzed, defined as objects or as things — one can only relate to them dialogically” [Bakhtin 1984: 68]. A polyphonic truth depends on many simultaneous, interdependent voices.

An artistic laboratory activates the co-production of subjectivities and corporealities. The collective processes acknowledge and stimulate the existing struggle between conditioned and confined notions of a self, as well as the expanded understanding of singularities. It is a collective space for exchanging, sharing and researching embodied knowledge and practices through a process of experimenting, questioning, playing, creating, researching through a diversity of corporeal, subjective, spatial, temporal, linguistic, imagetic, sound- and object-based mediums.

The artistic laboratory points us towards a new language and a new world of experiences in communication. Helio Oiticica brings up this question in his text ‘The Senses Pointing Towards a Transformation’ insists on “a complete revolution towards an individual-social uprising” [Oiticica 2018, orig. 1969: 5]. He proposes thought structures to express these potential new ways of communication, such as what he refers to as ‘community-cells’ that build towards ‘experimental communities’, as well as the use of ‘collective sites’ or ‘abiding places’ for ‘proposing to propose’. The intention is that the internal communal experiences develop towards expansive group relational experiments and expansive cells, with a demand for a new social relationship in society, a new understanding of relationality.

The artistic laboratory is a collective and cooperative practice and process. It illustrates the move towards the social in the arts, as described by Claire Bishop. It calls upon care and generosity as methods and central pillars for the work. Research can only become a laboratory, a thinking space, a place for knowledge production and circulation, when it is shared by a group of people who are constantly reformulating questions and tools. What is important to consider in the process is the ethics of dialogue, the ethics in action. The exchanges in the laboratory are based on artistic, social, philosophical and collaborative contributions of thought, producing knowledge in ever new, unexpected ways, so that methodology is constantly being reconfigured and reinvented [Stamer 2007: 66–68].

An artistic laboratory awakens a thirdspace relation with the world, spatiality and temporality, that is, a creative critical spatial consciousness of lived space and its imagined possibilities. It is another mode of thinking and a relation of openness, flexibility, permeability, and controversiality with the world and its events, experiences and environments. It considers that the findings we come across are never conclusions but rather starting points for further exploration [Soja 1996: 3–4]. Within the artistic laboratory, we constantly generate operations and triggers towards reconsidering how we relate to spatiality and temporality, to conventional time and space regimes, just as it is the case with the concept of thirdspace. This concept was originally proposed by Henri Lefebvre and reworked by Edward Soja [1996], within the field of an expanded and critical geography in the attempts to move beyond and criticize a binary logic and oppositional dichotomy of power. Thirdspace is a lived space we give meaning to, and it is intertwined with lived experience through a critical spatial awareness of it. It has to do with how we understand and act to change spatiality, both real and imagined. It is interdependent with the more conventionally known First and Second space. 1. In First space we perceive space as it is mapped (real material world). 2. In Second space we conceive space and have ideas about it (imagined representation of spatiality). 3. Thirdspace is lived space (a real and imagined space) and is where all the spaces comes together, it is all encompassing. It thinks of spatiality as permeated by emotions, modes of perception, interactions, affectability, physical environment, fantasies, desires, memory, etc. In discussing the potentials of thirdspace awareness, Edward Soja likewise invokes Foucault’s concept of heterotopic space which refers to other possible spaces, a space of radical openness and hybridity which reconsiders the powers that order space [Ibid.: 6–10]. Foucault describes it as:

the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also in itself a heterogeneous space. In other words we do not live in a kind of void <...> we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another [Foucault 1984: 231].

This concept directly awakens our spatial imagination towards other encounters and relationships between space and time in their interdependence. The artistic laboratory likewise enacts various sorts of heterotopias, which, according to Foucault, exist in every culture and civilization. These ‘counter-sites’ are real places that do exist, but are likewise outside of all places even if we can locate them, as earlier described by Vera Mantero. We are constantly activating other regimes of experience, governed by aesthesis, that are not reducible to logic, reason or morality. Foucault explains that a heterotopia could be an enacted utopia where inversion, dissensus, and representation occurs, a mixed joint experience, a placeless place that both enacts the virtual and the real: “I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself and enables me to see myself where I am absent” [Foucault 1984: 232]. He refers here to the experience of looking into a mirror. Very similar elliptical dynamics of action, reflection, perception, presences and absences occur in the artistic laboratory spaces. These two concepts serve us in digging into the potentialities of the artistic laboratory as a lived-imagined space-time that enacts, interacts, interrelates, inverts, involves etc.

Its lineage in and around contemporary dance comes in part from movement-research and the post-modern dance phenomenon that began in the United States in open dialogue with many other art fields and processes, in particular with the evolving and uncertain field of performance. Amongst other authors, Martin Spånberg explains that the artistic research paradigm that has accompanied the concept of ‘artistic laboratory’, that is to say, a growth in process oriented investigatory strategies in the performing arts, began to be consolidated and flourish within Europe and the United States between the 1990s and the early 2000s: ‘the era of research’ where an ‘obsessive passion for research began to spread’ amongst dancers, choreographers, performing artists, set-designers, production managers [Spånberg 2006: 1]. Thus, in a similar move, dance began an approximation and expansion towards performance practice and studies, visual arts, new medias, post dramatic and physical theater. There has simultaneously been a shift towards the social, integrating and exploring new social technologies, new economies, and diverse forms of social engagement (both in centers and margins, cities and rural areas) [Bishop 2012]. Through the expansion and openness to what dance could be, as well as a deep interest in what the body-mind (as heterogeneous and unknown) is capable of in relation with others, there has emerged the need for spaces and formats to ‘experiment the experimental’ [Oiticica 2015]: to question, study, process and develop tools, methods and networks together (practical and theoretical), acknowledging the challenges involved in this shift towards trans- and inter-disciplinarity. In these shifts, ethical-aesthetic paradigms needs to be reconfigured through experiences, in order to readapt to new conditions, environments and contexts.

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To conclude, it is important to reiterate that we should be applying critical thinking to the elaboration and reconfiguration of this phenomenon of artistic research (with its amorphous and uncertain qualities). It is a theme that we need to be speaking and exchanging about collectively, practically and theoretically in order to maintain a resistance and re-existence in the movement of the artistic laboratory and research-creation in general. For this, I suggest that we depart from the sensing body as a field in continuum that has the potentiality to activate a diversity of collective artistic processes in a move towards the social (in schools, universities, cultural spaces, social projects, streets and squares, at the centers and margins of the countryside and city). This is in opposition to, and departure from, the artistic laboratory becoming mostly a trend and possible profit-making format for artistic, economic and cultural institutions, as well as the growing think tanks and multimillion dollar creative industries that characterize cognitive capitalism. Arts labs have a huge potential to create a new dynamics for knowledge production and exchange within the university space, but should also be gradually reconfigured with care and critical thought. Moreover, we must constantly be restructuring our ethic-aesthetic guideposts and tools. What kinds of artistic laboratories, heterotopical spaces, thirdspaces, aesthetic experiences, collective processes, experimental artistic languages, new modes of communication, and community cells do our body-minds urgently ask for and desire? In the current semio-capitalist conditions that engender capitalist subjectivities, what formats and experiences of artistic laboratories support and engage processes of re-singularization of one's subjectivity and corporeality? The artistic laboratory is a potential transversal field where our sensing bodies (as living artistic laboratories) engage in and exchange with a collective thirdspace — a heterotopic space of action and reflection — of philosophy in action. The art lab format, in progress, is interdependent with the medium and intelligence of our thinking, knowing, vibrating living bodies.

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