



UNIVERSIDADE
LUSÓFONA

**CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO DE LISBOA
ESCOLA DE COMUNICAÇÃO, ARQUITETURA, ARTES E TECNOLOGIAS DA
INFORMAÇÃO
DOUTORAMENTO EM ARTE DOS MEDIA E COMUNICAÇÃO**

**CONTACT ZONE:
LIVE CINEMA & POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITIES**

Tese apresentada a provas públicas para a obtenção do grau de Doutor em Arte dos Media e Comunicação, orientada pela Professora Doutora Adriana de Almeida Portela Viana de Sá.

Natália Pinheiro Gondim de Albuquerque, nº22200346
2026

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VERSÃO FINAL

Tese defendida em provas públicas na Universidade Lusófona, Centro Universitário de Lisboa no dia 26/03/2026, perante o júri, nomeado pelo Despacho de Nomeação N.º 222/2026 de 26 de março, com a seguinte composição:

Presidente:

Prof. Doutor Manuel Luís Bogalheiro Rocha Fernandes.

Arguentes:

Prof.ª Doutora Susana Nascimento Duarte, Instituto Politécnico de Leiria;

Prof.ª Doutora Rajele Jain;

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Prof.ª Doutora Soraia Alexandra Cancela da Fonseca de Vasconcelos Magalhães, Universidade Lusófona;

Prof. Doutor Hugo Miguel Marques Neves Barata, Universidade Lusófona;

Orientador: Prof.ª Doutora Adriana de Almeida Portela Viana de Sá, Universidade Lusófona.

Este trabalho também foi orientado pelo Prof. Doutor João Pedro de Sousa Cardoso.

Natália Pinheiro Gondim de Albuquerque, n.º22200346
2026

What is retained from the past is embedded within what is now perceived and so embedded that, by its compression there, it forces the mind to stretch forward to what is coming – John Dewey (2010, p. 332, own translation)

*To diaspora artists, who remind us that we
are one.*



Short- Documentary Film

www.zonadecontato.com

Acknowledgments

My heartfelt gratitude goes to the artists of the Zelu collective, whose generosity in sharing their life stories through interviews has been invaluable to this research: Admila Cardoso, Élio Alexandre, Idalécio Melim, Márcia Raquel Lima, Marco Medina, and Margarida Conceição. I am equally grateful to those who participated in our live performances in Lisbon and Luanda, including performers Mbalango and Vagné L, as well as audience members who were interviewed: Alexandre Vieira, Ágnes Vilsenki, and Alessandra Montani. Special recognition goes to Werá Alexandre for his contribution to the *playshop* with the Zelu collective, and to André for providing a welcoming gathering place for diasporic artists at Homies and supporting my stay in Luanda. Thanks, are also due to Élio and Carina for their assistance during my stay. I also extend my gratitude to the audiences, whose active engagement was fundamental to every cultural activity developed throughout this research.

I am deeply grateful to the cultural spaces that provided essential support: Curta a Tarde in Lisbon; Instituto Guimarães Rosa in Luanda; and Porto Iracema das Artes in Fortaleza, where we attended the residency *Narration and Abstraction in Performance*, guided by Arto Lindsay and Eric Barbosa. During this residency, we created a collective performance with Diego Lucena, Lucas Lins, and Henrique Gomes, all of whom generously agreed to be interviewed by me, including Sarah Nastroyanni as an audience member. I am equally thankful to Camila Valenzuela-Moguillansky, whose expert guidance proved fundamental to my learning of the microphenomenology method.

I am deeply grateful to my father and mother for their support, which has enabled me to pursue academic and international experiences. I also thank my friends for their constant encouragement, particularly Ágnes, Alessandra, Ana, Clara, and Idalécio, and my sister Luciana, whose help proved essential during my journey as an immigrant PhD student in Portugal. My gratitude extends to the faculty at Universidade Lusófona and to CICANT for the scholarship waiver and support in presenting at the FilmEU_RIT Summit at Tallinn University. Most of all, I thank my supervisor, Adriana Sá, whose dedicated guidance and genuine care have been constant throughout my journey; my co-supervisor, João Sousa Cardoso; Katia Sá and David Novack, whose thoughtful feedback has greatly enriched this work

Abstract

Lisbon stands out as a centre for multicultural encounters, bringing together people from former Portuguese colonies. Our artistic research investigates how the real-time manipulation of audiovisual content, involving active contributions from artists and audiences, can foster the agency and sense of belonging of Portuguese-speaking diasporic artists within societies grappling with the legacy of Portugal's colonial history. Mary Louise Pratt uses the term *contact zone* to describe a space where “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths, as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). Our research aims to add new layers of meaning to this understanding whilst drawing from the intersection of cinema and live performance. Engaged with participatory practices focused on Portuguese-speaking artists who self-identify with diasporic communities, our project emphasises their cultural entanglements through diverse modes of artistic expression. We developed a case study on three live cinema sessions performed in cities with historical legacies embedded in the Portuguese colonial regime: Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza. Our research highlights the neglect of perspectives parallel to dominant historical narratives in our contemporary postcolonial context, whilst exploring the potential of *liveness* in both producing and viewing narratives performed by diasporic artists. We seek to understand how liveness can facilitate our coexistence in contemporary migration societies.

Keywords: contact zone; diasporic artists; documentary filmmaking; live editing; participatory arts;

Resumo

Lisboa emerge como centro de encontros multiculturais, reunindo pessoas das antigas colônias portuguesas. Esta investigação artística examina como a manipulação em tempo real de conteúdo audiovisual, com participação ativa de artistas e audiências, pode contribuir para a agência e pertencimento de artistas diaspóricos lusófonos em sociedades marcadas pelos legados coloniais portugueses. Pratt (1991) define *zona de contato* como o espaço onde “culturas se encontram, colidem e confrontam-se mutuamente, frequentemente em contextos de relações de poder altamente assimétricas” (p. 34, tradução minha). A pesquisa adiciona novas camadas a esta compreensão, partindo da interseção entre cinema e performance ao vivo. Engajada com práticas participativas centradas em artistas lusófonos autoidentificados com comunidades diaspóricas, o projeto enfatiza entrelaçamentos culturais através de diversas expressões artísticas. Desenvolveu-se um estudo de caso sobre três sessões de cinema ao vivo em cidades imersas no legado colonial português: Lisboa, Luanda e Fortaleza. A investigação sublinha a negligência de perspectivas paralelas às narrativas históricas dominantes no contexto pós-colonial contemporâneo, explorando o potencial do ‘ao vivo’ na produção e visualização de narrativas performadas por artistas diaspóricos. Busca-se compreender como o ao vivo pode facilitar a coexistência em sociedades migratórias contemporâneas.

Palavras-chave: artes participativas; artistas diaspóricos; edição ao vivo; realização de documentários; zona de contato;

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Situating Our Approach

This chapter situates our investigative approach, outlining its background, relevance, contributions, and methods. It grounds our exploration of live editing as a tool for participatory art practice in documentary filmmaking, which involves navigating historical knowledge and artistic research processes within the specific contexts in which they occur.

1.1 An Intersection of Art and Politics

Artistic research performances can help generate public interest in policy-making discussions, as observed by Gioia Chilton and Patricia Leavy (2014). As such, our study addresses public policies against racism within a postcolonial context, particularly in societies formerly colonised by Portugal. Bridging art and politics, we seek to foster public engagement with policy discourse surrounding recent anti-racism action plans in Portugal¹. In this way, we engage with what Marcus and Kara (2016, p. 6) describe as “live cinema documentaries that blend VJ software-facilitated simultaneous editing of documentary footage, audio, and music by video performance artists and musicians in multiscreen exhibition venues.”

Like many forms of contemporary art, our practice values conceptualism, the appropriation of digital content, and real-time improvisations that narrate the author’s perspective whilst remaining open to participatory audience interaction, reinforcing the unfinished character of the work. In accordance with this perspective, André Parente (2013, p. 29) argues that the sense of incompleteness reconfigures the artistic experience, promoting active spectator participation in shared processes and collective encounters. Intersubjectivity also plays a significant role in our investigation, as we seek to understand how, and to which extent, the practice of live editing can foster a sense of agency and belonging among diasporic artists living in the aftermath of colonial regimes.

We choose the term ‘diasporic’ rather than the term ‘immigrant’ to contemplate the fact that these artists can identify with diaspora communities without having experienced migration themselves. The concept of *diaspora* is defined as “the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions” and is described as “a central historical fact of colonization” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013, p. 81).

In her article “Digital Diasporas: Postcoloniality, Media and Affect” (2020), Sandra Ponzanese elaborates on the significant impact that digital connectivity has on the sense of spatiality, belonging, and self-identification. As the author observes:

¹ For more information on political measures related to combating racism and xenophobia in Portugal, see: European Commission. (2021, July 29). *Portugal: National plan to combat racism and discrimination 2021–2025*. <https://rm.coe.int/sixth-report-on-portugal/1680b6668d>

Digital diasporas provide new possible cartographies to map the self in relation to increasingly complex patterns of globalization and localization, while avoiding closures and the negative effects of identity politics. Furthermore, it allows different scripts to be envisioned for the politics of emotion that is essential to the understanding of the motives, nature and impact of the migrant experience, as well as the possibility for negotiating multiple belongings. (2020, p. 977).

Drawing from these insights, we apply the concept of *digital diasporas* to our study to suggest new ways of understanding and situating personal identity within complex global and local dynamics. The locations of our filmic experiences—Lisbon, Luanda and Fortaleza—are particularly relevant, as they exist within a postcolonial context characterised by asymmetrical power relations and contested cultural identities.

In this introduction, we present the context of the cities where we developed our artistic research and share some examples of contemporary artistic interventions that challenge Portuguese society's public discourse on its colonial history.

During fieldwork, I participated in the African Lisbon Tour on the Transatlantic Slave Trade², led by activist Naky Gaglo, where I learned from civil society initiatives that exemplify the active role of diasporas in sharing parallel narratives and promoting critical engagement that challenges Portugal's dominant historical narratives and examines their contemporary social and political consequences in postcolonial societies.

In Lisbon, the *ReMapping Memories* project, launched by the Goethe-Institut Portugal, has been managed since 2023 by the Museu de Lisboa and the association BUALA, with editorial coordination by Marta Lança. The project presents a visual mapping that guides visitors through contested narratives surrounding memorial sites linked to anticolonial resistance during Portugal's colonial regime. The project also addresses memorial practices by sharing essays, reports, and interviews related to often-neglected histories of the African population's presence in Lisbon.³

² African Lisbon Tour on the Transatlantic Slave Trade [Tour Africano de Lisboa sobre a Tráfico Transatlântico de Escravizados]. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://africanlisbontour.com/>

³ Remapping Memories Lisboa – Hamburg. (n.d.). *Remapping Memories Lisboa – Hamburg*. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://www.re-mapping.eu/pt/o-projeto>.

In her contribution to this project, Miriam Thaler (2024) discusses the protests against systemic racism triggered by the global impact of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which originated in the United States in the summer of 2020 and also reached Lisbon. She highlights the discussions surrounding the recently installed statue of Father Antônio Vieira, a 17th-century Jesuit priest and missionary, in central Lisbon, where the word "DESCOLONIZA" (decolonise) was painted in red graffiti, following the major BLM protests. She also points out that previous manifestations, such as the local movement *Descolonizando*⁴, had already contested the colonial gaze denoted by this statue in June 2017, shortly after its inauguration.



Figure 1. Audiovisual research material documenting the statue of Padre Antônio Vieira in Lisbon, 2023. Photo: Natália Gondim.

The statue commemorates Antônio Vieira as a priest who defended the rights of Indigenous peoples in Brazil. The monument depicts him, dressed in religious vestments, with a crucifix in his left hand held above the Indigenous children's heads. As Thaler contests, it "evokes the European notion of protection and a civilising mission towards colonised peoples, a common argument propagated by European ex-colonial powers, often employed to justify the exploitation and slavery of invaded territories"⁵.

⁴ See *Descolonizando*. (n.d.). [Facebook page]. <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064371144944>

⁵ This quotation has been translated by the author from the original text in Portuguese from Thaler, M. (n.d.). *Estátua do Padre Antônio Vieira: O crepúsculo da representação canónica*. Remapping Memories Lisboa – Hamburg. Retrieved February 16, 2024, from <https://www.re-mapping.eu/pt/lugares-de-memoria/estatua-do-padre-antonio-vieira>



Figure 2. Audiovisual research material documenting the statue of Padre Antônio Vieira in Lisbon, 2023. Photo: Natália Gondim.⁶

Another artwork that challenges a mono-nationalistic narrative is the installation *The Boat*⁷. It was created by the interdisciplinary artist and scholar Grada Kilomba, who holds Portuguese nationality with familial roots in São Tomé and Príncipe. Kilomba’s work reflects on her African heritage and examines decolonisation across various artworks. *The Boat* consists of 140 blocks forming the silhouette of a ship’s hull, symbolising the space meant to hold the bodies of millions of Africans enslaved by European empires. It confronts the mainstream Portuguese collective imagination of a boat as a symbol of so-called ‘discoveries’.

Kilomba states that “a continent with millions of people cannot be discovered” and “one of the longest and most horrendous chapters of humanity—Slavery—cannot be erased.”⁸ In this way, she invites the public to revisit national memorial practices by associating the symbol of a boat with its historical function in the lucrative trafficking and enslavement of African individuals by Portugal. This message is engraved in multiple languages on each

⁶ The statue of Padre Antônio Vieira, surrounded by Brazilian Indigenous children, includes a description of him as a ‘Defender of Indigenous People and Human Rights’.

⁷ BoCA Biennial of Contemporary Arts. (2021, October 4). *Grada Kilomba, O Barco / The Boat | BoCA 2021* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7vSm5DLgDs>

⁸ The interview excerpt was transcribed and translated from Portuguese by the author. For the full interview, see *Roda Viva* (2024, May 13): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uF37P209wAo>

wooden piece of the large-scale installation, serving as an act of remembrance.

Moreover, initiatives such as *Interferences: Emerging Urban Cultures*⁹, exhibited at MAAT - Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology in 2022, and the *Imminent Festival* in Lisbon acknowledge the contributions of diasporas to the city's cultural landscape in a shared, and yet divided postcolonial Portuguese society.



Figure 3. Audiovisual research material documenting the Festival Iminente¹⁰, held at Praça do Comércio, Lisbon, 2023. Photo: Natália Gondim.

In Luanda, the itinerary exhibition *Choreographies of the Impossible*¹¹—part of the 35th São Paulo Biennial and co-curated by Grada Kilomba—was presented at the Instituto Guimarães Rosa, featuring *Baptism*, an installation by Angolan artist Januário Jano. It is composed of twenty photographs showing Jano removing white garments made of cotton fabric, symbolising the colonial impositions of Portuguese colonisers in Baixa do Cassange¹², where a 1961 massacre became a catalyst for Angola's liberation struggle (Albuquerque, 2023).

By including Luanda in its itinerary, the exhibition not only broadens its geographical scope but also highlights the role of diasporic artists from former Portuguese colonies in shaping contemporary art through an emerging recognition of their shared narratives, which express a

⁹ MAAT (Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology). (n.d.). *Interferences: Emerging urban cultures*. MAAT. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://ext.maat.pt/longforms/interferences-emerging-urban-cultures>

¹⁰ For more information, see Festival Iminente (2023). *Festival Iminente 2023*. <https://2023.festivaliminente.com/>

¹¹ Fundação Bienal de São Paulo. (2024, September 20). *A 35ª Bienal de São Paulo – Coreografias do impossível: Itinerância 35ª Bienal – Luanda, Angola*. <https://bienal.org.br/agenda/itinerancia-35a-bienal-luanda-angola/>

¹² The 1961 Baixa de Cassange revolt began as a labor protest but evolved into the first armed uprising against Portuguese colonial rule, leading to severe repression by colonial forces (Silveira, 2013).

deep entanglement of the histories of these peoples, whose lives and identities continue to be shaped by the legacies of forced migration and enslavement, as reflected in the cultural expressions of Brazil and Angola.



Figure 4. Audiovisual research material collected in Luanda, 2024, documenting the installation *Baptism* by Januário Jano¹³ during the 35th Bienal de São Paulo. Photo: Natália Gondim.

In Fortaleza, emerging collectives in visual arts, dance, and music engage with religious rituals as a means of reconnecting with Afro-Indigenous ancestral identities and subverting colonial legacies through artistic interventions across the city¹⁴. Within this context, the phrase “Exu Te Ama” (“Exu Loves You”), an intervention by Jean dos Anjos at the Centro Dragão do Mar de Arte e Cultura, became a viral symbol of Afro-Brazilian cultural pride and resistance against religious intolerance. After facing political backlash—including a formal demand by a state deputy to remove the work—the institution reaffirmed its stance against religious racism, emphasising the cultural and political relevance expressed in this artistic gesture.¹⁵

¹³ JANO, J. (2025). *Baptism* [Photographic installation]. Installation composed of 20 photographs, documented in the catalog of the 35th São Paulo Bienal. Retrieved September 27, 2025, from https://bienal.org.br/biblioteca/guia-35a-bienal-de-sao-paulo/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁴ See *Coletivo Riddims*. (2024). *Baculejo* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/3v0aiGzTAEA> (audiovisual documentation by Natalia Gondim).

¹⁵ G1. (2023, October 19). *Deputada pede retirada de mensagem “Exu te ama” de exposição no Ceará; entidades*



Figure 5. Audiovisual research material collected in Fortaleza, 2024, documenting “*Exu Te Ama*” (“Exu Loves You”), an intervention by Jean dos Anjo at Centro Dragão do Mar de Arte e Cultura. Photo: Natália Gondim.

Together, these cultural expressions documented in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza demonstrate how these contemporary artists reimagine their shared history through artworks that challenge the dominant narratives in the public spaces of postcolonial cities. By exposing a complex cultural entanglement of their multiple identities, they challenge the mono-perspective imposed by nationalistic narratives and assert the transformative potential of diasporas in reshaping our collective memory. In doing so, diasporic artists may contribute to political and social change towards coexistence and reconciliation.¹⁶

1.2 Parallel Narratives in Live Cinema: Addressing Inequality

According to Lilian Schwarcz and Heloisa Starling (2015), an empire that enslaved a significant number of Black people across continents also decimated numerous Indigenous populations. I use the expression “a significant number” to acknowledge the difficulty in providing an exact count of people enslaved and killed due to Portuguese involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, as the precise amount remains uncertain, with estimates ranging from millions to tens of millions. As Patrick Manning observes in his book *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (1990):

consideram “esdríxulas”. G1. <https://g1.globo.com/ce/ceara/noticia/2023/10/19/deputada-pede-retirada-de-mensagem-exu-te-ama-de-exposicao-no-ceara-entidades-esdruxulas.ghtml>

¹⁶ For further insight into the role of diasporas as peacebuilders, see International Catalan Institute for Peace. (2025, January). Diasporas as peacebuilders (No. 42). <https://www.icip.cat/perlapau/en/article/diasporas-as-peacebuilders/?pdf>

In the period from 1500 to 1900, the demand of slave purchasers resulted in the emigration of roughly 12 million slaves to the Occident, some six million slaves to the Orient, and the emigration of perhaps another 8 million slaves within Africa. It was the largest migration in human history to that time. (Manning, 1990, p. 104).

Manning (1990, p. 12) notes that “The Occidental slave trade began with the Portuguese appearance on the West African coast in the fifteenth century, but its most important years were from 1650 to 1850”. He further estimates that approximately 12 million enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic between the 16th and 19th centuries, with around 10.5 million arriving in the Americas (1990, p. 37). The author stresses the moral imperative to address past injustices in the present, once “we are all implicated as beneficiaries in a social and economic system constructed in significant part through the exploitation of slaves” (Manning 1990, p. 174).

He also identifies several patterns of response to historical injustice: charity, reparations, familial self-help, and remembrance. The role of remembrance is remarked by him: “For the case of African slaves (...) the response to their sacrifice is to honour their memory and thereby ensure that no such sacrifice will be made again” (1990, p. 176). As a Brazilian researcher, I align with the argument that genuine responses must involve shared responsibility through politics of reparation and remembrance.

Marie Louise Pratt (1991, as cited in Sternfeld (2017), uses the term ‘contact zone’ to discuss a space of unavoidable conflicts between individuals, derived from the power dynamics between colonisers and colonised. She identifies two significant tools within the contact zone: *autoethnographic* texts, in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them, and *transculturation*, which she describes as follows:

Ethnographers have used the term transculturation to describe processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture. The term, originally coined by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s, aimed to replace overly reductive concepts of acculturation and assimilation used to characterise culture under conquest. While subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for. Transculturation, like autoethnography, is a phenomenon of the contact zone. (Pratt, 1991, p. 36).

Clifford (1997, as cited in Sternfeld, 2011) proposed applying the concept of contact zones to urban spaces, where it is defined more by social than geographical distances,

emphasising that these social separations are shaped by historical and political forces. In “Memorial Sites as Contact Zones”, Nora Sternfeld highlights *actualisation* and *transnationality* as aspects “necessary and controversial in contemporary migration society” (2011). She claims: “For the fact of migration, society must ultimately have implications for cultures of remembrance in a divided/shared present: it calls for going beyond the mono-perspectivity and the exclusions of the still dominant nation-state paradigm” (2011, under *How Governmental is the Transnationalization and Actualization of Remembrance?*, para. 1).

Building on these perspectives, our investigation focuses on the contemporary social and political contestation of dominant narratives—particularly those expressing nationalistic pride by framing Portuguese colonial history as “discoveries”. In this sense, we align with Peter Pál Pelbart’s assertion that a subjective mutation is essential for a transformative mode of existence:

Such moments, whether individual or collective (such as May 1968), correspond to a subjective and collective mutation, in which what was previously lived as inevitable suddenly appears as intolerable, and what before was not even imaginable becomes thinkable, desirable. It is a redistribution of affections that redraws the borders between what is desired and what is no longer tolerated. (Pelbart, 2016, p. 412, own translation)

Given the possibility of collectively narrating history, we engage with participatory practices by combining documentary filmmaking with live performance. We seek to foster the agency and sense of belonging of diasporic artists, while utilising digital media technologies that enable artists to improvise and self-represent their narratives through their artistic expressions. In this way, we recall Cohen’s words, as mentioned by Pelbart:

It is in this narrow passage from representation to acting, less deliberate, with space for improvisation and spontaneity, that live art walks, with *happening* expressions and performance. It is also in this tenuous limit that life and art come together. As we break with representation, with fiction, space opens up for the unforeseen, and therefore, for the living, as life is synonymous with the unforeseen, with risk. (Cohen, 2003, as cited in Pelbart, 2016, pp. 265–266, own translation)

We regard the present moment as one of rupture. As such, this artistic research engages with a recently formed BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) collective in Lisbon, called *Zelu*. The collective aims to facilitate cultural gatherings that nurture new possibilities for artistic exploration in spaces addressing racism and xenophobia. It seeks to counterpoint Portugal’s limited public recognition of the contemporary consequences of its colonial history. In this sense, we also align with Paulo Freire (posthumous work, 2014/2022) in

challenging the discourse centred on the impossibility of change. He claims that such discourse serves as a tool to conform to our social and political reality, conferring ethical impunity to one's participation in History: "What I think is that.... we make ourselves our own History." (p. 210, own translation)

Combined, these frameworks enable critical contemporary responses to historical injustice. Our research opens artistic pathways that challenge dominant historical narratives, particularly for those in postcolonial societies marked by enduring inequalities from slavery systems, such as Brazil. Through recognition of parallel narratives and collective efforts towards reconciliation, we investigate a transnational approach to narrating the colonial past and its continuing influence on contemporary social and political relationships.

Claiming that the transatlantic slave trade constituted a genocide of African people has been a position advanced by several contemporary scholars, who align it with the definition provided by the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (United Nations, 1948) as specific "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."¹⁷

Despite ongoing debates about categorising the enslavement of African people as a crime of genocide, scholars such as Ana Lucia Araujo (2017) argue that the immense loss of African lives and the destruction of their cultural systems constitute a prolonged form of genocide, the effects of which persist in systemic racism and social inequality across postcolonial societies. Similarly, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) contends that the history of the Americas involved systematic genocide against Indigenous peoples through warfare, forced displacement, and cultural destruction, with lasting consequences for the marginalisation of affected communities.

In this context, we analyse the potential of live editing to support cultural and political change, drawing on methodologies that foster self-reflection. In our study, we seek to understand how improvisation during a live cinema experience can facilitate the emergence of a collective narrative in a contact zone. For this, we consider Araújo's (2010) argument against technicism in cultural production. He observes that technological innovation is often controlled by dominant economic powers, which ultimately constrain its capacity to drive political transformation. In his words:

¹⁷"In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such : (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." (United Nations, 1948, p. 280).

The analysis of technologies is of great relevance for demonstrating the aesthetic and political potentials they present; however, if not accompanied by the analysis of the actors who dominate the exploitation of technologies and cultural production, as well as the role that culture and technology play in the economic structure, it fails to reveal the true obstacles to political confrontation. (Araújo, 2010, p. 136, own translation)

Given the highly unequal power relations prevalent in postcolonial societies worldwide, we propose engaging with parallel narratives to collectively create possibilities for reconciliation with the present through ‘actualisation’ and ‘transnationality’ as responses to the colonial past that shapes our contemporary relationships. Building on this context of historical and ongoing inequalities, this research investigates how live editing can foster a sense of agency and belonging whilst opening new pathways for participatory dialogue among individuals who coexist within the collective.

1.3 Aims and Contributions

Our artistic research is guided by two key inquiries: How can artists assert agency through live editing in participatory documentary filmmaking? And does this practice influence their sense of belonging within a contact zone?

Drawing from a selection of historical and contemporary works, the following sections will ground our research questions and summarise our contributions.

1.3.1 Aura, Presence, and Autonomy of Art in Live Cinema

Walter Benjamin explored the concept of *aura* in his book *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* published initially in 1936 (2020). In Benjamin's theory, aura represents the unique and irreproducible presence of a work of art—its authenticity, deeply tied to its historical context, cultural embeddedness, and material singularity. Benjamin claims that film is devoid of aura because it is a medium inherently based on mechanical reproduction. Yet, as Bráulio S. R. de Araújo suggests, certain movies or specific cinematic moments can still evoke an aura, through a feeling of uniqueness and authenticity that transcends the reproducibility of the cinematic medium itself (2010).

Our study examines the ‘auratic’ dimensions of live cinema, exploring how they become culturally embedded through historical specificity of the places in which they occur, as well as the temporal aspect of ephemerality, which heightens participants’ self-awareness of their presence during each session. By drawing on existing theoretical frameworks and

engaging with intersubjectivity through analyses of participant's experiences, as it emerges through our live-editing practice, we seek to generate insights that bridge intellectual inquiry with the assessment of their embodied experience of 'liveness'.

In our participatory performance sessions, liveness substantiates in a two-fold manner: through the emergence of unpredicted narratives that transcend technological limitations via improvisation, and through accidental human-driven events within our collective experimentation.

Another relevant aspect of our artistic practice contribution relates to how several diasporic artists who participated in our sessions respond directly to the power issues around economic control over technological innovation. They reclaim their autonomy by producing their interfaces through resourceful materials, recycling, or using natural elements like *cabaças* (gourds) and other found objects, as well as self-made instruments such as the *mbira* (originating from Mozambican diasporas). These are symbolic strategies that often occur outside mainstream technological production circuits. They reflect a conscious effort by these artists to overcome what might be assessed as an over-dependence on industrial tools in live performing arts.

1.3.2 Exploring Hybrid Narrative Structures

Our work entails a dimension of unintentionality that arises from collective physical presence during live cinema sessions—we refer to this as *co-presence*. The idea of co-presence becomes complex in our practice: our live editing work intertwines prepared material with live-captured footage, whilst subsequent private studio editing for documentation adds yet another layer of mediated presence. Drawing from literature on audiovisual works and documentaries, we use the term 'hybrid narrative structure' to describe a combination of linear storytelling and non-linear elements—mixing facts, fiction, multiple viewpoints, and interactive parts.

In the introduction to *Kuleshov on Film* (1974), Ronald Levaco comments on the author's view regarding the predetermined sequence in which a film's fragments are assembled—montage—as the fundamental source of cinema (Levaco, 1974, p. 7). In this way, montage allows the reconfiguration, intensification, or even subversion of the pre-existing meanings embedded in isolated shots. João Mário Grilo (2017) observes that the *Kuleshov effect* demonstrates how editing redefines a shot's meaning through contiguity and continuity. He emphasises that this process elicits only a suggestion, yet one that is fundamental to cinematic meaning (p. 89).

In *Film form: Essays in film theory* (Eisenstein, 1949/2014), twelve essays written by the author between 1928 and 1945 present key points in the development of Eisenstein's film theory. His concept of dual-unity¹⁸ is particularly inspiring for our live and studio editing processes. It refers to a montage technique involving the collision of independent shots which, by exposing the conflict of ideas, generates a unifying solution expressed in a meaning that emerges from this duality. In his words:

An exact representation of the universe, of its evolution, of the development of mankind, and of the reflection of this evolution in the minds of men, can therefore only be obtained by the methods of dialectics, with its constant regard to the innumerable actions and reactions of life and death, of progressive or retrogressive changes. (2014, p. 144)

In our live editing practice, the linear narrative unfolds in a chronological sequence, guiding a continuous flow constructed from pre-edited audiovisual material. At the same time, we seek the freshness of ambiguity and the disruption of this narrative through real-time audiovisual manipulation. By interacting with multiple perspectives and juxtaposing linear and non-linear narrative layers, we interrupt the flow of coherence through flashbacks and various non-diegetic elements—such as music, narration, or sound effects that exist outside the story world and serve to expand audience perception and engagement. These elements create thematic, emotional, and associative connections, introducing contrasting perspectives. As a result, we compose a hybrid narrative structure that integrates linear and non-linear aspects while remaining open to live experimentation.

In *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, Michel Chion (1990/2018, p. 19) argues that sound and image mutually shape how we perceive audiovisual content: sound influences how we experience an image, while an image also affects how we perceive sound. He further introduces the concept of *added value*, defined as:

(...) the expressive and informative value with which a sound enriches a given

¹⁸ Eisenstein (1949/2014) discusses the concept of *dual-unity* as follows: "The dialectic of works of art is built upon a most curious 'dual-unity.' The affectiveness of a work of art is built upon the fact that there takes place in it a dual process: an impetuous progressive rise along the lines of the highest explicit steps of consciousness and a simultaneous penetration by means of the structure of the form into the layers of profoundest sensual thinking (...) That is why, with this basic thesis in mind, we need not be afraid of an analytical deciphering of the most basic laws of sensual thinking, by firmly keeping in mind the necessity for unity and harmony in both elements, which produce a fully worthy work only in this unity. By allowing one or the other element to predominate the art-work remains unfulfilled. A drive towards the thematiclogical side renders the work dry, logical, didactic. But overstress on the side of the sensual forms of thinking with insufficient account taken of thematic-logical tendency-this is equally fatal for the work: the work becomes condemned to sensual chaos, elementalness, raving. Only in the "dually united" interpenetration of these tendencies resides the true tension-laden unity of form and content." (p. 144)

image, so as to create the definite impression, in the immediate or remembered experience one has of it, that this information or expression “naturally” comes from what is seen and is already contained in the image itself (p.5).

He also introduces the term *synchresis* to describe “the forging of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears” (p. 5). Chion’s insights are particularly valuable in our study for examining how the real-time interplay between sound and image in our live sessions affects audience perception.

Complementing this, Pia Tikka’s research on enactive narrative experience allows us to explore how audience perception can transcend authorial expectations, moving towards their embodied participation in a collective experience. The improvisational nature of live editing creates space for the spontaneity of live arts, enabling both performers and the audience to shape the evolving live cinema narrative in real time. She argues:

Instead of assuming the role of an omniscient and omnipotent controller, the author has to accept a more modest approach to control. To meet this challenge, the author has to assume a more enactive role backed by a holistic and biological system, where she and her dynamical enactive cinema artwork together form a cinematic system as a whole. (Tikka, 2008, p. 27)

In this sense, the bodily and affective engagement of the audience with the unfolding narrative during performances is crucial for understanding participatory practices in live cinema.

1.3.3 Live Cinema: Toward a Decentralised Model

Our artistic research in documentary cinema explores the potential of participatory practices in live editing. Our engagement aligns with Dovey’s motivations and reflections on this approach. As Dovey expresses it:

One of my hopes, through engaging in creative research through film, is to unsettle the generic space between documentary filmmaking, curatorial practice, and video-essay making. (...) I want to contribute to what I like to call a “people-oriented” approach that decentres the authority of the film critic and foregrounds the voices of the people and communities whose work the critic is exploring; this is something that many video essays—focused as they are on analysing films and films alone—cannot achieve. (Dovey, 2023, p. 6)

Based on our artistic process, we propose a model for practising live cinema within contact zones. This model incorporates live editing, live music, and other live arts performances

presented to a local, in-person audience within culturally specific spaces, which bring together diasporic performers and local communities. Across our three sessions, key variables include the presence or absence of a live camera, multiple artistic modalities, and the level of abstraction in the audiovisual material.

Our live cinema model is both context-specific and adaptable, offering a flexible framework that can be applied to similar case studies. While grounded in the unique conditions of each session, it evolves through the creative development of each live editing session. By sharing insights into location, performance design, and participatory strategies from the three sessions, we establish a practical and conceptual framework to support filmmakers in developing live cinema practices within transnational, postcolonial, and migratory contexts—particularly relevant in light of contemporary debates on the role of digital technologies for diasporas and their impact on the politics of remembrance in migration societies.

Furthermore, our investigation decentralises the theoretical discourse in film studies, shifting it toward more meaningful participation by individuals often regarded as objects of study by academic researchers. In this manner, we adopt a perspective aligned with what Marcos Aurélio Felipe (2019) calls the ethno-cinematic shift in contemporary documentary filmmaking, incorporating the viewpoints of Indigenous Brazilian filmmakers while contesting the dominance of Eurocentric frameworks in film analysis. Building on this approach, the interplay between our live camera techniques and the cinematic gaze employed by Indigenous filmmakers in Brazil will be examined in subsequent sections, demonstrating how these practices challenge conventional methods of cinematic observation.

1.4 Our Interdisciplinary Research Methods

We designed our methodological framework to explore the potential meanings of producing and observing live editing practices within participatory documentary filmmaking in postcolonial societies. Our case study analyses three performances, *Contact Zone*¹⁹, which adapts the concept of contact zone from literary studies to cinema studies. Live editing is employed as a method of artistic research, combining documentary filmmaking with participatory practices involving diasporic artists in live cinema performances.

Given the complexity of this exploration, a multi-method approach has been deemed essential. The following subsections provide a thorough examination of our methodology.²⁰

¹⁹For more information on the live cinema performances, see <http://www.zonadecontato.com>

²⁰ All references and citations in this study follow the APA style (7th edition).

1.4.1 Artistic Research in Film

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1989, p.12) states that a painter's task is to access the raw meaning of existence without the pressure to provide answers or solve the world's problems. Their role is not to fulfil societal duties but to express their unique perception of reality, transcending conventional intellectual constraints. Unlike other intellectual pursuits bound by theory and societal expectations, the work of an autonomous artist reflects a deeper layer of experience. It can capture raw, unfiltered aspects of human experience, offering a unique perspective that other intellectuals cannot access. As described by the author:

He is there, strong or weak in life, but undoubtedly sovereign in his rumination of the world, with no other "technique" than that which his eyes and hands give themselves by the force of seeing, the force of painting, obsessed with pulling from this world where scandals and glories of history echo, canvases that will add little to the fury or the hopes of men, and no one murmurs. What is this secret science that he has or seeks? This dimension for which Van Gogh wants to go "further"? This fundamental of painting, and perhaps of all culture? (Merleau-Ponty, 1989, p. 15)

In his writing on Stan Brakhage's cinema, Merleau-Ponty reflects on how our perception, when guided by an integral gaze, can foster a more intimate relationship with the cosmos. According to him, this holistic mode of seeing engages the viewer fully, as he observes: "its metaphysics implies conceiving the image as the supreme vehicle of 'truth' and of cinema as the instrument for translating 'inner vision' into external forms" (1983, pp. 182–183, own translation). Aligned with his approach, our engagement with artistic research in film is motivated by the importance of integrating artistic practice and theory in the production of knowledge in film studies.

As described by Henk Borgdorff (2006), such methodology integrates creative practice with scholarly investigation, positioning the artwork itself as a form of knowledge production. It considers artistic practice as a valid research method. He observes that, while an exhibition's documentation may capture the process of creative practices, artistic research requires a critical reflection and theoretical framing alongside the artwork to demonstrate its academic contribution.

As a method, live editing allows the researcher to explore the temporal, affective and cognitive dimensions of artistic experimentation. This process facilitates the exploration of implicit knowledge, such as insights gained through practice. These often cannot be captured through written language alone. The performance itself becomes a site of knowledge production, where meaning emerges through the interplay of image, sound, rhythm, and

audience response.

In this way, we will examine live editing for its capacity to produce a non-discursive form of thinking, aligning with Borgdorff's (2006) claim that artistic practice constitutes an unconventional formulation of thought. This understanding encourages a profound reflection on the ways through which we perceive our lived reality, challenging traditional methods of producing knowledge.

In "Mapping Artistic Research in Film", Manuel Damásio and Jyoti Mistry (2020) reflect on the complexity of defining artistic research in film, highlighting the necessity of expanding pedagogical and aesthetic frameworks beyond dominant Eurocentric models, so as to embrace "multiple perspectives, numerous film histories and aesthetics" (p. 6). They also identify the ethical challenge of representing the Other as a central issue in artistic research. They point to the political potential of aesthetics in cinema, noting that "dominant cinematic conventions reinforce historical and political power structures and by working directly with the language of film itself, these conventions can be subverted" (p. 7). In this sense, they state:

The aim of research using film language and cinematic forms, is not to represent the experiences of marginal peoples but rather to find forms that capture more sharply the utterances of the Other. In other words, rather than speaking on behalf of the Other, experiments with the film form strives to create a visual expression of those layered, negotiated experiences of oppressed peoples, identities that have been formed in relation to power and the narratives that illustrate the construction of those identities. (Damásio and Mistry, 2020, p.7)

Our study draws on Damásio and Mistry's (2020) claims that film-based research emerges as a distinctive methodology, transcending conventional approaches to historical and political representation. We also directly address what Mieke Bernink (2022) identifies as a key question: "What kind of knowledge can 'artistic research in and through cinema' generate that cannot be generated any other way?" (p. 130), by engaging with the debate in "Becoming Research: The Way We Work Now", where Irit Rogoff (2019) discusses a 'research turn' within art and curating.

Rogoff argues that "research has moved from being a contextual activity that grounds production and exhibition of art, to a mode of inhabiting the art world in its own right" (2019, p. 1). This highlights a contemporary shift from relying on what she calls "inherited knowledge" from academia toward a more reflective engagement with one's conditions of production. Therefore, we engage with her claim that "The centrality of contemporary art practices in developing new forms and expressions of research, grounded in invention and speculation rather than in proof and verification, is at the heart of this 'turn'" (2019, p. 1).

Inspired by these reflections, our study seeks to understand how diasporic artists and audience members experience our live cinema sessions. To this end, we turn to the analysis of their subjective experiences as a way of producing knowledge. Thus, it became necessary to adopt a method capable of analysing the intersubjective dimension of these experiences, capturing nuances that often escape other research approaches. In this sense, micro-phenomenology emerges as a particularly suitable methodology, allowing for an in-depth investigation of the personal experiences of the participants.

1.4.2 Micro-Phenomenology: A Way to Analyse Personal Experiences

To access people's experiences, we utilise a micro-phenomenological methodology - a rigorous, interview-based method that involves guiding participants to access and describe the implicit, often overlooked, aspects of their experience. In the words of Kirsten Heimann, Hans Boelsbjerg, Christopher Allen et al. (2023, p. 217):

(...) micro-phenomenology is a research tool enabling the investigation of subjective experience. Comprising an interview and analysis technique, it allows for detailed descriptions of brief moments of subjective experience and provides protocols to compare them systematically.

This approach enables us to explore the domain of subjective knowledge and intersubjectivity, which is often underexamined in film research. Claire Petitmengin's website²¹ on micro-phenomenology illustrates how this method can be applied in artistic practices, providing several examples, including the work of Olafur Eliasson. In 2021 Eliasson documented his installation *Life* by capturing audience experiences through micro-phenomenological interviews conducted by cognitive scientist Katrin Heimann. These interviews were shared on the *Life* website²², allowing the exhibition to continue resonating even after its closure.

To achieve this, Heimann conducted 28 micro-phenomenological interviews, exploring visitors' experiences during their attendance at the exhibition. Eliasson notes that these interviews offered a deeper understanding of the artwork's affective and cognitive impact on the audience, with selected quotes used to illustrate this. Following this example, our investigation also developed a website designed to highlight participants' descriptions of their lived experiences, which can be accessed in audio format at www.zonadecontato.com.

²¹For further details, see the Microphenomenology website: www.microphenomenology.com.

²² For further details, see the Experiencing Life website: <https://experiencing-life.net/>

In our study, interviewees' descriptions of feeling 'present' during live cinema sessions is often articulated through their detailed memories of their experiences. According to Petitmengin: "A detailed description of these processes through micro-phenomenological methods leads to a fine-grained exploration of the invisible dimensions of experience from which a creative idea arises, and to which the work of art connects us"²³. By analysing participants' reflections on their experience of physical co-presence during our sessions, we investigate how live editing practices can operate within shared yet divided postcolonial migration contexts to open cinematic pathways that foster new possibilities for coexistence.

In this sense, we specifically investigate how live camera input affects participants' experiences during our performances. By 'live camera input', we mean real-time video footage captured by a camera and immediately fed into a system (such as a computer, projector, or visual effects setup), without any delay or pre-recording.

In later sections of our study, we explore how participants respond to questions of agency and belonging in situations both with and without live camera input. In doing so, we consider their perceptions of embodied self-awareness through physical co-presence, as well as through the additional digital layer of audiovisual transmission, which enables them to expand their observational capacity of live interactions during performances.

To understand how these audiovisual experiences resonate at deeper levels of consciousness—beyond individual perception—we draw on frameworks of subjective knowledge and intersubjectivity. This theoretical foundation helps us examine not only what participants consciously observe during live cinema sessions, but also the implicit, shared dimensions of experience that emerge through collective viewing and the archetypal images that shape our understanding.

More than sixty years ago, Carl Jung (1959/1980) wrote on archetypal images that mediate the content of our collective unconscious to our consciousness. He argued that these images are not merely expressive but also formative, as they organise and structure our psyche²⁴. In contrast with Sigmund Freud (as cited in Jung, 1959/1980, p. 3)—to whom the unconscious is primarily formed through personal experience—Jung identifies a deeper, universal layer that he calls the collective unconscious²⁵. Unlike the personal unconscious,

²³ Micro-phenomenology. (n.d.). *Artistic axis*. <https://www.microphenomenology.com/artistic-axis>

²⁴ Whilst Jung's exploration of the unconscious began as early as 1912 with *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (later translated as *Psychology of the Unconscious*), this study draws on his later, more developed formulation in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1959/1980), which offers a more mature development of his theory.

²⁵ Jung claims that "in his later works Freud differentiated the basic view mentioned here. He called the instinctual psyche the 'id,' and his 'super-ego' denotes the collective consciousness, of which the individual is partly conscious and partly unconscious (because it is repressed)" (Jung, 1959/1980, p. 3).

which holds unique, individual content, this collective unconscious consists of shared, inherited elements called archetypes, which are common across all humans (Jung, 1959/1980, pp. 3–4).

As a form of knowledge production, our micro-phenomenological approach seeks to unveil what Pélbart (2016) describes as an *unconscious reservoir of culture*:

In a rescue of the ambivalence between reason and unreason, (...) the field of impulsivity is legitimised, with eruptions of the unconscious, left spaces, transversal narratives, climates of abstract intensity, critical incisions, mental landscapes, derivative processes, and sound indices. (p. 267, own translation)

This description also resonates with various contemporary thinkers and practitioners who identify a foundational dimension as the source of thought, creativity, and the transformation of self-consciousness. Freud had already proposed a stratification of psychic life, distinguishing the unconscious, the preconscious, and consciousness in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/1999, p. 403). Petitmengin characterises this pre-reflective dimension of experience as “not unconscious, but not yet conscious” — the subtle, embodied layer from which thought emerges (2007, p. 2). Her micro-phenomenological approach seeks to access this implicit dimension at the very source of cognition. Furthermore, it is helpful to recall filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein’s assessment of the arts as enacting “an artificial retrogression...towards the forms of earlier thought-processes” (1949/2014, p. 144).

The pre-reflective assessment from our micro-phenomenological interviews with performers and audiences during our three live cinema performances will enable us to glean, analyse and elaborate on experiential structures. Our investigation will describe how live performers can, through improvisation in music, painting, poetry and editing, access an immersive state that leads to flow, enacting the suspension of pre-conceived individual narratives and storytelling strategies. Merleau-Ponty (1989) would call this a ‘secret science’.

Given this aim, we also explore psychological frameworks, including Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory, developed across several works since 1990. Flow is defined by Csikszentmihalyi as a state of optimal experience. It is achieved through a deep focus and immersion, during which individuals sense a dynamic equilibrium between their personal abilities and the demands of the task, becoming fully engaged in the present moment. These ideas provide us with a framework to investigate live cinema as an autotelic—meaning inherently rewarding—and process-driven experience. We connect this approach to the reflections of Pelbart, who writes:

If cinema did not aim at film, it could achieve images - but to do so it would need

to stop “making work”, wanting a product. Perhaps only then would cinema be able to reach “things” as a process, an event. It would even be necessary to change the verb “to film” - after all, why call an activity by its final product - we don’t say “to book” when we write a book, but when we use a hammer, we say to hammer - it would then be necessary to say, “to camera” (2016, p. 399, own translation)

These insights also resonate with Alexandre Astruc’s notion of *caméra-stylo* (camera-pen); the author claims that the filmmaker writes with the camera just as an author writes with a pen. In his essay “The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo” (1948/2022), he emphasises his ideas on cinema as a means of personal expression, where audiovisual composition and editing function as tools of thought and articulation.

In consonance with this idea, we explore Kuleshov’s sentence-like montage, where the construction of meaning emerges through the sequential combination of shots. In the introduction to *Kuleshov on Film* (1974), Levaco notes:

Kuleshov defined the shot as a “shot-sign” which could be syntactically integrated, as a “word-equivalent,” into a film comprised of other shots. From this followed the obvious analogy of (film) sequence and sentence (which Kuleshov used early on) and his subsequent, now infamous dictum that a film is built “brick by brick” (Levaco, 1974, p. 7).

Both Kuleshov and Astruc viewed cinema not merely as a medium for representation, but as a system of signs — a language capable of conveying self-expression and meaning. Building on this foundation, we understand live editing as a practice that seeks to unsettle dominant narratives by exploring cinema as a process-oriented, participatory practice. To this end, our live editing incorporates both live camera and pre-recorded material, where the live camera input functions not only as a *caméra-stylo* — a tool through which performers can express and shape meaning — but also as a mechanism that enables unexpected interventions from both performers and audience members, contributing to a collective storytelling experience that emerges in real time through simultaneous production and viewing.

We also compare this tool with the cinematic approaches employed by Indigenous filmmakers in Brazil, drawing on the insights of Werá Alexandre, a Mbyá-Guarani filmmaker, as shared in an interview published on the *Kurumim Cinema Festival*’s Facebook page²⁶. His approach is rooted in relational, embodied, and culturally specific sense-making, echoing our interest in the emergence of unconscious knowledge. Werá acknowledges unintentionality as a

²⁶Cinema Festival Kurumin. (2021, April 8). *Web Series – Cineastas Indígenas – Alexandre Werá* [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=904238519761372>

component of his practice, assigning a playful, childlike character to the camera:

I started very young, and I have this idea that the camera is like a child. It can only see and hear — it can't process things to share them with others. So, the camera is kind of like a child that you teach, and that's it—it just listens. Then, after some time, comes the editing stage, which is where the processing and organisation of information happens, and that's when you can actually share it with others—with the audience, right? That's where maturity comes in: being able to process and say, like, 'Oh, this is how my grandfather, my father, and my mother taught me, so this is the right way to do it.' And that's kind of how it is. I learned by doing, thinking about this idea of the camera and children. (*Cineastas Indígenas* - Alexandre Werá, 2021, own translation)²⁷

His metaphor of the camera as child resonates with Dziga Vertov's *Kino-Eye* concept, where the camera's "eye" is understood as a mechanical extension of human perception, capable of capturing hidden truths, and the rhythms of life beyond our ordinary perception. In Vertov's words: "The movie camera was invented in order to penetrate deeper into the visible world, to explore and record visual phenomena, so that we do not forget what happens and what the future must take into account" (1984, p. 67).

We can say that Werá Alexandre's metaphor of the "camera as a child" and Vertov's concept of the *Kino-Eye* both invite us to see the world anew through the camera's lens. However, their approaches differ in important ways. For Vertov, the camera's eye reveals what remains visible yet unnoticed in everyday experience. For Werá, the camera embodies a childlike openness, receiving the world without preconception, as if seeing it for the first time. From this perspective, the camera uncovers hidden cultural and political meanings often neglected in our everyday experience — not only by capturing what goes unnoticed, but by approaching it with a renewed, unguarded gaze.

1.4.3 An Autoethnographic Approach

The autoethnographic approach is central to our research methodology, enabling us to critically engage with the ethical complexities of representation in ethnographic inquiry. According to Adams et al. (2015), "autoethnography emerged in response to concerns about colonialism, the need to recognise the social difference and identity politics, an insistence on respecting research participants, and an acknowledgement of different ways of learning about the culture" (pp. 21-22). Jones et al. consider the researchers' position in autoethnographic

²⁷Cinema Festival Kurumin. (2021, April 8). *Web Series – Cineastas Indígenas – Alexandre Werá* [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=904238519761372>

inquiry, noting that “it is the ‘I’ that ‘not only looks but is looked back at, that not only acts but is acted back upon by those in her focus” (Ellis, 2004, p. xix as cited in Jones et al, 2016, p.71).

In our case study, we adopt a first-person perspective, drawing on field observations to elaborate our analysis. The integrity and accountability of this investigation rely on a conscious engagement with the researcher’s active role in the artistic research process. This approach also extends to a careful consideration of the ethical implications of her positionality within the contemporary power dynamics of the contexts under study.

1.4.3.1 Cultural stereotypes vs. Identity

As a Brazilian researcher, I am acutely aware of how my multiple identities, lived experiences, values, emotions, and interpersonal relationships shape both the process and the reporting of this research, which highlights the inseparable connection between my positionality and the knowledge I produce.

My aim extends beyond merely conducting a situated study; it also involves the critical exploration of my personal and cultural entanglements with the subject under investigation. This perspective foregrounds the subjective dimensions of live-editing practice, offering a first-person analysis that, as Ellis (2004, as cited in Jones et al., 2016) notes, is often overlooked by more traditional theoretical methodologies.

Although I identify as a Portuguese-speaking Brazilian diasporic artist with a migratory trajectory in Lisbon and awareness of remote Portuguese ancestry, my identity emerges from the convergence of multiple cultural, social, and political affiliations in constant tension within contemporary Brazilian society. These identity layers, frequently in conflict, not only constitute my artistic and investigative perspective but also shape the methodological choices and ethical commitments that guide this research.

Although these intersecting identities shape my perspective and methodology, they also highlight areas of disconnection and invisibility within my own cultural experience, prompting critical reflection on aspects of Brazilian identity that remain largely unconscious or unacknowledged.

One such dimension of my Brazilian identity from which I feel profoundly disconnected concerns the cultural presence of Indigenous peoples. Although I have become increasingly aware of how it permeates the Portuguese I speak, my daily habits, and even my genetic ancestry, the modes of existence rooted in this territory prior to European invasions and

colonisation remain largely absent from individual and collective awareness in contemporary postcolonial cities. Reflecting on this throughout the research has prompted a deeper process of self-discovery, particularly as I confronted the erasure of Indigenous histories at political and sociocultural levels, shaped by my observations of the widespread lack of knowledge of these narratives both within the Brazilian educational system and in the European institutions where I previously studied political science and cultural mediation.

These histories remained unheard, silenced, and systematically marginalised in my formal education. Today, however, they are reemerging as essential epistemological frameworks for dialogue and as a means to contest prevailing narratives of colonial history. They demand not only recognition for their historical and cultural value within the national context but also acknowledgment of their crucial role in shaping the future of contemporary society. Here, we are referring to the living histories and cultures of approximately 1.7 million Indigenous people currently residing in Brazil.²⁸ As André Cunha says:

The history that constitutes each of us also constitutes the collective we are and are becoming. Looking carefully at our origins and at the forgotten and neglected side of this past can equip us and provide tools to build a present of interaction and loving fluidity with the diversity we have. (2023, pp. 99–100, own translation)

Cunha notes that the Brazilian educational system has taken steps towards this shift through legislation such as Law 10.639/2003, which mandates the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture in school curricula (2023, p. 99). This movement represents a contemporary turn away from a mono-perspective narrative toward a more inclusive understanding of history, thereby creating room for parallel narratives to stimulate dialogue. As Cunha elucidates:

In general, we can quickly name our European origins, but we do not know our other origins. We have great difficulty accepting our Indigenous reality, which greatly limits our process of awareness. It is not uncommon to find, in children's educational materials, caricatured images of Indigenous people that are far removed from the plural diversity of Indigenous peoples existing in Brazil (Cunha, 2023, p. 84, own translation)

²⁸ Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas. (2023, August 7). *Dados do Censo 2022 revelam que o Brasil tem 1,7 milhão de indígenas*. Retrieved September 21, 2025, from <https://www.gov.br/funai/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2023/dados-do-censo-2022-revelam-que-o-brasil-tem-1-7-milhao-de-indigenas>

This argument can be illustrated with two contrasting visual references. The first is a frame exhibited at the Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon, a historical painting that portrays Indigenous people through a Eurocentric colonial lens—exoticised and stereotyped—thereby reinforcing a narrative of subjugation and otherness (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. *O Inferno*, c. 1510–1520. Historical painting exhibited at the Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon portraying Indigenous people through a Eurocentric colonial lens—Portuguese unknown master. Source: Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.²⁹

The second image captures a pivotal moment in Brazil’s political and cultural landscape: a widely circulated photograph of Sônia Guajajara taking office as the country’s first Minister of Indigenous Peoples in 2023. Her presence at the highest levels of government symbolises not only the growing political agency of Indigenous peoples in Brazil’s public sphere, but also the reassertion of Indigenous epistemologies within both national and global levels (see Figure 7).

²⁹The painting shows Lucifer adorned with an Amerindian feathered headdress and African artifacts, reflecting early colonial associations of non-European peoples with demonic imagery. See Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga. (n.d.). *O Inferno*. <http://www.museudearteantiga.pt/colecoes/pintura-portuguesa/o-inferno>.



Figure 7. *Sônia Guajajara takes office as Minister of Indigenous Peoples, January 12, 2023. Photo by Jacqueline Lisboa. Source: WWF-Brasil.*

Together, these images exemplify a contemporary ‘subjective mutation’, reflected in symbolic representations, both visual and political, shifting from imposed colonial imagery to visibility and leadership expressed through self-representation. By engaging with these parallel narratives, we recognise the autonomy of Indigenous populations in constructing collective knowledge systems that foster decolonisation through intercultural dialogue.

In our case study, we addressed parallel narratives in three cities through the documentation of statues of leaders involved in the abolition of slavery, resistance to colonial regimes, and the movements for independence. We engage with this ‘subjective mutation’ for its potential to inaugurate a future that embraces parallel narratives presented in the public sphere, allowing postcolonial identities and its emerging cultural expressions to rearticulate our perspectives on the past and transform the enduring legacies of colonialism in the present.

1.4.3.2 Self-Identity, Group Shame and Ethics

Stuart Hall’s approaches to cultural identity negotiation view it as a process continually formed and reformed through dialogue with dominant power structures, thereby enabling resistance to hegemonic narratives (2019). Similarly, Homi Bhabha conceptualises hybridity as a postcolonial condition that disrupts fixed cultural boundaries and destabilises

colonial authority (1994). These perspectives stress how recognising and valuing multiple identities can serve as a powerful means to confront and transform the ongoing impacts of colonial legacies in the contemporary postcolonial context. They align with our search for new modes of cultivating belonging through artistic expression within a ‘contact zone’.

We consider that creative processes give rise to the emergence of unconscious elements, as described in Jung’s analytical psychology, and that symbolic audiovisual materials serve as a means of accessing our collective unconscious knowledge (Jung, 1959/1980).

Beyond observing the contemporary contestation of the dominant narrative of Portuguese colonial history, our live cinema model seeks to contribute to the reinvention of collective imaginaries through ‘actualisation’ and ‘transnationality’. It fosters self-reflection on multiple affiliations within postcolonial identity frameworks and proposes a pathway to access deeper layers of connection through the unconscious dimensions of artistic experience.

Our live cinema model aligns with the Gestalt therapy approach, for its encouragement of developing present-moment awareness through the integration of thoughts, feelings, and actions. Anne Ginger and Serge Ginger (1995) emphasise that individuals are responsible for self-observation and self-awareness as means of personal growth along the path of life. Based on the *paradoxical theory of change*, initially formulated by Fritz Perls and later developed by Beisser (1970) in *The Paradoxical Theory of Change*, this theory emphasises that genuine transformation occurs when individuals accept who they are, rather than attempting to become something they are not.

Ginger and Ginger highlight the application of Beisser’s theory to social systems, which requires recognising their fragmented components in order to achieve successful reintegration. This process supports the individual’s journey towards self-identity (1995, p. 121). In this sense, I share how my self-identification as a non-Indigenous and non-African-descendant artist influenced my motivations for researching this topic, considering my social position as someone born in Brazil and raised in a high/middle-class environment that inherited many of the thoughts and behaviours derived from a colonising political and cultural system.

We connect this idea to Dovey’s discussion on researcher positionality, recognising that personal and identity contexts shape the research process and its outcomes, as they are influenced by the social, political, and cultural positioning of the researcher in knowledge production. In her words:

(...) when a researcher is not from the community about which they are conducting the research, and especially when the researcher is from a historically privileged group and the participants from a historically disadvantaged group, this

shift is, of course, even more important to ensure respectful relationships for—as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has pointedly told us— “research”, which has been a dirty word for many Indigenous Peoples, whose trust in the benefits of academia needs to be wholly recuperated in many contexts and cases. (Dovey, 2023, p. 7)

In this sense, as a researcher reflecting on my own role in current sociopolitical inequalities and envisioning possibilities for change, I find my motivation aligned with Pélbart’s reflection:

The ignominy of the life possibilities offered to us appears from within. We do not feel outside of our time; on the contrary, we never stop making shameful compromises with it. This feeling of shame is one of the most powerful motives in philosophy. (Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, 1992, as cited in Pélbart, 2016, pp. 403 - 404, own translation).

According to Gary Yontef, there are three types of shame: situational, existential, and group. In this research, I will focus on the latter one: “Group shame refers to shame that is experienced as a result of membership in a class, race, religion, or any other social grouping” (Yontef, 2003, p. 351). In this sense, my motivation to address this subject in this study stems from a feeling of shame rooted in the historical and ongoing advantages afforded to a postcolonial societal group to which I belong.

Acknowledging group shame as part of my positionality shapes the way I approach fieldwork, emphasising my role as an engaged participant and attentive listener, which aligns with Dovey’s reflections:

If mindful and sensitive, the researcher-as-listener, rather than the researcher-as-expert/explainer, can play a significant role in transforming the very conditions of knowledge production, where the emphasis is more on attempts to approach and converse with rather than master, author, control, interpret, and argue (Dovey, 2023, p. 7).

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into four chapters, each contributing to an in-depth exploration of artistic research through the lens of live cinema and participatory practices.

Chapter 1 introduces the research both contextually and theoretically, while also presenting the research design. It outlines the background and significance of the study, followed by our research aims and contributions. The chapter then presents our interdisciplinary

methodology, emphasising the role of artistic research in film and the use of micro-phenomenological methods for interviewing participants and analysing their experiences, combined with an autoethnographic approach in which the researcher engages as a participant–observer in field research across the three cities.

Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive literature review on live cinema, exploring both its conceptual foundations and practical applications. It addresses key themes such as the phenomenology of liveness, the development of filmic editing techniques in early Russian cinema, their relation to live editing tools employed in emerging practices of live cinema, and the role of live cinema as a participatory art form. Additionally, the chapter examines contemporary artistic projects shaping the field of live cinema.

In Chapter 3, we present our case study *Contact Zone*, drawing on our performances in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza, and further developing it as a model for live cinema practice. The chapter examines the location, design, and participatory elements of each session, with particular attention given to their site-specific contexts and the engagement of diasporic artists and audiences in these cities. In this way, we analyse both the variants and invariants across our live cinema sessions. In this third chapter, we also explore the aesthetic and conceptual framework of our documentary audiovisual narrative, alongside excerpts from interviews with participants evoking their perceptions during the live sessions.

Finally, in Chapter 4, we analyse the subjective dimension of the experiences of participants in our live cinema sessions. Using the micro-phenomenological method, we seek to understand the common structure of the experiences reported by participants. From this analysis, we investigate whether, and in what ways, the live cinema model proposed through the case study of our three performances enables diasporic artists' agency, and whether this model can foster a sense of belonging in participants living in post-colonial contexts. The chapter concludes with notes on the research outcomes, followed by the conclusion, bibliography, and annexes, which serve to contextualise and support the overall research process.

CHAPTER 2

Understanding Live Cinema: Origins and Innovations

In this chapter, we review a diverse body of scholarly work related to the notion of liveness in the performance arts, experimental approaches to documentary film narratives, and the political dimensions of participatory arts. Our selection of works is curated through the lens of the broader political context of postcolonial studies, with particular emphasis on migration and diaspora cultures.

So, what do we mean when we use the term contemporary ‘live cinema’? For a start, it derives from an intersection of film, theatre and performing arts. Carolina Martínez-López and Ramon Girona note how the evolving interplay between theatre and film roots on early cinema. In their words: “Contrary to common assumptions, this dialogue is not a new phenomenon, but one that can be traced back to the very origins of cinema, when the real world of the stage and the magical world of film began to collide” (Martínez-López and Girona 2023, p. 33, own translation).

The authors describe the significant advancements that occurred in the 1920s with Soviet and Weimar theatre experiments, highlighting the pioneering artworks of Erwin Piscator, who used film to enhance theatrical experiences aligned with socio-political ideologies (2023, p. 33). They explain that this period’s avant-garde movements viewed theatre as a medium for ideological dissemination and technical innovation, as seen in Walter Gropius’ design for Piscator’s Total Theatre (p. 34).

At its origin, Erwin Piscator’s pioneering work in 20th-century theatre, best known for his contributions to epic theatre, introduced innovative techniques and approaches to integrating multimedia into theatrical performances. In the foreword to *Teatro político* (Piscator, 1968), Wolfgang Drews writes:

Documentary epic theatre transforms into a theatre of confession. A unique form within the cherished multiplicity that reflects the richness of life insists on its right to exist. A partisan stage? A stage for humanity. Always, once more, from the beginning: a “perverse optimist” who is not frightened by any experience, a passionate moralist who fights—with all the tools of the present age—for a responsible dramaturgy. The dreams of his youth. He never disdained them. But did the vibrant illusions withstand the persistent reality? (p. 13, own translation)

Piscator’s innovations have had a lasting influence on live cinema practice, including the integration of multiple media, political and social engagement, and technological experimentation. He employs the expression “breaking the fourth wall” in *Das Politische Theater* (*Political Theatre*) to explain how this theatre departs from the logic of material accumulation sustained by the excessive use of devices, technical effects, and stage tricks. According to the author: “on the contrary, all of them are mere means and ends to ensure that

the spectator is brought into the midst of the scenic event, belongs spatially to the stage, with nothing hidden from them behind the curtain” (Piscator, 1968, pp. 151–152, own translation).

Martínez-López and Girona analyse how these early experiments influenced modern theatre by creating immersive experiences through multimedia, thus continuing a legacy that merges cinematic and theatrical elements across both mainstream and experimental productions. They note that these practices are evident not only in avant-garde works but also within established institutional theatre. Furthermore, they observe the endurance of such exchange today, through experimental approaches that incorporate the technological advancements and artistic techniques characteristic of each period.

2.1. The Idea of Liveness in Audiovisual Art and the Concept of Live Cinema

In this section we explore the connections between theatre and live cinema performance in the context of our media-driven culture, as discussed by Philip Auslander (1999/2023) in *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. Auslander’s concept of liveness is defined through a relational, phenomenological approach of this experience rather than a fixed ontological state. We draw upon Matthew Reason and Anja Mølle Lindelof’s discussion of Auslander’s claim that our understanding of live performance is heavily shaped by mediatization and continues to evolve throughout constant technological advancements. They argue that making essentialist judgments based on a presumed inherent quality of liveness is no longer tenable (Reason & Lindelof, 2017, p. 4). In their words:

The simple declaration of essentialism goes against our lived experiences, which include charged, human and ever so very real encounters with human presence and liveness through digital, screen, recordings and other media. The focus, therefore, needs to shift away from locating liveness within performance *a priori* (within an ontology of liveness) and instead to careful consideration of the particular and contingent relationships between performance and audience. Away from liveness and towards experiencing live (2017, p. 5)

Auslander (1999/2023) also discusses the value of live performance in our contemporary mediatized culture. He criticises discussions that oppose live performances and mediated experiences, calling our attention to how liveness can be overestimated or even mystified by an ontological approach. Instead, he claims that a phenomenological understanding of our perception of liveness entails a symbiotic relation between live performance and media. To illustrate his claim, he cites Steve Wurtzler on how we only make sense of liveness through a relational condition: “the notion of the live is premised on the

absence of recording and the defining fact of the recorded is the absence of the live” (Wurtzler, 1992, p. 89, as cited in Auslander, 1999/2023, p. 2).

From this perspective, Auslander challenges the definition of digital liveness that dismisses technological determinism in favor of a constructivist view—where technological entities are considered live only because we perceive them that way. He argues that this approach falls short and overlooks the complexity of the issue, as it simply transfers the power dynamic from technology to the spectator—what he calls a shift “from technological determinism to spectatorial determinism, so to speak” (2012, p. 10).

In his view, digital liveness emerges from a dynamic interplay between the technological affordances of the medium and the spectator’s willingness to engage with its performative claims of immediacy and authenticity. This perspective reframes liveness as a phenomenological and co-constituted experience, understanding it not as an inherent property (ontological), but as shaped through the relational dynamics between media and audience perception. In his words:

The benefit of a phenomenological perspective is that it enables us to understand that digital liveness is neither caused by intrinsic properties of virtual entities nor simply constructed by their audiences. Rather, digital liveness emerges as a specific relation between self and other, a particular way of “being involved with something.” The experience of liveness results from our conscious act of grasping virtual entities as live in response to the claims they make on us. (2012, p. 10)

Moving beyond the notion of liveness in audio-visual art, we explore the historical origins and innovations that have contributed to forming a conceptual framework for live cinema. The roots of live cinema can be traced to a range of artistic movements and innovations throughout the 20th century. Its history is inextricably related to early visual music which often employs abstract animation and light shows to create a multisensory experience.

Cindy Keefer notes that from as early as the 1730s, beginning with the Jesuit priest Father Castel, artists have explored what is known as *color music*. This involved the invention of color organs, “machines of their own invention using moving colored lights to compose and perform visual compositions. Some were designed to perform colors silently, others were performed with music” (Keefer, 2015, p. 85). According to Keefer, it laid the groundwork for contemporary VJs, live cinema artists, and ambient video creators, as many video and light artists trace their influences back to this early practice, including the Danish-American Thomas Wilfred, who showcased his Clavilux color organ in concert halls during the 1920s and 1930 (2015, p. 85).

She also emphasises the influence of pioneering artists in the field of visual music

films on contemporary abstract media artists, specifically noting the impact of the filmmaker Oskar Fischinger on artists such as Len Lye, Norman McLaren, Jordan Belson, James Whitney, Mary Ellen Bute, Jules Engel, and Harry Smith (Keefer, 2015, p. 81).

In tracing the roots of live cinema, the groundbreaking work of avant-garde filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage and Stan VanDerBeek is particularly noteworthy. Merleau-Ponty (1983) emphasises the importance of Brakhage's ideas, highlighting *Metaphors on Vision* as presenting a "synthesis of its convictions regarding the experience of vision and the role of cinema in the pursuit of a complete relearning of what this experience is, and what it might signify in terms of opening up to a new relationship with nature, the body, and culture" (p. 182, own translation).

Building on this foundation, the evolution of live cinema also encompasses the integration of video art into performance practices, notably by Fluxus artists, alongside emergent theoretical frameworks such as Gene Youngblood's concept of *expanded cinema* (1970). A. L. Rees distinguishes three aspects in this concept:

The first was to melt down all art forms, including film, into multimedia and live-action events. The second was to explore electronic technologies and the coming of cyberspace, as heralded by Marshall McLuhan. The third was to break down the barrier between artist and audience through new kinds of participation. Each of these challenged existing notions of cinema as a commercialised regime of passive consumption and entertainment. Among the many modes of expanded cinema there were of course differences. (2011, p. 13)

Youngblood highlights how artists like VanDerBeek began to explore film beyond traditional settings by incorporating multiple screens for immersive projections and pioneering new forms of interactive cinematic experience.³⁰ During the 1960s and 1970s, Fluxus artists such as Nam June Paik incorporated film and performance into their works, foregrounding a more active role for the audience. According to John G. Hanhardt (2015), "this creates an active dialectic between artist and process and viewer, a profound cognitive relationship which allows an abstraction unique to the medium" (p. 25). Fluxus artists' performances, referred to as *happenings* were engaged with improvisation and participation, as Hanhardt's observes: "it is a work predicated on chance, the unexpected occurrences that create a unique artwork" (2015, p. 25).

³⁰ The author highlights: "In real-time multiple-projection, cinema becomes a performing art: the phenomenon of image-projection itself becomes the 'subject' of the performance, and in a very real sense the medium is the message. But multiple-projection lumia art is more significant as a paradigm for an entirely different kind of audio-visual experience, a tribal language that expresses not ideas but a collective group consciousness. It's obviously the beginning of what Stan VanDerBeek proposed in the 'image library, newsreel of dreams, culture intercom'." (Youngblood, 1970, p. 387)

According to Craig Thompson, the artist Dick Higgins proposed the term *intermedia* to encompass the hybridity of Fluxus artworks. As Thompson explains, Higgins' concept attempted to capture how these artistic practices defied fixed boundaries, occupying spaces between established artistic categories (2011, p. 66). In the realm of video art, pioneering artists like Nam June Paik embraced this same spirit of 'intermediality' by incorporating video technology into live performances and installations. This period marked a fusion of television, video, and performance art, expanding the possibilities for how moving images could be created and experienced (Hanhardt, 2015, p. 24).

Another important work from this period is *Movie-Drome* by Stan VanDerBeek (1964-65), which was designed to immerse the viewer while using multiple projections. This approach emphasised the spatial and experiential elements of the filmic experience, aligning with the concept of expanded cinema by Youngblood (1970), as illustrated in the Figure 7. In his manifesto *Culture: Intercom and Expanded Cinema*, VanDerBeek (1966/2011) wrote:

I should like to share with you a vision I have had concerning motion pictures. This vision concerns the immediate use of motion pictures—or expanded cinema—as a tool for world communication, and opens the future of what I like to call “Ethos-Cinema.” Motion pictures may be the most important means for world communication. At this moment, motion pictures are the art form of our time. We are on the verge of a new world, new technology, new art—when artists shall deal with the world as a work of art; when we shall make motion pictures into an emotional experience too, one that shall move art and life closer together. All this is about to happen, and it is not a second too soon. (p. 81)



Figure 8. *Movie-Drome* at Design-In, VanDerBeek, 1967. Photo by Bob Hanson. Source: MoMa Magazine.³¹

An ‘intermedial’ approach by Dick Higgins (1966), as discussed in Thompson’s reflections (2011), not only marked Fluxus artistic practices, but continues to influence contemporary audiovisual art—especially in practices that resist fixed categories and encourage new relationships between artist, audience, and medium. These artworks integrated multimedia techniques, setting the stage for future innovations in live cinema.

Thompson also highlights Hannah Higgins frame of *Fluxus* art practices as an open-ended, participatory, and non-hierarchical experiences. He observes her reflections, particularly in *Fluxus Experience* (2002), where she discusses Fluxus not only as an aesthetic movement but also as a mode of encounters based on sharing experiences, relationality, and presence over objecthood and representation. This approach reflects Fluxus’ rejection of totalising meaning or closed form. Instead, it embraces indeterminacy through human interaction. In this sense, he also pins down the ethical dimension of *Totality and Infinity* (1961), by Emmanuel Levinas, emphasising that “Levinas suggests that the work of art can also serve as a site of alterity; it can

³¹ VanDerBeek in *Movie-Drome* at Design-In, New York, 1967. Photo by Bob Hanson. From *The Movie-Drome Dreams of Stan VanDerBeek*, by A. Barliant, 2023, *MoMA Magazine*. <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/845>.

derail intentionality” (2011, p. 19)

Furthermore, *Fluxus* movement paved the way for new forms of performance art, and artists like VALIE EXPORT³², Marina Abramović, and Laurie Anderson absorbed and expanded these ideas in their artistic performances. In *Tapp und Tast Kino* (1968), VALIE EXPORT’s performance expands the observer’s visual experience to include tactile interaction with the audience, activating her physical presence as a stimulus for the audience to produce an embodied perception of her artwork. In doing so, EXPORT challenges normative and objective uses of visual media, proposing instead a more subjective engagement through the audience’s sensorial experience and interpretation of reality, as demonstrated in Figure 9, a photograph of EXPORT’s performing *Tapp und Tast Kino* (1968) in the streets of Vienna.



Figure 9. VALIE EXPORT, *Tapp und Tastkino*, 1968, in Vienna’s streets performance.³³

Both Marina Abramović and Laurie Anderson have innovatively integrated technology into their performance art, though with notably different intentions and aesthetics.

³² VALIE EXPORT is written in all caps as the artist intentionally styled her name as a conceptual statement. Inspired by *Smart Export* cigarettes, the name functions like a brand, symbolising how she was exporting herself as a work of art. As Delpoux notes, EXPORT “demanded that it should always be written in capital letters”, marking a shift from pseudonym to brand (Delpoux, 2020, p. 234).

³³Image from "VALIE EXPORT: Image and Body Space," by R.-A. Gush, 2017, *AWARE – Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions*. <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/magazine/valie-export-image-espace-corps/>.

Abramović, renowned for emphasising physical endurance and direct, unmediated human connection—as shown in the retrospective *The Artist Is Present* (2010)—has more recently embraced technology to explore presence in new dimensions. In *The Life* (2019), she utilised augmented reality to project a lifelike hologram of herself, enabling viewers to engage with her virtual presence via specialised headsets. This marked a significant change in her path, given her traditionally corporeal work: *The Life* challenges the notions of physicality, presence, and the artist's role in live performance.³⁴

Laurie Anderson, in contrast, has long embraced new technologies, subverting their predominant use by reinventing and exploring their unexpected artistic possibilities. While Abramović uses technology to interrogate the role of human presence, vulnerability and connection, Anderson blends video, synthesised sound, and electronic instruments into interactive projections that challenge the use of media by dominant narratives, questioning how meaning is constructed and disseminated in contemporary culture.³⁵

Fernando Gonçalves (2005) points out that Anderson's works exemplify how media and technology can act as forces of singularisation, helping to break away, as much as possible, from the standardising logic imposed by capital and its modelling mechanism: “What matters to Anderson is to narrate, create, transform, to imprint other functions onto technology and mediation, to traverse them with a desire that is not about representing or fitting in, but about experimenting, inventing, and turning them into tools for creation” (p. 196, own translation).

In *Chalkroom* (2017), Anderson utilises virtual reality to navigate narrative environments, providing audiences with a unique sensory and spatial engagement. In this manner, both artists incorporate technology as an aesthetic and conceptual tool. While using digital technology as an expressive medium, their applications reflect distinct artistic sensibilities—one grounded in the corporeal dimension of human presence, the other in experimental approaches to mediation and narrative—yet both ultimately interrogate the boundaries of presence and mediation.

³⁴ Richards (2010) notes that, although Abramović claims to undertake no preparation—describing her approach as doing ‘nothing’—this ‘nothing’ in fact represents a highly specific mental state. In the three days preceding a performance, she experiences agitation, nervousness, and dizziness, with her ability to communicate significantly compromised. Yet once the public enters the space, she enters what she terms a ‘performance state’—an altered state of consciousness in which her nervousness dissipates and she inhabits the present moment fully. Richards observes that “the discipline and exactitude of her practice is something that comes from the experience of performance rather than from anything preconceived” (p. 76). He further emphasises that Abramović's work emerges from “the decision to make the work and the commitment that this necessarily implies... as are intention, willpower, presence and a willingness to see the process of the performance as another learning experience” (p. 76). This understanding relates closely to interviewees' descriptions of their live cinema experiences and to our analysis in the following chapters of how these experiences align with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, introduced in 1990 and further elaborated in his subsequent works, defining flow as a state of optimal experience.

³⁵ For more on these artists' approaches, see Anderson's interview with Abramović. Anderson, L. (2003, July 1). *Marina Abramović* [Interview]. *BOMB Magazine*. <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/marina-abramovic/>

Building on the established dialogue between theatre, performance, and cinematic arts, we also analyse contemporary expressions that use this blend to advance social and political agendas through the collaborative project *At Home in Gaza and London* by Station House Opera. In 2016, they initiated workshops with artists in Gaza and the UK to develop a performance in which participants appear together via live streaming, sharing domestic and public spaces across borders. The project culminated in 2018 with simultaneous performances linking El Wedad Theatre in Gaza, Battersea Arts Centre in London, and the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival.³⁶



Figure 10. Live-streamed theatre performance between London and Gaza by Station House Opera. Photo by Rob Harris. Source: The Guardian (Harris, 2018).³⁷

The creative use of non-diegetic, real-time audiovisual manipulation finds early resonance in the pioneering work of Merrill Aldighieri. As noted by Ana Perfeito and Bruno M. Silva (2019, p. 538), in her documentary *The V.J. Diaries*, Aldighieri recounts her first performance at the iconic New York nightclub Hunnah, where she projected experimental films and live footage alongside the music, transforming the screen into a dynamic, improvisational extension of the DJ set. The authors explain that she utilised analogue U-matic tape players and live camera feeds to blend archival footage with original material. In a 1980s interview

³⁶ For further details, see Harris, R. (2018, June 13). *At home in London and Gaza – live-streamed theatre*. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jun/13/at-home-in-london-and-gaza-live-streamed-theatre-station-house-opera>

³⁷ Harris, R. (2018, June 13). *At home in London and Gaza – live-streamed theatre*. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jun/13/at-home-in-london-and-gaza-live-streamed-theatre-station-house-opera>

with MTV, she introduced herself as a ‘VJ’—a term that would later become widely associated with live visual performance (Perfeito & Silva, 2019, p. 538). Perfeito and Silva remark that while the analogue foundations of Aldighieri’s practice have since evolved into digital interfaces, the core method of layering live and pre-recorded visuals remains fundamental to contemporary live cinema.

They also emphasise the conceptual distinctions between live cinema and VJing (p. 539), drawing attention to Mia Makela’s notion, articulated as follows:

Live cinema describes work which is in essence artistic, to differentiate from VJing, which can resemble visual DJing. DJs don’t produce their own material, they mix music, the same way as VJs can mix already existing material. (...) The act of mixing, remixing and selecting becomes the work of a VJ. Live cinema creators’ goals appear to be more personal and artistic than those of VJs, and their work tends to be presented in different context[s], like museum[s] or theatre[s], and often to an audience similar to that of cinema (...) as in clubs the public is not there mainly to see the visuals but to enjoy various sensorial inputs simultaneously (2006, as cited in Perfeito & Silva, 2019, p. 539).

On the history of live cinema, Steve Gibson and Stefan Arisona (2023) observe: “Live cinema came out of the Live Visuals revolution of the 1990s and was led in the early 2000s culture by filmmakers such as Peter Greenaway and Mike Figgis, as well as Live Visualists such as The Light Surgeons” (p. 300). They remark that the emphasis on sustained narrative arcs often renders live cinema productions more complex to organise than typical VJ performances, which tend to rely on shorter, frequently abstract clips (p. 302). According to the authors:

Live cinema performances therefore require more careful planning and less automatic processing of visual material in response to incoming audio data. How material is assembled for performance and what strategies are used to balance improvisational and orchestrated elements are key aspects to consider in relation to live cinema practice (p. 302).

Among contemporary examples, the authors highlight *Supereverything* (2011) by The Light Surgeons—a live audiovisual performance commissioned by the British Council and filmed across Peninsular Malaysia—which is particularly relevant to our work. The project “explores the relationship between identity, ritual and place in relation to Malaysia’s past, present and future. Revealing juxtapositions between tradition and modernity, it seeks to discover who we are and how our complex identities are connected”³⁸

Developed by Christopher Thomas Allen, with Allen and Tim Cowie as lead artists in

³⁸ For more on *SuperEverything* live cinema, see <https://thelightsurgeons.com/what-is-supereverything/>

collaboration with a group of Malaysian artists, this cross-disciplinary performing arts project was created using footage filmed across Malaysia over the course of a year. The resulting material forms ‘quasi-documentary’ narratives about the country’s diverse cultures, reassembled in real time during performances and accompanied by live music from a combined ensemble of Western and Malay musicians (Gibson & Arisona, 2023, p. 302).

We were also inspired by other live cinema projects that merge documentary, music, and real-time editing in distinct ways, such as Vincent Moon’s *Petites Planètes* and Sam Green’s *A Thousand Thoughts*. In Moon’s performances, he projects pre-recorded documentary films while performing live sound on stage. The interactions between live performers and the audience during these performances are documented and provide us with strategies that we have adapted within our real-time editing practice in the *Contact Zone* sessions.

Moon’s work offers a compelling example of how live cinema can serve as a filmic site-specific practice that involves co-presence. Each performance is a unique event shaped by the specific location, audience, and local artists.³⁹ Rooted in ethnographic research and spiritual traditions across different cultures, *Petites Planètes* documents ancestral music and oral storytelling from around the world, transforming them into ritualistic cinematic experiences. Rather than presenting finished films, he treats each screening as a performative act, blurring the lines between cinema, concert, and ceremony through an immersive experience connecting performing artists with audiences, and transforming documentation into a participatory ritual.⁴⁰

According to Matheus Araújo de Siqueira (2020), Moon’s work in Brazil illustrates a form of ‘aural intermediality’ that places sound and its sensorial impact at the center of the narrative experience. By intentionally withholding background information and adopting a spontaneous, unstructured method of recording, Moon centers listening as the primary mode of engagement with reality. From his earlier documentary film *Saravah*, in which editing relies on pre-edited documentary framing, Moon’s practice evolves in *Petites Planètes* toward improvised audiovisual compositions assembled in real time.

Another contemporary practice which is relevant to our study is Sam Green’s ‘live documentaries’⁴¹. Green combines pre-recorded visuals with improvisation, describing his process as “editing in four dimensions”⁴²—shaping not just the film, but the entire performance space. In this way, he guides the audience’s attention through the timing of his voice, images, and sound, transforming each performance into a unique, ephemeral event.

³⁹ For more of Moon's live cinema work, see <https://www.vincentmoon.com/creations/live-cinema/>

⁴⁰ For more of *Petites Planète* live cinema, see <https://petitesplanetes.earth/en/live-cinema/>

⁴¹ Green, S. (n.d.). *Sam Green*. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://samgreen.to>

⁴² Exploratorium. (2015, February 3). *Live cinema | Brent Green and Sam Green | Exploratorium* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nfZ5ag9AaA>

In *A Thousand Thoughts*⁴³, performed by Green and Joe Bini with the Kronos Quartet, live audiovisual performance and music come together to form a collective form of storytelling. During the event, Green performs live on stage, guiding the narrative with a microphone, while the Kronos Quartet plays music in real time. On screen, a mix of images, video clips, and interviews unfolds—including voices of Kronos Quartet members and other artists they have collaborated with, such as Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, Terry Riley, Tanya Tagaq, and Steve Reich. The creators refer to this format as a ‘live documentary’, blending elements of cinema, concert, and spoken word into a shared, immersive experience. They describe it as follows: “The magic of cinema combines with the energy and urgency of live performance to create incredibly rich moments that remind us of the value in the unique, the handcrafted, the ephemeral, and something that is never experienced the same way twice.”⁴⁴

2.2. Perceiving Liveness: From Physical Presence to Digital Mediation

In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic resulted in widespread lockdowns that profoundly altered our experience of ‘liveness’. During that time, as a filmmaker, I was involved in a documentary project with female artists who organised cultural events showcasing artistic performances by women in Fortaleza, my hometown in Brazil. Confronted with sudden lockdown restrictions, I was faced with the challenge of adapting our documentary process by gathering digital archives, holding virtual meetings, and recording online interviews with these artists. In our editing process, I integrated pre-pandemic audiovisual archives documenting our lived experiences during the collective’s cultural events, including group discussions, artists’ live performances, and artistic workshops that took place during those events. This transition, from filming the collective’s physical encounters to recording virtual interviews, sparked my curiosity and led me to explore: What makes filming live events in co-presence feel more meaningful?

The concept of presence has been extensively explored across various disciplines. A comprehensive collection of definitions is systematised by Matthew Lombard and Matthew T. Jones in their chapter “Defining Presence”, published in *Immersed in Media: Telepresence Theory, Measurement, and Technology* (Lombard et al., 2015). The authors present an interactive table that categorises presence according to a set of nuanced forms: presence without technology, presence that may or may not involve technology, and technologically mediated

⁴³ See Kronos Quartet. (n.d.). *A Thousand Thoughts draws from all latitudes to portray a comprehensive chromatic spectrum of world music* [About]. <https://kronosquartet.org/recordings/detail/1534/>

⁴⁴ Kronos Quartet. (n.d.). *A Thousand Thoughts draws from all latitudes to portray a comprehensive chromatic spectrum of world music* [About]. <https://kronosquartet.org/recordings/detail/1534/>

telepresence.⁴⁵

The first category refers to Zhao's definition of *corporeal copresence* as "the most primitive mode of human togetherness" (2003, p. 447, as cited in Lombard et al., 2015) involving face-to-face or body-to-body interaction.⁴⁶ This definition underscores the foundational quality of unmediated presence in shaping human connection. The second category refers to a more flexible definition, which the authors relate to Heeter's description of *presence* as "reacting to the external world or what seems like the external world, as it happens" (1992, p. 343, as cited in Lombard et al., 2015). This definition focuses on the perceptual immediacy of experience, whether mediated or not.

Finally, the third category is based on the notion of *telepresence* defined by Minsky (1980), which involves the use of technology to simulate embodied action and perception at a distance, such as mechanical hands that replicate the user's movements and provide sensory feedback, enabling the performance of tasks in remote locations. The authors characterise it as a mistaken perception of technology, according to which "future instruments will feel and work so much like our own hands that we won't notice any significant difference" (Minsky, 1980, as cited in Lombard et al, 2015, p. 2).

Lombard and Jones define first-order mediation as the biological body serving as the fundamental interface for perception and experience, stating that "there is no such thing as experience that is not mediated by at least these mechanisms" (2015, p. 22). Second-order mediation involves experiences mediated not only by biology but also by human technology. When technology's role is unnoticed, they refer to "second order mediation perceived as first order mediation" (p.22). These understandings lead Lombard and Jones to define 'presence' as the "perceptual illusion of non-mediation", where mediated environments are experienced as real. This understanding is akin to Paul Dourish's notion of embodiment, which he uses to describe the dominant paradigm in media design (2001/2004). While both perspectives are rooted in phenomenology, Dourish's concept of 'embodied interaction', centers on how meaning emerges through technological and social practices in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). His notion of embodiment emphasises that interaction with technology is fundamentally rooted in real-world social practices and contexts. Rather than seeing users as abstract information processors, he emphasises the situated, physical, and social nature of interaction.

According to the author, meaning arises not just from what is on the screen, but from

⁴⁵ See Lombard, M., & Jones, M. T. (2015). *Defining presence*. In M. Lombard, F. Biocca, W. A. IJsselsteijn, J. Freeman, & R. Schaevitz (Eds.), *Immersed in media: Telepresence theory, measurement and technology* (pp. 13–34). Springer. Supplementary material available at <https://matthewlombard.com/presence-definitions/>

⁴⁶ See Lombard, M., & Jones, M. T. (2015). *Defining presence*. In M. Lombard, F. Biocca, W. A. IJsselsteijn, J. Freeman, & R. Schaevitz (Eds.), *Immersed in media: Telepresence theory, measurement and technology* (pp. 13–34). Springer. Supplementary material available at <https://matthewlombard.com/presence-definitions/>

how people engage with systems through their bodies, movements, and context. This perspective shifts media design toward supporting experiential, dynamic, and context-aware interactions, making it especially relevant for live and performative environments (2001/2004). Our study adopts the notion of ‘embodiment’ as understood in micro-phenomenology, emphasising first-person evocations of lived experience through the experiential body. This approach is rooted in Varela, Thompson, and Rosch’s (1991/2016) enactive framework, which positions cognition not as isolated within the brain but as emerging through one’s bodily engagement with the world. The central idea of *The Embodied Mind* is that cognition is not merely a representational process located in the brain, but is fundamentally embodied, situated, and enacted through the lived experience of the body.

Drawing on phenomenology approach by Merleau-Ponty, and Buddhist philosophy, the authors argue that mind, body, and environment are inseparable in the process of meaning-making. As Thompson explains in the revised edition, the enactive approach holds that “cognitive processes belong to the relational domain of the living body coupled to its environment” and that “even abstract cognitive processes are grounded on the body’s sensorimotor systems” (1991/2016, p. xxv). This perspective challenges the traditional mind-body dualism of Western cognitive science by foregrounding the body’s sensorimotor engagement with the world as constitutive of cognition itself.

In our study, we adopt an understanding of presence related to the first and second categories. We refer to the participants’ perception of their physical existence within a shared spatial and temporal experience, mediated by technology. The first category is important because our study focus primarily on our biological body as the primary interface through which we perceive and interact with the external world. According to Lombard and Jones:

Humans rarely consider the fact that all of our experiences of the outside world are mediated by our biology. Although it nearly always seems like it, we do not interact directly with our environment—we perceive it through our perceptual apparatus, including our sense organs and central nervous system, notably the brain (2015, p. 22).

The second category is equally important, as in our performances the experiences are mediated not only by biological processes but also by cinematic apparatuses, screens, and digital tools that extend and transform our perception. In later chapters of this thesis, we explore in greater depth how real-time camera input may influence participants’ self-awareness and sense of presence during a live cinema experience.

To understand if and how adding liveness through digital technology can facilitate a

sense of agency and belonging for diasporic artists participating in this study, it is useful to return to Philip Auslander's (2012) discussion of liveness, which was introduced in the previous section. Auslander analyses this concept from a historical perspective, considering the technological development of mediated performances and its impact on audience engagement. He explores the relationship between live performances and emerging media, comparing it to the early competition between theatre and television. He states: "Historically, television usurped the theatre's cultural position and audience, and the general tendency of live performance to become more and more like mediatized performance through the incorporation of technology is a competitive strategy" (p. 1).

His perspective underscores the evolving nature of liveness as shaped by media technologies. Auslander (2012) notes that with the advent of broadcast technologies, the notion of liveness shifted to accommodate temporal co-presence without spatial co-presence, allowing audiences to witness performances in real time despite being physically distant (p. 5). The author adopts a phenomenological perspective to discuss the perception of liveness, delving into what constitutes a performance as live in the age of digital reproduction and mass media. By doing so, he challenges traditional understandings of liveness, proposing that while remote digitally mediated performances may be regarded as live, they constitute a distinct experience of liveness from performances characterised by the physical and temporal co-presence of performers and audience.

These questions about temporal and spatial co-presence are particularly relevant to live cinema, which intersects with cinema's broader relationship to time and reality. Ian Aitken examines the work of Bazin, an influential film critic and theorist who started to write about movies in 1943. According to him, Bazin viewed film as a medium uniquely capable of preserving temporal duration and capturing the flow of the present as it becomes the past, which he described as "change mummified" (Aitken, 2013, p. 2). Aitken suggests that this cinematic capacity offers a more enduring and holistic experience of reality than our everyday perception, which is marked by fragmentation and ephemerality. In this sense, he argues that cinema compensates for the impermanence of our lived experience, providing a form of permanence that fulfils an existential need. He also mentions Bazin's notion that this compensation, at the core of documentary cinema, should remain as faithful as possible to the "physiology of existence", that is, to the perceptual experience of reality itself (Bazin, 1967, as cited in Aitken, 2013, pp. 2–3).

We can say that Aitken's interpretation of André Bazin's concept of cinema is a response to a fundamental human existential desire: the longing for totality.

Fernão Pessoa Ramos (2016) emphasises on how film presentation, particularly the time-bounded nature of a movie session, functions as a central mechanism through which cinema establishes its specificity as a medium. Thus, the temporal dimension of a film exhibition, much like the time-bounded immediacy in a live cinema performance, becomes a crucial factor in shaping the spectator's experience. In his words: "The screening, as a way of presenting the film, is what is most unique to cinema. It is what sets it apart among the various arts and technologies (...) The film's duration dictates a way of appreciation that must match our ability to physically endure its passage" (Ramos, 2016, p. 42, own translation).

The time-limited experience of live audiovisual performances is also emphasised in Leishman's definition of contemporary Live Visual Performances (LVP) as a "mediated experience fostered by the intermedial space of merged sound and image, shared during a live, specific, time-bound performance that will eventually come to an end" (Leishman, 2022, p. 267). This self-awareness of experiencing an authentic and unique live cinema performance can be related to the sensation of "being involved with something", as discussed by Auslander (2012) when he approaches liveness from a phenomenological point of view, distinguishing our perception of live performances from that of recorded ones.

In our study, we further investigate how this sensation relates to the notion of *aura*, as first discussed by Walter Benjamin, who argued that "reproducible art, such as photography and film, lacks the aura evident in earlier non-reproducible art forms such as painting and sculpture" (Benjamin, 1968, as cited in Goodfellow, 2023, p. 177). Countering this premise, Goodfellow (2023) proposes that media art can generate aura through live performances, suggesting that "the presence of the performer and audience generates the aura" (p. 177), even in algorithmically generated Live Visual performances, where the dialogical relationship between audience and machine remains constitutive of the auratic experience. This performative dimension raises critical questions regarding the ontological status of live visual artworks—whether aura resides in the ephemeral performance itself or in the underlying code and technological substrates, and, crucially, whether this aura remains perceptible to the audience (Goodfellow, 2023, pp. 177–179).

The auratic dimension of our live cinema sessions will be further explored in this study, as it was notably evoked by Márcia Raquel Lima, who performed live painting during our session in Luanda. Her involvement across multiple phases—as an interviewed member of Zelu in our audiovisual material, and her subsequent micro-phenomenological interview examining her experience as a performer—provides empirical grounding for our theoretical inquiry into the auratic potential of live cinema.

2.3 Experimental Approaches in Documentary Cinema

In this section we explore the concept of experimental documentary filmmaking, beginning with the historical origins of cinema within its documentary background. According to Aitken (2013), at the end of the nineteenth century there is a focus on realism remarked through the everyday scenes of the Lumière brothers' earliest films⁴⁷ as well as other works from that period. He regards documentary filmmaking as a genre that shares common elements with earlier photography practices aimed at documenting human existence, society, and natural life. In his words: "Documentary film is thus, always was, and ever will be, intrinsically related to issues of realism and realistic representation, and this affiliation has certainly influenced the development of the medium up to the present day" (p. 1).

The author notes a shared principle between the aesthetics of early photography, which focused on ordinary life, and the depiction of observed events in documentary films. Furthermore, Aitken points out that the filming of fleeting life happenings in documentary cinema preserved photography's representational achievement in capturing and perpetuating ephemeral moments of daily life experiences.

To explore emerging categories in documentary studies, we emphasise the ongoing difficulty in defining documentaries, as elucidated by Jinhoo Kim (2022), due to their varied connections to evolving political, technological, cultural, and institutional contexts. According to the author, these shifts have profoundly influenced the development of documentary forms and themes, audience expectations, and the communicative intentions of both individuals and institutions (pp. 11-12). He comments on Bill Nichols' notion that each mode of documentary practice "may arise partly as a response to perceived limitations in previous modes, partly as a response to technological possibilities, and partly as a response to a changing social context" (Nichols, 2001, as cited in Kim, 2022, p. 12). This approach aligns with the evolving technological and social contexts that shape the ongoing development of this study.

In our live cinema performances, we explore distinct modes of documentary filmmaking. Initially, we developed the participatory mode based on Bill Nichols' categorisation of documentary films, wherein he identifies six modes: poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative (2010, p. 31). Nichols argues that the participatory mode of documentary filmmaking "emphasises the interaction between the filmmaker and subject. Filming takes place through interviews or other forms of even more

⁴⁷Auguste and Louis Lumière were pioneering French filmmakers, widely regarded as the inventors of the Cinématographe and among the first to publicly screen motion pictures in 1895, marking the beginning of cinema as a mass medium (Abel, 2005, p. 570)

direct involvement, from conversations to provocations. It often incorporates archival footage to examine historical issues” (p. 31).

While we acknowledge that some of Nichols’ work may seem dated in light of recent developments in documentary theory, his foundational contributions remain integral to the study of documentary filmmaking. His categorisation of documentary modes, particularly the participatory mode, continues to provide valuable insights into the interaction between filmmakers and subjects, as well as the ethical and agency-related dynamics inherent in these relationships.

In the debate surrounding the early dualistic categorisation of cinema, Arlindo Machado (2010) notes that, prior to the 1960s, “films were generally classified as ‘documentaries’ or ‘fictions’, with limited flexibility to move beyond this reductive division” (p. 25, own translation). He further argues that “an emerging production, particularly outside commercial spheres, increasingly resisted this outdated classification” (p. 25, own translation). In our investigation, we expanded our artistic practice into an experimental mode, as discussed by Machado (2010). The author elucidates the historical aspect of this mode by tracing its early adoption in American underground cinema, which began in the late 1950s. As Machado states: “the term replaced the earlier use of avant-garde in the 1920s to describe similar attempts, while in the video domain, experimental cinema was paralleled by video art, which pursued similar aesthetic goals and propositions” (2020, p. 23, own translation). He highlights Stan Brakhage's experimental filmmaking as a significant reference to an experimental turn in cinema. In his words:

When Stan Brakhage began producing films by attaching butterfly wings to blank film, ignoring the boundaries of the frame, it became impossible to sustain the traditional dichotomy without question. The term “experimental” was thus adopted to label this previously excluded audiovisual field. Interestingly, “experimental” could only be defined by its exclusion, by what is atypical or non-standard about it, essentially what does not fit as either documentary or fiction, placing it outside the normative models, formats, and genres of audiovisual. (2010, p. 25, own translation)

In his chapter “Anarchy of the Audiovisual”, Machado (2014) highlights how Gene Youngblood (1970) addressed transformations in film production through the concept of expanded cinema, encompassing various forms of artistic expressions, blurring the boundaries of cinema, theatre, painting, and music, through articulation with emerging digital technologies.

In our study, we align with efforts to disrupt conventional modes of film production and viewing, specifically concerned with cultural representation in cinema. For this, we explore

a participatory approach to documentary filmmaking through live editing practice, examining how this format engages with experimental cinematic narrative structures, which responds to the technological conditions of our time.

Therefore, we also align with Kim's (2022) interpretation of Michael Renov's insights on how emerging technologies for self-representation—such as smartphones, live streaming, and social media—do more than simply reflect evolving modes of personal expression. According to Renov (as cited in Kim, 2022), these tools actively reshape the very structure and experience of documentary cinema. They push the medium beyond its traditional boundaries of form (i.e., linear, edited films), disrupt the conventional site of exhibition (such as cinema halls or festivals), and extend audience engagement beyond passive viewing to include creation, interaction, and participation. As Renov suggests:

(...) non-filmic technologies for self-representation do more than reflect the changes in the ways that people make sense of and express themselves: that is, they also affect the form, platform, and experience of documentary cinema so pervasively as to go beyond its 'traditional mode' (form), to blur the distinction between its traditional site and elsewhere (platform), and to embrace people's media activities other than viewing. (1999, p. 318, as cited in Kim, 2022, p. 13)

This perspective resonates with our participatory approach to live cinema, where real-time interaction between artists and audiences during a performance-based encounters similarly challenges the formal and spatial limits of documentary viewing. In the following sections of this chapter, we examine participatory practices through live editing tools used to shape our artistic research into a collective audiovisual storytelling.

2.4 Participatory Arts: Ethics and Agency in Collective Narratives

To investigate participatory media arts, our research draws on the theoretical frameworks of Boris Groys and Claire Bishop. In *Art Power*, Groys (2008b) examines how participation alters the relationship between the artist, the artwork, and the audience. He highlights the blurring of boundaries between art and life, challenging the traditional role of art as an object for passive contemplation. Groys (2016) suggests that in a world saturated with images and information, participatory art provides means to engage the audience in participatory productions, decentralising authorship and promoting transformative, meaningful experiences.

In "A genealogy of participatory art", Groys (2008a) points out practices that go

beyond producing specific socio-political objectives to sharing the production process through participation in all stages of creation. The author highlights that such practices involve mutual responsibility for the result of the work. He also addresses the political potential of relational experiences by examining how digital media can facilitate collective engagement rather than reinforce isolation. He considers the role of events and exhibitions that gather individuals physically, even when mediated through digital platforms, as opportunities to counteract the fragmented, solitary conditions often associated with contemporary socialising and spatio-temporal structures. As observed by the author:

At the same time, an exhibition utilizing the web and other digital media renders visible the material, physical side of these media—their hardware, the stuff from which they are made. All of the machinery that enters the visitor's field of vision thus destroys the illusion that everything of any importance in the digital realm only takes place onscreen. More importantly, however, other visitors will stray into the viewer's field of reference, and they will often seem more interesting than the exhibits themselves. In this way the visitor becomes one of the exhibits, for he is aware that he is being observed by the others. He is aware of his physical position in space. A computer-based installation thus prompts the viewer's conscious experience of his own body, an experience normally marginalized by solitary labour at the computer. (2018a, p. 31)

We also delve into Claire Bishop's (2012) writings, in which she emphasises the social and political facets of collective art throughout history. In *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Bishop examines how artistic practices involving audience participation often perpetuate power imbalances and exclusion, despite their declared democratic ideals. Throughout her book, Bishop (2012) highlights the tension between the aesthetic and political aspirations of participatory art. She argues that while many participatory works aim for social impact, they should also be evaluated for their aesthetic and individual desires, rather than solely for their social and political intentions. She writes:

One could extend Lacan's argument to suggest that the most urgent forms of artistic practice today stem from a necessity to rethink the connections between the individual and collective along these lines of painful pleasure – rather than conforming to a self-suppressing sense of social obligation. Instead of obeying a super-egoic injunction to make ameliorative art, the most striking, moving and memorable forms of participation are produced when artists act upon a gnawing social curiosity without the incapacitating restrictions of guilt. (p. 39)

In this sense, Bishop (2012) critiques the pursuit of 'social consensus' in participatory arts, asserting that it can often obscure underlying conflicts. She suggests that following individual desire may lead to more authentic forms of participation in the arts, as engaging

one's curiosity about reality can itself become a form of political engagement. In her words:

Setting individual *jouissance* against the application of a universal maxim, Lacan argues that it is more ethical for the subject to act in accordance with his or her (unconscious) desire than to modify his or her behaviour for the eyes of the Big Other (society, family, law, expected norms). Such a focus on individual needs does not denote a foreclosure of the social; on the contrary, individual analysis always takes place against the backdrop of society's norms and pressures (p. 39).

These authors provide complementary views on participatory art. On one hand, we consider Groys's ideas regarding the collective transformative potential of these practices, while also gaining insights from Bishop's critical questions about the aesthetic and political implications of participation. Both authors' notions of participatory arts contribute to our investigation, as we recognise the importance of addressing our engagement with participatory practices' challenges and contradictions from distinct perspectives.

Moreover, we draw on contemporary curatorial studies by Irit Rogoff to expand the debate on participatory practices. In "Looking Away: Participations in Visual Culture" (2005), Rogoff discusses participation as the experience of living a cultural moment—detached from the expectation of focusing solely on exhibited artworks and instead engaging with the unfolding events during the exhibition. She reflects:

It is precisely because we are knowledgeable about the "auratic" value invested in art through teleology and filiation (to use the Marxist and the semiotic terms of analysis), precisely because we have been through such a long and protracted phase of institutional critique of the spaces and strategies of display, that we can affect such a bold step of "looking away" from inside those discourses and those spaces. In the process, we produce for ourselves an alternative mode of taking part in culture in which we affect a creative bricolage of artworks and spaces, and modalities of attention and subjectivities, that break down the dichotomies of objects and viewers and allow for a dynamic manifestation of the lived cultural moment. (Rogoff, 2005, p. 133)

The author further discusses her ideas on unexpected events that can occur when sharing such moments and emphasises that: "exhibition spaces might indicate possibilities—rather than provide opportunities, for self-representation." (Rogoff, 2005, p. 122). In "Becoming Research: The Way We Work Now" (2009), she also addresses the shift towards new practices of knowledge production that emphasise observing one's surroundings over reviewing "inherited academic knowledge". In this manner, Rogoff highlights how what is often dismissed in our daily experiences, or, referred to as "distraction" from a predetermined object of investigation, can play a relevant role in driving one's curiosity when producing

academic research, particularly in the context of innovations in knowledge production through artistic practices.

Her approach acknowledges the interconnected nature of experiencing our contemporary cultural life and suggests that allowing ourselves to be guided by curiosity toward our environment through self-observation can lead to opening alternative ways of reflecting and engaging with the world around us. Building on these perspectives, our focus on participatory practices aims to explore a collective narration by witnessing the unfolding of events in a time-bounded cinematic experience.

In our audiovisual material presented during the live cinema sessions, we focused on diasporic artists from former Portuguese colonies living in Lisbon, deliberately setting aside non-diasporic Portuguese artists and those from Indigenous populations living in these territories. This narrowed scope allowed us to engage with artists belonging to diaspora communities connected through cultural activities in Lisbon, examining how these experiences shape their artworks.

We align with Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's writings on renewed forms of community. They emphasise that such affective connection—experienced through touch, music, and collective presence—creates a communal sentiment, an improvisational and relational space beyond individual interiority. In their words:

A feel, a sentiment with its own interiority, there on skin, soul no longer inside but there for all to hear, for all to move. Soul music is a medium of this interiority on the skin, its regret the lament for broken hapticality, its self-regulatory powers the invitation to build sentimentality together again, feeling each other again, how we party. This is our hapticality, our love. This is love for the shipped, love as the shipped. (2013, p. 98)

By engaging in participatory practices with these artists, our aim is to move beyond a third-person discourse, which often seeks to raise awareness of a subject from a single perspective—typically reflecting the filmmakers' observations and presented to an audience detached from the subject. Instead, we cultivate a collective artistic process, using live editing tools to invite the audience to engage deeply with the performance and to become aware of co-presence as participants in the shared narration of our stories.

This process unfolds during live cinema events centred on the dissenting dimension of our audiovisual material, which challenges the dominant historical narratives of colonisation promoted by Portugal's official discourse.

Although our artistic research prioritises the procedural nature and ephemerality of these encounters, we found that creating audiovisual documentation that incorporates

participants' perspectives further supports our aim of developing a participatory practice through live cinema. For this, we produced a short documentary film⁴⁸ capturing our live sessions, incorporating participants' reflections on their lived experiences as evoked through micro-phenomenological interviews with both performers and audience members.

This approach ensures participants' involvement across all phases of our artistic process—from pre-recorded documentary interviews and live session performances to audience participation and post-performance discussions—while also integrating their reflections on these experiences. In this way, we respond to critiques of agency in both filmmaking and curatorial practices, as articulated by Dovey: “I also want to contribute to undoing what Pooja Rangan (2017) calls ‘immediation’, through which (usually privileged) filmmakers believe that they can transparently give voice to (usually marginalised/subaltern) subjects” (2023, p. 6).

As adopted by Dovey (2023) in the *Screen Worlds* project⁴⁹—an initiative foregrounding ethical engagement through community screenings and open access—we aim to develop a participatory practice that addresses similar concerns. By creating a space to share a moment in time—where parallel narratives unfold alongside multidisciplinary live performances by diasporic artists from former Portuguese colonies—we seek for self-representation via participation in shared cultural experiences.

According to Jack Halberstam's observations on Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's idea of revolution “not as a masculinist surge or an armed confrontation” but as one that will come “in a form we cannot yet imagine” (2013, p. 11)—Moten and Harney's framing of “study” as thinking with others, beyond institutional demands, allows participants to inhabit “the with and for”, embracing a necessary disorientation. Halberstam also introduces the notion of the “movement of things”, a fugitivity defined by motion and a separation from settling (Halberstam, 2013, p. 11). We illustrate this concept in Figure 11, *Homeless with a Roof*, an installation by El Bango, a visual artist born in Portugal who lived as an immigrant in England and has family roots in Guinea-Bissau and Angola, documented during the Colectivo Zelu gathering in Lisbon.

⁴⁸ Gondim, N. (2025). *Contact Zone → Live cinema performances in Lisbon, Luanda and Fortaleza (2025)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/mz4pFsefRIE>

⁴⁹ For more information of *Screen Worlds: African Screen Worlds: Decolonising Film and Screen Studies*, see <https://screenworlds.org/>.

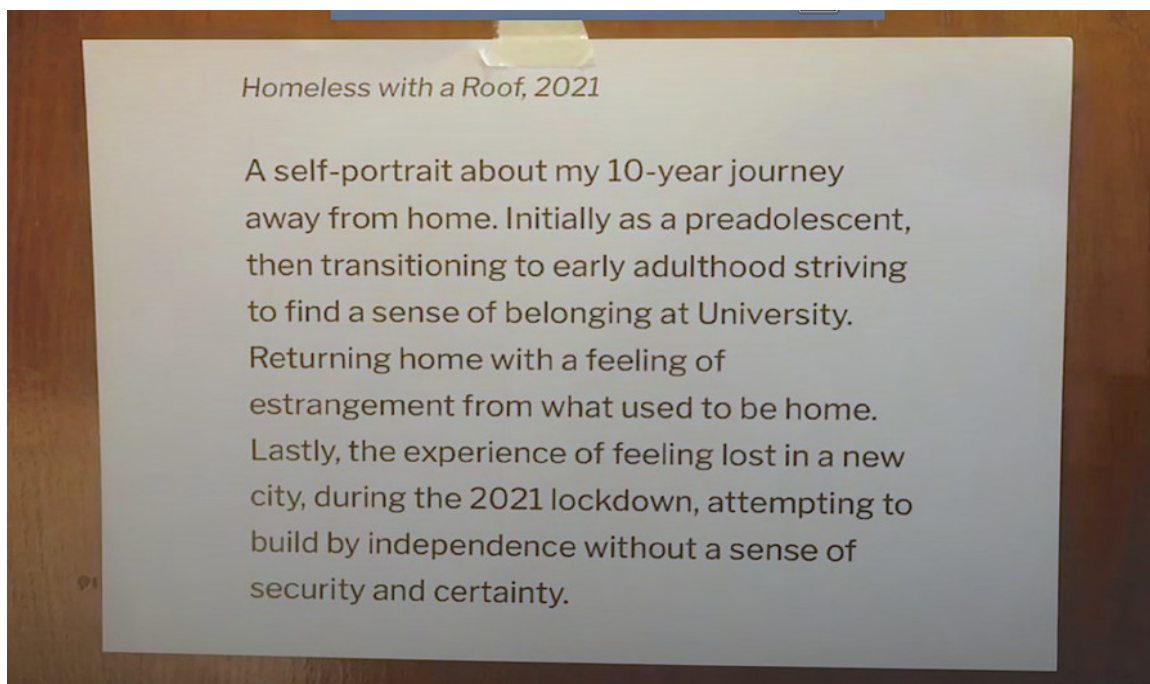


Figure 11. *Homeless with a Roof* (2021) by El Bango⁵⁰. Audiovisual research material collected at Colectivo Zelu cultural gathering, Lisbon, 2023. Photo: Natália Gondim.

As discussed by Halberstam, a central aspect of Harney and Moten’s notion of “being together in homelessness” is a lived state of dispossession. Harney and Moten explore this improvisational dimension of connection through mutual identification in a state of disorientation. In their words:

Can this being together in homelessness, this interplay of the refusal of what has been refused, this undercommon appositionality, be a place from which emerges neither self-consciousness nor knowledge of the other but an improvisation that proceeds from somewhere on the other side of an unasked question? (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 96, as cited in Halberstam, 2013, p.11)

This idea resonates with our study’s orientation towards exploring documentary beyond the representation of others and self-investigation, toward experiencing together, an act of improvisation, through which unpredicted events or questions can be raised. In this way, accessing collective tacit knowledge through improvisation might contribute to identifying intersubjective elements for constructing future narratives from shared storytelling. By performing collectively, through physical co-presence in real-time, we engage with the ethical political, and aesthetic dimensions of participatory art. In this sense, we align with what Dovey describes as a “conversational ethic and aesthetic which embraces the to-and-fro, the call-and-response, of ongoing dialogue and collaboration and care—rather than isolated encounters or

⁵⁰ See more about the artist at: <https://www.instagram.com/elbango98ateliers/>.

one-off interviews” (2023, p. 6). She further claims this as a “crucial methodology when it comes to the ethics of research in relation to both creativity and criticism” (2023, p. 6).

In the following section, we examine the practices of live editing and the role of chance as a central element in the improvisational dimension of our performances. We also present our reflections on the participatory dimension of *Contact Zone*.

2.5. Live Editing as Participatory Practice

As noted in the previous section, our study engages with the political dimensions of participatory art by drawing on the critical writings of Claire Bishop (2012), who challenges the often overly optimistic assumptions regarding the political efficacy and social impact of participatory practices. She suggests that, rather than promoting genuine democratic engagement, participatory art can sometimes offer mere representations of participation, which may distract from meaningful systemic issues. In response, we follow her call for a critical examination of how participatory art can fall short of its emancipatory claims, while instead focusing on the aesthetic and political assessment of these practices.

Similarly, we also engage with Antoni Roig Telo (2013) critiques on the participatory claims made by new media art, questioning the extent to which such practices genuinely empower audiences or foster meaningful engagement. In his words:

These practices point to a cultural environment that blurs the traditional divide between producers and consumers. Within it, appropriation, re-elaboration, and play abound; cultural experiences are increasingly socialized; participation and co-creation discourses are embedded even in mainstream productions; and engagement is a fundamental element of any creative endeavor. (p. 2329)

He points out that new media’s focus on participation does not necessarily signify effective participatory implementation. In this context, he identifies that “spaces for negotiation and debate, decision-making, transparency processes, and mutual recognition become essential to the consideration of a creative project as participatory” (p. 2329).

Building on these critiques, our live cinema model proposes formal similarities with contemporary performances—such as those by The Light Surgeons, Vincent Moon, and Sam Green—but distinguishes itself through its participatory practice. Our work actively includes participants throughout all stages of the process. This begins with pre-recorded interviews and extends into the performance itself, where participants’ physical interactions—with live performers and audience members—are projected onto the screening.

Moreover, our audiovisual documentation of the three live cinema performances incorporates audios from pre-recorded micro-phenomenological interviews with both performers and spectators, as they describe their experiences during their participation in our sessions. These materials can be reused in future live sessions, generating an evolving narrative. In this way, each iteration of the work builds on the last, deepening engagement and expanding the participatory dimension of our practice.

Based in collective improvisation across three live cinema performances, our practice is shaped by pre-recorded audiovisual material manipulated in real time by the artistic researcher, who also intervenes with live camera inputs capturing the co-presence of live musicians, multidisciplinary artists and local audience during our sessions. In this sense, we align with Groys' perspective that, "even if it does not provoke a brawl in the futurist manner, it facilitates an encounter between diverse individuals who become aware of the communal presence of their bodies in space" (2008a, p. 31). In this way, our study approaches the political dimension of live editing by its role in facilitating cultural encounters through both physical and digital mediation.

As a collective storytelling practice, the unfolding of events in our live sessions is crucial for examining the agency of diasporic artists within contemporary postcolonial societies. To this end, we explore how live editing tools, such as live camera input, can be integrated into documentary screenings, fostering audience participation and deepening collective engagement.

Our live cinema model includes experimentation within a hybrid narrative structure, expanding the framing of narrative modes beyond the linear and non-linear binary. We engage with a live-editing practice that works with both modes: linear narrative—a chronological sequence that structures events and guides meaning—and non-linear narrative—which disrupts this sequence through flashbacks and non-diegetic elements such as video clips, music, voice-over narration, or sound effects that shape the audience's perception.

This framing extends to the alinear narrative mode, based on the collective improvisation of live cinema. In this way, we explore how the intersection between live arts and documentary cinema can enable a shared moment of agency, facilitated by the real-time transmission and recording of audience participation, as well as by interventions of 'chance' that emerge during live interactions among participants and performance artists.

In this way, our investigation approaches the recent conceptualisation of live cinema, as explored by Gibson and Arisona (2023) in their interview with Chris Allen, founder and director of the collective The Light Surgeons. The authors refer to the group's description,

available on the official website⁵¹ of their performance *Supereverything*, where live cinema is characterised as follows:

The concept of live cinema is still a fairly new and developing genre within media art that brings together experimental approaches to narrative and non-narrative film making, with live music and the performing arts. Rather than screening a traditional, linear edited film, a live cinema performance allows artists the freedom to experiment and improvise within a selection of different material, prepared video clips, audio visual samples or more generative code-based plugins that can be run in VJ software such as VDMX. (*Supereverything*, n.d., as cited in Gibson & Arisana, 2023, p. 305)

Karen Pearlman's writings in *Cutting Rhythms* (2009) explore intuition as a guide in the decision-making process of editing, allowing editors to craft a film's rhythm that resonates with the audience on multiple levels. Pearlman emphasises that this process goes beyond fixed rules, requiring an understanding and response to the film's emotional and narrative dynamics drawn from experience.

As a contemporary artistic reference, we draw on Kirsten Johnson's documentary *Cameraperson* (2016). John), wherein she conveys a sense of unknowing about the long-term significance of the audiovisual material she captured; her perception of what was experienced only emerged when revisiting the footage from a perspective beyond her role behind the camera. She also offers a comparative analysis of how seemingly ordinary images—often captured without the explicit intention of documentation—can contain latent visual and contextual traces that reveal vestiges of the past, indicate the existence of hidden narratives, and reflect social and political realities in flux, preserved through audiovisual documentation. Although present, such traces often go unnoticed within the limits of our conscious perception during the immediacy of lived experience. In this context, Johnson comments:

You know, I still don't recognize it, this film. It doesn't seem like it comes from me; and yet, it is obviously mine. We were formally interested in the idea that the audience could share the experience that I have as I film. But what I experience as a cameraperson is informed by who I am internally. (Johnson, as cited in Cohn, n.d., p. 2).

In this sense, Johnson's reflections connect to our earlier discussions of Wera Alexandre's notions regarding the playful nature of cinematic creation—specifically the idea of the “camera as a child”. Both reflect on the importance of what the camera captures in everyday life, often revealing to us what was experienced unconsciously during ephemeral

⁵¹ For more information, see <https://supereverything.net/what-is-live-cinema/>

moments of co-existence. On this documentary aspect of encapsulating memories of the fleeting instant, Johnson (as cited in Cohn, n.d.) states: “We wanted to allude to everything that cannot be said and everything that cannot be known. (...) We made a film that seemed transgressive and full of discoveries, even for me” (p. 2, own translation).

In this sense, we elucidate Marcel Duchamp’s (1957/1975) idea that “the artist acts as a mediumistic being who, from the labyrinth beyond time and space, seeks a way out towards clarity” (p. 139). Duchamp’s words resonates with the Surrealist practice of ‘automatism’, which Goodfellow (2023) describes as “a strategy employed by Surrealist artists to produce art and writing in direct and intuitive ways, bypassing the artist’s conscious decision-making” (p. 168). He reflects on the resistance to his consideration of artistic creation enacted by artists’ role as mediumistic beings, by stating:

I know that this statement will not meet with the approval of many artists who refuse this mediumistic role and insist on the validity of their awareness in the creative act—yet art history has consistently decided upon the virtues of a work of art through considerations completely divorced from the rationalized explanations. (Duchamp, 1957/1975, p. 139)

Furthermore, we add to this approach Wassily Kandinsky’s notion of artistic expression as an ‘inner necessity’, which relates to his concept of *innerer Klang*—the spiritual vibration that emerges from within the artist and resonates with universal truths (Kandinsky, 1911/2008; Grohmann, 1958). As Grohmann explains, Kandinsky advanced “the principle of inner necessity, with the recognition that form is a bridge to inwardness” (1958, p. 202), connecting the artist’s internal vision to forms that can communicate profound truths. This idea parallels John Dewey’s conception of artistic expression as a synthesis of emotional depth and technical mastery.

Dewey (2010) emphasises that artistic expression is “sustained by emotion and organised by technique” (p. 160, our translation). He understands the role of emotion in the act of expression as responsible for maintaining the continuity of movement through the choice of material and composition, but not as constitutive of what is manifested in the act of expression itself. He states: “Without emotion, there can be artistic skill, but not art; it can be present and intense, but if it is directly manifested, the result will not be art either” (p. 160, our translation).

Likewise, Ismail Xavier (1983) perceives Brakhage’s cinema as possessing the radical aim of reclaiming our visual sensibility, including often-unexamined subjectivities constrained by our cultural backgrounds, to unveil profound inner visions (p. 182). His views on *Metaphors on Vision* by Stan Brakhage highlight the artist’s recognition of “an open conflict between the linguistic and the visual”, in which “there is a repressive process of centuries of education

weighing on our relationship with the visible: education teaches us not to be aware and not to properly value what we see” (p. 182, own translation). He suggests that such revelations manifesting in the visible world align with the notion of filmmakers as “visionary artists”:

He seeks to integrate everything that can be an object of vision across different regimes of consciousness; with eyes wide open, half-open, or closed. “Peripheral vision”, generally repressed, comes to the centre; the processes of sensitising the eye with closed eyelids gain relevance. Within the search for images as an investigation of a new “truth”, any encounter is welcome, for every new image can bring a revelation. In its complete movement, Brakhage’s cinema is an instance of looking inward, of finding within subjectivity the truest visions blocked by the cultural grid. (Xavier, 1983, p.183, own translation)

In this sense, Xavier claims that artists can access inner images during the creative process, conveying an internal “truth” with universal resonance. This, in turn, expands the spectator’s visual perception towards our shared reality. In his words: “It is within himself that the artist must seek what is universally valid” (1983, p. 183, own translation).

Furthermore, to support our analysis of participants’ experiential structures through an intersubjective lens, we draw on Dewey’s citation of English writer John Galsworthy, who defines art as “the imaginative expression of the energy that, through the technical concretization of feeling and perception, seeks to reconcile the individual with the universal, awakening impersonal emotions within it” (2010, pp. 336–337, own translation). His reflections on these moments of “reconcile” and “harmonious cooperation between man and the world” are presented below for being particularly relevant to our investigation on whether and how live cinema can foster a sense of belonging in participants within a contact zone:

The energies that constitute the objects and events of the world, and therefore determine our experience, are the “universal”. “Reconcile” means achieving, in an immediate and non-argumentative manner, periods of harmonious cooperation between man and the world, in experiences that are complete. The resulting emotion is “impersonal” because it is not linked to personal destiny but to the object to which the self has devotedly surrendered in its construction. Appreciation is equally impersonal in its emotional character because it also involves the construction and organization of objective energies. (2010, pp. 336–337)

This dynamic interplay between the individual and the universal, as expressed in Kandinsky's concept of ‘inner necessity’, compels artistic creation from within. This necessity captures the profound human drive for self-expression: the yearning to be seen, heard, and to share both individual and collective narratives. He envisioned a synthesis of the arts grounded in this principle, anticipating a future where “the roots of the various disciplines will be reduced to a common root, and this will facilitate the achievement of synthesis” (Grohmann, 1958, p.

202). Within the contemporary postcolonial context of shared yet divided migration societies, engaging with our ‘inner necessity’ can play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging.

Throughout our three live cinema sessions, we observed a gradual shift towards abstraction within the audiovisual documentary narrative, as ‘accidental’ events became increasingly evident in the performances. Thus, having begun with a hybrid structure in the first performance, we progressively explored experimental possibilities in our subsequent live sessions. This trajectory resonates with the notion of the unfinished, as discussed by Vladimir Jankélévitch and Béatrice Berlowitz (2021) in *Um Lugar do Inacabado*, in which the unfinished is not understood as a failure but embraced as an aesthetic and philosophical stance that welcomes indeterminacy and incompleteness in the temporal unfolding of meanings from these shared experiences.

Our approach also aligns with João Leal’s (2014) reflections on the limitations of so-called ‘non-narrative cinema’, in which he argues that even films seeking to subvert conventional narrative frameworks remain inevitably immersed in the artists’ subjectivity, even when this occurs unconsciously during their practice. We align with Leal’s claim on the impossibility of achieving complete abstraction in experimental narratives by proposing instead a dynamic range of narrative modes within an experimental hybrid structure—moving beyond a dualistic framework of alternating between linear and non-linear forms. We explore the possibility of an emerging ‘alinear’ narrative that manifests during live collective improvisation: a narrative that occurs in real-time through unforeseen events triggered by interactions between performers, audience, digital interfaces, and physical ambiance during live performances, all participating in the collective creative act emerging in our sessions.

In the following sections, we investigate how performance artists describe altered states of consciousness arising from their creative experiences in live cinema. Our study analyses their accounts of experiencing collective improvisation and examines whether these experiences align with the state of *flow*, as previously described. We also address its political potential, in accordance with Csikszentmihályi’s (2014, p. 51) claim that the success of political, religious, and cultural movements may depend, in part, on their capacity to facilitate ‘flow experiences’—immersive and intrinsically rewarding states that arise when individuals are fully engaged in their activities.

CHAPTER 3

Contact Zone: Live Cinema Model

In this chapter, we present our case study, which focuses on three live cinema performances. We approach live cinema as an ‘art of the contact zone’, wherein autoethnography and transculturation play a key role. By using this framework, we address our central research questions: whether, and in what ways, our live editing practice can cultivate a sense of ‘agency’ and ‘belonging’ among participants in our sessions. To this end, we examine the settings of our three live cinema performances, focusing on their locations, performance setups, and participatory practices implemented in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza.

Our practice integrates documentary filmmaking with diasporic artists, first-person audiovisual documentation from field observations, and abstract visual and sound elements that evoke cultural entanglements shaped by historical events such as slavery and forced migration under Portuguese colonisation, as well as the enduring presence of Indigenous communities in these territories. These three audiovisual components are manipulated in real time during our live sessions. For the live editing performance, we utilise a laptop running Resolume software, paired with a MIDI keyboard interface, which together enable real-time composition of visuals and sound.

The live cinema model we propose unfolds through three interconnected forms of participation: the live-editing performance by a documentary filmmaker, the live music performance by a diasporic musician, and the co-presence of a local audience. Derived from analyses of our three performances, this model remains open and adaptable, allowing for the integration of multiple live art modalities—such as live painting, live poetry, or other forms of improvisation—thereby developing a unique event according to the availability of artists and the specificities of its context and location.

Each session concludes with a post-performance discussion in which performers and audience members reflect on colonial history and its resonance in their lives—particularly within postcolonial migration societies. All interactions are conducted in Portuguese, positioning the language as a tool of transculturation that subverts dominant colonial cultures. By engaging critically with an idiom once imposed upon colonised peoples, we challenge mainstream narratives of colonisation and confront its enduring legacies. In this chapter, we analyse the aesthetic and conceptual elements of these audiovisual narratives, highlighting the cultural entanglements that permeate everyday life, shaped by shared colonial histories. By examining the outcomes of this artistic research, we propose a live cinema model situated within participatory documentary filmmaking and discuss its role in the politics of remembrance within these cities.

3.1. Live Cinema as “Arts of the contact zone”

As described by Pratt in “Arts of the Contact Zone”, conflicts are a result of the asymmetrical power relations that define a contact zone. In this research, we explore new ways of engaging with liveness by employing live editing as a cinematic tool to negotiate these relations in the present. In *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway emphasises the importance of confronting and grappling with complex, challenging issues rather than seeking simplistic solutions to what troubles us. She advocates for a committed, ongoing process of responsibility in addressing the challenges of living in a ‘damaged world’. Haraway calls for a move away from “the premises of starting over and beginning anew”, instead encouraging us to “learn to inherit without denial and stay with the trouble of damaged worlds” (2016, p. 150).

In “Belonging to the Contact Zone”, Sternfeld aligns with Judith Butler’s thoughts on sharing a world that both “connects and separates us” (Butler, 2015, as cited in Sternfeld, 2017, p. 261). As reiterated by the author, Butler mentions the interdependence of individuals who would not choose to live together and justifies the need for a ‘performativity of the alliance’ (Sternfeld, 2017, p. 255).

Such an aspect of performing alliances is also developed in the writings of Ailton Krenak, a philosopher and leader of the Indigenous peoples in Brazil. His reflections on the contemporary need for ‘affective alliances’ emphasise cultivating relational responses to address his experience of living in a reality where “the closest neighbour we had was the one who most denied our existence” (Cesarino, 2016, p. 170, own translation). Recalling his experience of isolation in a post-colonial society, Krenak underscores the necessity of establishing such alliances. In this sense, he claims that:

(...) to see beyond these social borders, to open a relationship with this outside world, with the church, the mission, religion, politics, the work...it was almost a total impossibility. I looked at this whole wall and tried to measure the other side. I thought about who was in these places, who was leaving the city to come towards us, and what we would receive, how we could respond to all these pressures. And between escapes and attempts at contact, attempts at exchange, at getting closer, I started building some ideas about alliances. (Cesarino, p. 170, own translation)

Krenak also identifies conflict as foundational to the need for forming alliances, stating: “The defining feature of this relationship is conflict” (Cesarino, 2016, p. 170, own translation). He reflects on a shift from persistent non-collaboration and widespread resistance—rooted in feelings of injustice and loss—towards creative openings that generate possibilities for engaging together with the future. His concept of affective alliances emerges

as a refusal of discourses of impossibility, proposing instead a gradual engagement with change—not as immediate escape routes, but as possibilities for exchange that values and sustains long-term connection. Within this framework, the neighbour is imagined not as temporary but as a lasting presence. As Krenak affirms: “It is the construction of an idea that your neighbor is forever” (Cesarino, 2016, p. 170, own translation).

Applying the concept of contact zone to our live cinema sessions involves creating an interactive space where diverse cultures, perspectives, and narratives intersect through performance. In this setting, multidisciplinary diasporic artists and audiences from, or living within, migrant societies in a post-colonial context come together in a shared event. Initial contact for developing this case study was made in 2022, following a meeting with Élio Alexandre, a member of the Zelu collective in Lisbon.

Together, we envisioned an audiovisual performance that explored the entanglement of the members’ multicultural identities and their experiences as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) artists living in Lisbon. The project was conceived as a collective artistic process centred on sharing participants’ experiences as diasporic artists and reflecting on the impact of these experiences on their creative practices within the context of racism and xenophobia in contemporary Portuguese society.

During the first year of this research, we conducted semi-structured interviews with Zelu artists, which served as the basis for the documentary audiovisual material presented in our live cinema performances.⁵² These interviews explored Zelu artists’ migration experiences in Lisbon. Additionally, we collected audiovisual documentation of their participation in cultural activities in the city, as part of our field observations.

As a participant-observer in the Zelu collective, I also took responsibility for organising a cultural gathering, which affirmed my active membership within the group. Spradley (1980) emphasises that the role of a participant-observer is dynamic and evolving, distinguishing it from that of an ‘ordinary participant’, he states: “you will have to maintain a dual purpose: you will want to seek to participate and to watch yourself and others at the same time. (...) You will experience the feeling of being both an insider and an outsider simultaneously” (Spradley, 1980, p. 58).

For this event, we invited Werá Alexandre, an Indigenous filmmaker from Brazil, to participate virtually in a conversation following the screening of his films at Homies, a meeting point for Zelu’s cultural activities. In Figure 12 we illustrate our virtual meeting, where we discussed Werá Alexandre’s participation in this event.

⁵² See Annex 1 for the transcript of a semi-structured interview with Margarida Conceição (Daisy) in Lisbon, 2023, translated from Portuguese to English by the author.



Figure 12. Screenshot of a virtual meeting with Mila, a Portuguese artist born in Cabo Verde; Natália, a Brazilian documentary filmmaker living in Lisbon; and Werá, a Guarani Mbyá Indigenous documentary filmmaker from Brazil.

Our methodology adopts a participatory approach that resonates with Kim's (2022) discussion of emerging 'open-ended' methods in documentary filmmaking, which seek to move beyond conventional 'story-based narratives' (p. 8). In this sense, we organised this event as part of our orientation towards a procedural artistic process.

Zelu activities, named as *playshops*, were organised by artist-members as creative encounters aimed at providing space for in-person interactions, rather than delivering pre-conceived lessons or producing market-driven artworks. The documentation of these exchanges was subsequently integrated into our audiovisual material for live cinema sessions, illustrating the shared experiences and dialogues that emerged within the cultural gatherings.



Figure 13. Still image from audiovisual material edited by Natália Gondim, documenting the screening of Werá Alexandre’s film during the 2024 Zelu collective *playshop* in Lisbon.

Drawing on Pratt’s notion of the ‘contact zone’ as a space of negotiated asymmetrical relations, Sternfeld (2017) argues that it enables individuals to recognise their shared belonging even within contexts marked by division and conflict. Following this understanding, our live cinema practice is grounded in participants’ experiences of co-presence, where being together in a shared time and space — during a live cinema performance within postcolonial societies — can become a social and political act of actualising our collective narratives.

In the following section, we present a case study of three live cinema performances, exploring whether and how this practice can foster participants’ agency and sense of belonging within a contact zone.

3.2 Case Study: Contact Zone - A Live Cinema Model

Contact Zone is a live cinema model developed through performances in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza. For each event, we created a unique audiovisual composition shaped by documentary recordings of the city, the spatial configuration of the venue, the multimodal practices of participating artists, and the participatory dynamics of audience interactions.

These three sessions were documented to form the foundation for an audiovisual work—a short documentary film⁵³ that integrates the various phases of each session, including the micro-phenomenological interviews with participants.

Our case study is structured into three parts. The first part focuses on the researcher's role as participant-observer, the semi-structured interviews collected to compose our documentary filmmaking process, and the analysis of aesthetic and conceptual aspects of the audiovisual material generated throughout the study.

The second part describes the location, design, and participatory practices of each performance. The third examines our live cinema model, developed from the analysis of three interconnected forms of participation: the live-editing performance by a documentary filmmaker, the live musical collaboration by a diasporic musician (with the potential to integrate additional artistic modalities), and the co-presence of a local audience. Following these analyses, we discuss how this model engages with the notion of the contact zone as a means for artists from diasporic communities to participate in the politics of remembrance within postcolonial societies, challenging collective narratives to remain open to constant transformation.

3.2.1 Field research: participant-observation

As a participant-observer researcher, I engaged in cultural encounters organised by Zelu artists in Lisbon as both observer and participant. As previously mentioned, I also organised one of their playshops in March 2024, with the participation of Werá Alexandre, an Indigenous filmmaker from Brazil. During my field research, I documented Zelu's activities through audiovisual recordings, which later served as material for our live cinema sessions.

To document everyday life, I used my mobile phone to record field observations while moving between the three cities considered in this study. The resulting unstable, mobile imagery reflects the personal dimension of my daily movements while living in these places. Many of the filmed events occurred unexpectedly, captured as part of my routine of field observations.

Through this process, I expressed my own migration experience, highlighting how my perspective on history shapes my attention to specific memorial sites, and cultural manifestations while documenting the contemporary landscapes of these cities.

⁵³ Gondim, N. (2025). *Contact Zone → Live cinema performances in Lisbon, Luanda and Fortaleza (2025)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/mz4pFsefRIE>

During our live cinema sessions, I participated as a live editing performer manipulating audiovisual documentary material assembled through short, non-linear narratives of everyday moments in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza. These assemblages were juxtaposed, emphasising the historical connections of these cities in relation to the Portuguese colonial regime.

As I walked through these spaces, I captured fragmented storylines from each city, observing historical traces of the colonial past—street names, music, monuments, oral expressions, body movements, gastronomy, and architectural elements—embedded within the visual and soundscapes of both public and private spaces. These video clips documented my personal experience during the field research, as shown in Figure 14, which illustrates the initial phase of our documentary filmmaking through the early editing process of our audiovisual narrative.



Figure 14. Audiovisual research material collected in Lisbon, 2022–2024. Video: Natália Gondim.⁵⁴

In this video artwork, a non-linear narrative of brief moments documents my everyday observations in Lisbon, accompanied by a voiceover using an audio excerpt of found footage from an interview⁵⁵ with Indigenous philosopher and activist Ailton Krenak, in which he reflects: “It is even a metaphor, this story of ‘discovery’. Discovery, in our case, is

⁵⁴ Gondim, N. (2024). *Ŧ Incomunicável* (2024). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLSRXHidO9I>

⁵⁵ The interview excerpts were transcribed and translated from Portuguese by the author. For the full interview, see *Vozes de Pindorama com Ailton Krenak* (Casa Museu Ema Klabin, 2023): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9lshJY4Jns>

concealment” (Casa Museu Ema Klabin, 2023, 00:11:32–00:11:42, own translation).

We conclude the video with the continuation of his speech: “No one discovered anything—on the contrary, they hid everything” (Casa Museu Ema Klabin, 2023, 00:11:42–00:11:45, own translation). In this way, we incorporated this found footage to engage with contemporary Indigenous leaders’ reflections on colonial legacies that erase their memories and silence multiple voices from dominant historical narratives—central concerns of this study. The video also features a voice-over narration in which I read a quote attributed to Michel Seuphor:

There must be a painting, totally free of dependence on the figure, or object, which, like music, illustrates nothing, tells no story, and launches no myth. Such a painting would simply evoke the incommunicable kingdoms of the spirit, where dreams become thought, where line becomes existence (as cited in Lispector, 2019, epigraph, own translation).

Seuphor's reflection on abstract painting as a form that “illustrates nothing, tells no story, and launches no myth” provides a conceptual basis for exploring the notion of an alinear narrative—one that emerges through collective improvisation by releasing predetermined intentionality in both production and interpretation during live cinema sessions. His vision of abstraction in art as evoking “the incommunicable kingdoms of the spirit” aligns with our aim to access a pre-reflective dimension of live cinema experience and to explore its auratic quality.

We use the term ‘alinear’ to denote a narrative mode that moves beyond the habitual polarity between linear and non-linear modes—not by rejecting this duality, but by activating it as a generative tension in which both modes coexist within an experimental hybrid narrative structure, characterised by collective storytelling. This mode privileges co-presence through resonance, disruption, and experiential openness, transforming collective storytelling into a living process of emergence—one in which narrative meanings are enacted as participants continually interact and reconfigure them in real-time.

For this, our practice combines the live editing of both linear and non-linear documentary audiovisual material with live musical performances and other live arts interventions. Live interactions—whether via physical co-presence or live camera input—between performers and audiences are encouraged through active engagement from participants.

This experimental narrative format is open-ended, emergent, and unpredictable, often generating inconclusive audiovisual associations. Rather than presenting a pre-determined storyline, the collective improvisational work invites self-reflective inquiry, resonating with

Rancière's (2009) concept of the *emancipated spectator*: "It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the story and make it their own. An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators" (p. 22).

To reflect the researcher's participation within the audiovisual documentation, we include a symbolic representation of subjectivity by portraying her perceptual apparatus through photographs of her eyes, juxtaposed with filmed observations captured during her migratory movements in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza. Rather than presenting a coherent, explanatory sequence, the work invites viewers to feel, rather than understand, the flow of images and sounds that convey the researcher's perception of her experiences in these cities.

These visual elements are combined with found footage of neuroplasticity sourced from the internet, integrated into a non-linear narrative that represents her stream of consciousness. In this way, the neuroplasticity footage is presented as a 'brain screen' functioning as a visual metaphor over which ocular photographs of the researcher's left and right eyes are juxtaposed. The images of her eyes represent the 'third image' produced by the brain through binocular perception, as explored by Jonathan Crary in *Techniques of the Observer* (1988). In binocular perception, each eye receives a slightly different image, which the brain synthesises into a constructed mental representation—what has been described as a 'third image'. As Crary observes in discussing Wheatstone's findings:

The human organism, he claimed, had the capacity under most conditions to synthesize retinal disparity into a single unitary image. While this seems obvious from our own standpoint, Wheatstone's work marked a major break from (or often disregard of) the older explanations of the binocular body. (Crary, 1988, p. 27)

Crary also discussed how Goethe's recognition of the interplay between subjective experience and physiological processes in our perception resonated widely with key philosophical, scientific, and literary movements in the early 19th century. He draws a significant comparison to Maine de Biran's efforts to investigate the nature of our inner experience. Rather than adhering to the traditional model that treated the perceptual apparatus as a passive conduit of information, Crary highlights how Biran redefined this view, demonstrating that the observer's sensory mechanisms are inseparably entangled with the very objects they perceive (p. 7). He points out:

For both Goethe and Maine de Biran, subjective observation is not the inspection of an inner space or a theater of representations. Instead, observation

is increasingly exteriorized; the viewing body and its objects begin to constitute a single field on which inside and outside are confounded. Perhaps most importantly, both observer and what he sees are subject to the same modes of empirical study. (Crary, 1988, p. 7)

In this sense, we employ both visuals as a metaphor for individual's processes of observation, meaning-making, and memory—emphasising how our audiovisual material is shaped by the researcher's perception, as well as by audience own experience of it. Moreover, the practice of documenting brief, significant moments of her observations in short audiovisual clips is based on the concept of *protonarratives*, as discussed in neurocinematic studies.

According to Pia Tikka and Mauri Kaipainen protonarratives are affective micro-events that may initially appear fragmented or independent. However, they explain that independent protonarratives become interrelated and provide explanatory context when organised through editing, thereby creating a narrative coherence that conveys to the viewer a sense of continuity among events that were initially isolated (2015a, p.78).

In our practice, we engage with the notion of protonarratives through our non-linear editing, where seemingly isolated moments of glances, gestures, and ambient sounds, are assembled not to form a conventional storyline, but to encourage intuitive connections and emergent meanings to be shaped by audience perception. In her words:

Protonarratives are closely associated with intersubjectively shared patterns of human behavior and social interactions as they manifest in movies, allowing viewers to recognize and identify with in a largely equal manner. They can therefore be considered as building bricks of the overall narrative, due to their *a priori* determined significance. They refer to physical and situational engagement with the surrounding world, and they often relate to and gain their semantic significance from spatial and embodied metaphors, such as “following a path” or “falling like a stone.” In this sense, they form the basis for a narrative “language” (Tikka & Kaipainen, 2015a, p.78)

As discussed by Aitken, documentary practice of observing ordinary moments, enables the perception of meaningful messages embedded in our ‘lifeworld’. As he states: “What we have in the documentary film, therefore, is an intensified empiricism in which the rich and complex detail that we would normally fail to notice in daily life is held up for our pleasure and scrutiny” (2013, p.7). In this sense, Aitken emphasises the dual function of documentary: as an art of witnessing reality and as a means of transforming reality into an enchantment of our living experience. He also highlights the role of our intersubjectivity by suggesting that documentary film can move us beyond our individual perception towards a shared attention to ephemeral everyday phenomena, through this, collective testimony and self-

reflection can act as a socialising experience. In his words:

Film, therefore, broadens out beyond the individual in a way that memory cannot, and the act of viewing the film takes the individual out of his or her own individuality, rather than further into that individuality, and in so doing both possesses the capacity to challenge the preconceptions upon which such an individuality is founded and directs that individuality into the domain of social experience. (p.3)

Moreover, as described by the author, one of the main distinctions that documentary cinema introduced to photography is that viewers could not only see moments of everyday life, closer to how they are perceived by human vision, but also to take the time to reflect on these moments. According to him: “At its best, therefore, and also as a type of ‘record’, the documentary film appears to be characterised by a form of indeterminate, empirical and intermediary naturalism, which attempts to show us a ‘whole world’, and invites us to intuit a whole world” (p. 7).

In our case study, we observed how documenting such cues in the daily life of these cities reveals not only what is chosen to be remembered as collective memory from our shared histories under the Portuguese colonial regime, but also what risks being consigned to oblivion. To foreground this dynamic of erasure, we incorporated found footage of neuronal degeneration as a visual metaphor critiquing the exclusion of colonised peoples’ perspectives from dominant historical narratives. Through the researcher's field observations, this audiovisual documentation articulates how the absence of often-overlooked parallel histories permeates daily experience in these cities, as illustrated in Figure 15.



Figure 15. Photograph of the Contact Zone during our first live performance in Lisbon, 2024. Photo: Natália Gondim.⁵⁶

Our audiovisual documentation reveals how experiencing transnational mobility among postcolonial cities reflects in the researcher’s perception of the disparity in public exposure of parallel narratives and the contemporary challenges of actualising the predominantly mono-perspective conveyed in nationalist histories. As we illustrate through further audiovisual documentation of these three cities, latent and subtle transformations include marginalised perspectives—not as radical innovations or novelty, but as part of a contemporary movement for the historical recognition of the co-existence of parallel narrators within the collective reality we inhabit.

In this spirit, we draw inspiration from the epigraph that opens *El Aleph* by Jorge Luis Borges: “Solomon said: There is nothing new under the sun. Thus, Plato imagined that all knowledge is but recollection; and so Solomon decrees that all novelty is nothing but forgetting.” (Bacon, *Essays* LVIII, as cited in Borges, 1949/2015, epigraph, our translation).

⁵⁶ The street sign reads ‘Avenida General Roçadas’ named after José Mendes de Almeida Roçadas (1864–1939), a Portuguese general involved in the consolidation of colonial control in Angola and Mozambique as part of Portugal’s broader imperial project. In our audiovisual material we also documented ‘Rua do Poço dos Negros’, for more information see Raggi, G. (n.d.). *Rua do Poço dos Negros*. In *European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities — ECHOES*. <https://echoes.ces.uc.pt/expo-lisboa/rua-do-poco-dos-negros/>

3.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews with diasporic artists

In this subsection, we present the diasporic artists selected for our semi-structured interviews, who contributed to the linear audiovisual narrative of our practice. Their artistic trajectories and migration backgrounds represent diverse creative modalities and experiences of diaspora that are central to our investigation.

These artists self-identify as members of Portuguese-speaking diasporic communities in Lisbon, whose migration experiences and creative practices offer insights into how artists navigate and express cultural belonging within postcolonial contexts. As members of the Zelu collective, these artists are actively engaged in cultural initiatives aligned with our focus on creating possibilities for cultivating a sense of agency and belonging in post-colonial migration societies. This is especially evident in their promotion of cultural gatherings in Lisbon. The following video in Figure 16 illustrates our documentation of these events.



Figure 16. Audiovisual research material collected in Lisbon in 2023. *Zelu's* opening event at Fábrica Braço de Prata in Lisbon on January 21, 2023. Video: Natália Gondim.⁵⁷

Our interviews with Zelu artists were grounded in a sociological methodology, employing a semi-structured questionnaire to explore experiences at both personal and

⁵⁷ Gondim, N. (2023). *Zelu - Lisboa* (2023) [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/uYcOIZqGEZs>

professional levels, particularly in relation to their diasporic identities and the impact of migration on their everyday lives while growing up or living in Portugal. These in-depth interviews followed the principles of ethnographic interviewing as outlined by Stéphane Beaud and Florence Weber (2010). Conducted in Portuguese and filmed in Lisbon, where the Zelu collective is based, the interviews were later incorporated as audiovisual material in our live sessions. All interviewees were members of the collective, and the majority of the interviews were recorded in person.⁵⁸



Figure 17. Photograph of *Contact Zone*, showing our filmed interview with Admila Cardoso during the first live performance in Lisbon, 2024. Photo: Natália Gondim.

We conducted six in-depth interviews, guiding each participant to answer to our three main questions. First, they were invited to introduce themselves, with a focus on describing their diasporic background, migration experiences, and artistic practices. Second, they were asked to reflect on whether and how their artistic work relates to their sense of belonging to a diasporic community related to the Portuguese colonial regime. Third, they were invited to discuss their engagement with improvisation—whether mediated by digital technologies or not—as part of their creative processes. As is typical of the semi-structured format, the interviews remained open to follow-up questions prompted by participants’ responses.

In Annex 1, we illustrate how this openness facilitated a deeper exploration of the

⁵⁸ Of the six interviews conducted, only one—with visual artist Márcia Raquel Lima—was carried out virtually due to scheduling conflicts and travel plans.

interviewee's relationship to the spiritual practices of her diaspora through improvisation in her artistic process. From this finding, we sought to further understand how diasporic cultures can influence these artists' expressions of an 'inner necessity' as previously discussed in this study with reference to Kandinsky's writings in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911/2008). Our intention is not only to understand their personal drive for self-expression, but also to examine this drive as a universal human yearning for creativity, connection, and belonging, particularly within our postcolonial migration contexts.

In terms of the number of interviews conducted, we follow Beaud and Weber's (2010) approach, choosing not to produce a large, quantitative dataset. Instead, our aim is to generate meaningful qualitative material that aligns with the objectives of our research. In their words:

In-depth interviews are not intended to produce quantified data and therefore do not need to be numerous. They are not meant to be "representative". If you aim for "representativity", you will want to conduct interviews that cover the entire spectrum of the surveyed group. However, the logic of ethnographic research leads you to make choices, form alliances that will bring you closer to some and distance you from others. Moreover, each in-depth interview is an event that must be analysed on its own: it is a personal interaction where each party is deeply engaged, and it is also a solemn interaction with a minimum of staging, of ceremony. (Beaud and Weber, 2010, p. 156, own translation)

In the following, we present a brief introduction to the interviewed artists during our documentary filmmaking process, including their diasporic backgrounds, nationalities, and the artistic practices they engage with. They are: Admila Cardoso, a performer of Cape Verdean origin who works in dance, theatre, and circus arts. She also develops artisanal cosmetics and leads educational workshops focused on natural and cultural regeneration. Élio Alexandre, a visual artist of Angolan descent, born in Lisbon. He works in painting and illustration, exploring human vulnerable experiences with particular attention to Black identity.

Two other artists of Angolan origin were also interviewed and took part in the live cinema session in Luanda: Idalécio Melim, an Angolan photographer based in Lisbon, closely connected with local artistic communities, particularly those of Angolan heritage. His visual narratives reflect the everyday life in Lisbon and Luanda. And Márcia Raquel Lima, an Angolan-Portuguese artist working in painting and illustration, who celebrates Angolan culture while engaging with broader questions of contemporary social and political transformation in the country. She also took part in our session in Luanda, performing through live painting.

The only representative of Asian diasporas, Margarida Conceição is a visual artist and tattooist of Chinese and Portuguese heritage, with family roots in the city of Macao. She

explores her diasporic identity through tattooing, painting, and illustration, and also organises events supporting BIPOC artists in Lisbon. Lastly, Marco Medina is a musician with roots in Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, and Portugal. His songs reflect his multiple cultural identities and foster intercultural dialogue and connection among the diverse Lusophone communities. In Figure 18, a ten-minute documentary video artwork, we present interviews with these artists, which were used in our live cinema performances. This video illustrates a linear narrative mode that explores their lived experiences as diasporic artists in Lisbon. The aesthetic and conceptual dimensions of the piece—particularly its use of color and sound—will be examined in greater depth in the following subsection.



Figure 18. Audiovisual edited material in Lisbon, 2022–2024. Video by Natália Gondim.⁵⁹

At this stage of our editing process, we incorporated found footage to reinforce or contrast the discourses of the interviewed artists. These audiovisual materials relate to our historical and cultural entanglements as diasporic communities connecting to Portugal due to the colonial regime. We also included previous documentation of field observations in Lisbon, contributing to the evolving construction of the documentary narrative. This phase illustrates an expanded dynamic range of narrative modes, evolving from an initial non-linear form—

⁵⁹ Gondim, N. (2024). *Live Cinema @ Zona de Contato Cinemática - Lisboa*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/1zevkNVJUmY>

rooted mainly in fragments of field observations—toward a hybrid structure that gradually incorporates a linear storyline through interviews with diasporic artists.

In the next subsection, we explore the aesthetic and conceptual elements of our editing process. We examine how it evolved into a more abstract audiovisual narrative, shaped by the accumulation of audiovisual observations documented across the three cities. These materials were manipulated in real time during our practice through live editing performances, enabling a complex entanglement of cultures, geographies, and temporalities. During our sessions, we used these audiovisual materials alongside live interactions with other performing artists and local audiences.

3.2.3 Aesthetic and Conceptual Elements

The aesthetic and conceptual dimensions of our audiovisual material encompass the visual and auditory choices that shape viewers' experiences and the meanings conveyed by the film. These dimensions operate through the interplay of aesthetic elements (form, style, sensory expression) and conceptual elements (ideas, messages). In this subsection, we explore how this dynamic interplay influences participants' engagement with our live cinema sessions and their interpretation of the unfolding audiovisual narrative.

As mentioned previously, the subjective dimension of the researcher as participant-observer is represented through photographs of her eyes taken during medical exams. These images, evoking the very apparatus of vision, form the visual narrative of the performances, establishing a recursive dynamic in which the act of seeing becomes a metaphor for the mediated nature of perception. Through this visual strategy, we foreground the singularity of each person's embodied perspective on external reality, positioning observation as an active and interpretive process rather than a passive act of reception.

Our audiovisual material also reflects the researcher's stream of consciousness by mirroring not only her subjective experiences—based on short clips of what she perceived across these cities—but also her cognitive processes through the use of archival footage of neuroplasticity. In this way, it engages in a *mise en abyme*—drawing on Deleuze's analysis—as a self-reflexive structure in which the narrative contains a miniature version of itself (Deleuze, 2018, as cited in Rodrigues, 2021, p. 8). This structure highlights the discontinuities of the filmmaker's state of consciousness, manifested through alternations between linear pre-edited interviews with Zelu artists and non-linear storylines of short clips captured during her field research.

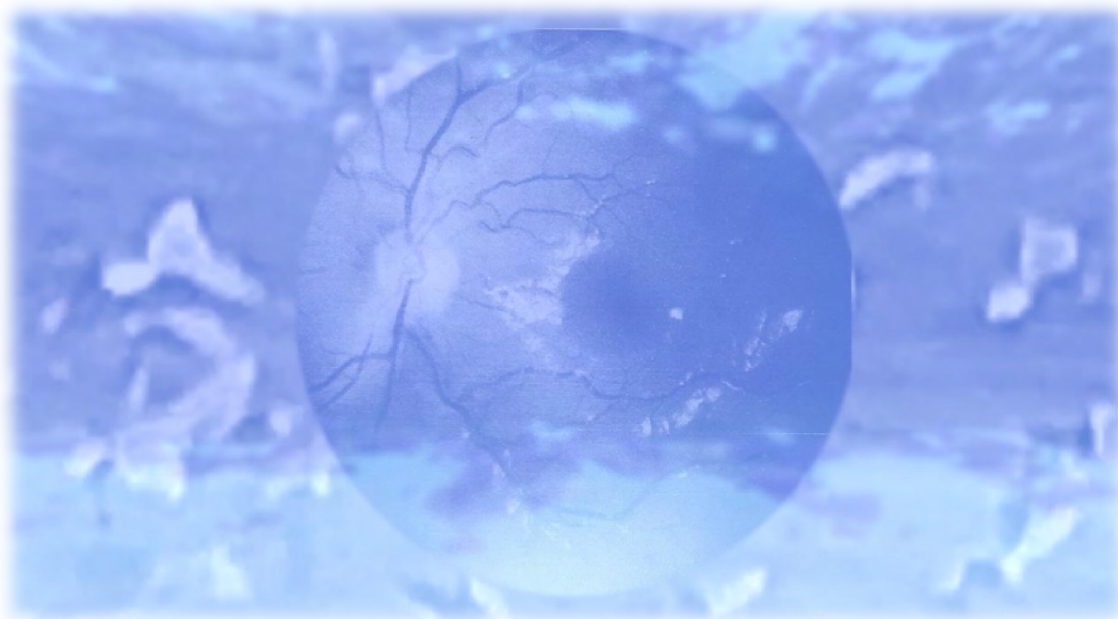


Figure 19. Still image from audiovisual material edited by Natália Gondim, showing a blue toned layered visual centred on an eye-like circular form.

Regarding visual stylisation, we applied image transparency by overlaying the photographs with a milky white layer dominated by light blue tones, evoking a state of immersion reminiscent of both the ocean and the sky. Symbolically, this suggests access to a unifying space—above or below—that transcends human perceptions of separation within the political boundaries of the territories we inhabit in our contemporary world.

Participants’ responses reflected these intended qualities, describing experiences of vastness and comfort. Admila Cardoso stated: “It was the environment that surrounded you and did not allow you to leave easily... an immersion in such a vast space that you became part of it.”⁶⁰ Other participants also noted the influence of the colour blue on visual and auditory perception, evoking feelings of calm, affection, safety, and well-being. As Cardoso described: “It stayed with me, something very vivid... bringing a sense of nostalgia, yet comforting... like a space for exchange and sharing, all within this shade of blue... between sky blue and deep blue.”⁶¹

These reflections highlight how form, colour, and sound combined to create an immersive environment that fostered a sense of welcome. Alexandre Vieira emphasised the variation in shades of blue as an affective element: blue, green, and violet, associated with the sea, trees, and sky, evoking a sense of calm and mental comfort. In his words:

⁶⁰ Cardoso, A. (2025, February 10). *Interview with Admila Cardoso* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁶¹ Cardoso, A. (2025, February 10). *Interview with Admila Cardoso* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

Hmm, about the change of colour — people often say that colours have the ability to convey emotions. The colours you used were very soft, gentle tones. They created a sense of calm, especially blue, because it's a colour I like, and also green. So, they give a feeling of calm and comfort.⁶²

The interviewees often used the Portuguese word *acolhimento*, which conveys a sense of being received with warmth and care—embraced both physically and emotionally. It has been translated here as a felt “welcome”, or “comfort” due to the difficulty of capturing its full meaning with a single English equivalent.

Other observations from participants regarding the audiovisual aesthetics included their perceptions of the fluidity in visual and sound effects, as described by Alessandra Montani Albertini: “It was like a fluid organism, something alive, like the seabed, where everything blends and flows.”⁶³ In this sense, participants often reported perceiving a constant movement within the narrative dynamics, triggering a sense of disorientation due to the juxtaposition of dialogue, live music, ocean sounds, and disruptive noises.

This multi-layered structure demands that participants engage with the unfolding of multiple and simultaneous sensory stimuli. As Vieira described: “There were moments when, if you weren’t fully attentive, it felt as though you would lose the flow of what was being told. This change of place required greater alertness to keep track of the narrative thread.”⁶⁴

As previously mentioned, in our live manipulation of the audiovisual narrative during each session, we used an accumulative collection of materials, incorporating the field research from each city along with live interactions with the musicians and other artistic performances. We shaped distinct live cinema experiences through variable elements manipulated in real time, while maintaining the invariant components of the audiovisual narrative described in this section.

In this way, our practice aligns with aspects of Fluxus, particularly its emphasis on process, chance, and the use of everyday materials and environments to blur the boundary between art and life. Both Fluxus and the earlier *musique concrète* movement, which was pioneered by Pierre Schaeffer in the 1940s, highlight the ephemeral, accidental, and tangible nature of lived experience. Numerous artists working with experimental sound have explored these techniques, including Nam June Paik, whose work exemplifies the possibilities of sonic collage. As Philip Brophy explains:

⁶² Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁶³ Albertini, A. (2024, August 24). Interview with Alessandra Montani Albertini [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁶⁴ Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

While the sourcing and transforming of “concrete” or real-world sounds had been declared a modernist sonic practice by Pierre Schaffer and Pierre Henry a decade earlier, a Cagean aura is foregrounded in Paik’s piece, possibly through chance-calculated determinations of the fragments’ length as well refuting their referential content. (2015, pp. 228 - 229)

In line with these principles, our audiovisual material incorporated direct sound recordings captured from the streets of the three cities, which was modified in real time by adjusting speed and volume, generating sonic textures during the performance.

To understand the audience’s sonic experience, we draw on Michel Chion’s concept of causal listening, in which listeners attempt to identify the source of a sound (Chion, 1990/2018, p. 22). Chion distinguishes between causal-detective listening—determining the origin of a sound—and causal-figurative listening—interpreting the sound within the diegetic context of the film (p. 23). During our live performances, participants reported engaging in both modes simultaneously: identifying whether sounds originated from the live performers or the projected film, while also attributing meaning to the sounds as part of the diegetic or extra-diegetic narrative.

In our audiovisual narrative, we also explored what Chion defines as *synchresis*—the perceptual fusion of sound and image that generates meaning (1990/2018, p. 24). The overlay of visuals and sounds—oceanic images combined with fluid visual effects and the live manipulation of pre-recorded whale sounds, together with the audiovisual documentary material from the three cities—conveys a sense of longing, a recurring theme in diasporic arts, which participants frequently described as evoking nostalgia.

This syncretic relationship between sound and image was evident in participants’ descriptions of their experiences. Henrique Gomes, one of the live music performers, observed that the bass frequencies were closely correlated with the fluid visual transitions. The low frequencies created a dense sonic texture, which he noted was mirrored by the visual elements to produce a shared affective density—evoking sensations of oceanic depth and the grounding pressure associated with submersion. Recalling his experience of the live performance in Fortaleza, he described how this interplay shaped his spatial perception: “That’s why I think the projection, for me, has an analogy with the bass frequencies as well. I feel that, just as the bass sound was filling the space, the blue light was also doing that—it was really spilling out everywhere, you know?”⁶⁵

From the audience’s perspective, this synchresis was also evoked through the recall of

⁶⁵ Gomes, H. (2025, February 11). *Interview with Henrique Gomes* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

embodied, rather than reflective memory—a feeling generated by the interplay of multilayered sound and visuals. Ágnes Vilsenki, an audience member in Lisbon, remarked: “Even if I don’t remember the exact words, what remains is the combination of elements — speech, music — that guided me into a sensory state. I don’t remember the music now, but at the time, it helped shape that feeling.”⁶⁶ Her account illustrates how audiovisual experiences shaped by live interaction with these elements generate individual perceptions that nonetheless share common experiential dimensions—a unity evident in our analysis of intersubjectivity within participants’ descriptions.

Alongside this syncretic approach, we employed asynchrony as a compositional counterpoint. In practice, within our hybrid structure, the non-linear narrative developed during the live editing performances created temporal disjunctions between sound and image, challenging participants’ expectations of continuity. The manipulated sounds, independent of the visuals, generated moments of confusion or sonic dissonance, accompanied by a continuous ocean sound whose volume was dynamically adjusted to respond to the rhythm and texture of the visual transitions.

Together, these elements produced an audiovisual experience that integrates synchresis and asynchrony, harmony and chaos. In this sense, Vilsenki described her experience not as a process of rational comprehension, but as a series of reflections — moments of sudden perception triggered by abstract or random images — allowing for emotional and intuitive engagement. In her words:

And another thing that came to mind is that these insights don’t necessarily happen when something obvious appears, for example, when someone is speaking and a statue shows up. The insight doesn’t always come at that moment of clear connection. Sometimes it happens when the image is not obvious, something more random or abstract. That occurred to me as well, because sometimes it’s a moment that gives you a kind of breath or pause... I don’t know. There are different kinds of images, with different characteristics, some more objective, others less direct, more abstract. And it’s not necessarily those clear, straightforward moments that spark insight. Sometimes it’s the opposite, when something is not direct. I think it’s more from the middle to the end. At the beginning, you’re just in the sensation. It’s not very rational, you go with the feeling and gradually begin to orient yourself, trying to understand how everything is being structured. But yeah... it kinda happens more from the middle to the end.⁶⁷

The invariant aesthetic and conceptual elements of our model foreground

⁶⁶ Vilsenki, A. (2024, August 24). *Interview with Agnès Vilsenki* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁶⁷ Vilsenki, A. (2024, August 24). *Interview with Agnès Vilsenki* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

intersubjective experiences, as identified in the analysis of participants' descriptions of each performance. Participants report experiencing a narrative dynamic in which linear and non-linear structures interplay. This interweaving, combined with the unpredictability inherent in collective improvisation, characterises the 'alinear' narrative mode we propose.

Alinearity is enabled by the co-presence of live performance artists and the audience during the sessions, heightening participants' perception of the immediacy with which events unfold and fostering an affective connection within the embodied interactions among participants—each performance thus becoming a unique and unrepeatable experience. In this sense, we argue that our live cinema model generates an auratic experience. This argument is supported by the analysis of the micro-phenomenological interviews conducted for this case study and further enriched by artist Márcia Raquel Lima's reflections, which will be presented in the final chapter of this thesis.

3.3 Live cinema sessions: Lisbon, Luanda and Fortaleza

In this section, we examine the implementation of our live cinema project in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza, focusing on three key dimensions. The first dimension is the performance location, which refers to the specific cultural venues where each session took place and their contextual significance. The selected venues were cultural spaces in which the participating artists were already actively engaged, fostering a sense of welcoming, and community-based that supported our encounters.

They were also chosen for their openness and flexibility in accommodating experimental, process-oriented creative encounters. Unlike traditional cultural institutions, these venues were willing to host our live sessions not as exhibitions of finalised artworks but as unfinished, rehearsal-like experiences. These settings enabled our collective exploration and improvisation, with events open to the public in environments that fostered community engagement and cultural exchange.

The second aspect explored is the performance design, which encompasses the structure and format of each session, including spatial configuration, technical setup, and the thematic framing of the work. This framing also involved the cumulative layering of audiovisual content, with each session incorporating and reworking materials generated in earlier performances.

The third dimension explored is participatory practices, focusing on the various modes of engagement in the live performances—including the real-time visual display of participants'

co-presence, live interactions, and post-performance discussions. Because improvisation varied significantly across sessions, we include excerpts from both audience members' and performers' micro-phenomenological interviews to illustrate the range of their experiences. In the following subsections, we examine how these improvisational variations unfolded across our sessions in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza.

3.3.1 Lisbon: Inaugural Circular Immersion

3.3.1.1 Performance location: Curta à Tarde at Sítio.PT

Our first live cinema performance took place during C.A.T—Curtas à Tarde, a cultural event at Sítio.PT held in Lisbon on 27 July 2024. This event brings together performances, short film screenings, and discussion panels. It is open to the public and focuses on artistic expressions that explore contemporary political and social issues.

I became involved in the event through my connection with Zelu and my participation in their cultural gatherings in Lisbon, where I met the event's organiser, Brazilian curator and filmmaker Graziela Pacheco, who was also actively engaged in Zelu's activities.

Our live cinema performance was scheduled for thirty minutes within the event program, followed by thirty minutes of open conversation among the curator, performers, participants, and audience members.

3.3.1.2. Performance design: Multi-screen 360-degree environment

Our live session was organised to accommodate around thirty people in a spacious event venue. The arrangement of the larger screen was designed to create the most immersive experience possible for the audience during the event. Attendees were invited to occupy the central space, which was set up with approximately thirty chairs, surrounded by three screens: one positioned near the live editing station and another near the live music station. The performers were arranged diagonally; the musician was positioned with his back to the screen that displayed the real-time image manipulation, while the live editing performer faced the main screen along with the audience.



Figure 20. Photograph of the setup for *Contact Zone*, our first live performance in Lisbon, 2024. Photo: Natália Gondim.

In addition, two lateral screens were installed to enhance a 360-degree-like immersive visual experience. The second screen, situated between the live musician and the live editing performer, had previously been set up for the short film screenings scheduled later in the event's programme. An additional screen was placed on the left side of the live editing station, similarly to the main screen, using fabric and clamps, as documented in Figure 21. These lateral screens displayed pre-edited audiovisual material predominantly featuring blue tones of visuals layering oceanic underwater scenes, flying birds, and swimming fishes. These elements provided the backdrop for the juxtaposition of videos played on a continuous loop within the eyeball imagery.

The chairs were placed throughout the space in a free arrangement, allowing for the dispersion of the audience within the area. There was easy access for attendees to enter and exit during the performance, with the freedom to move around rather than remain seated throughout the live cinema performance. The space was arranged to enable viewing from multiple angles, whilst directing attention to the main screen, which was the largest of the three screens and showcased the real-time audiovisual manipulation.

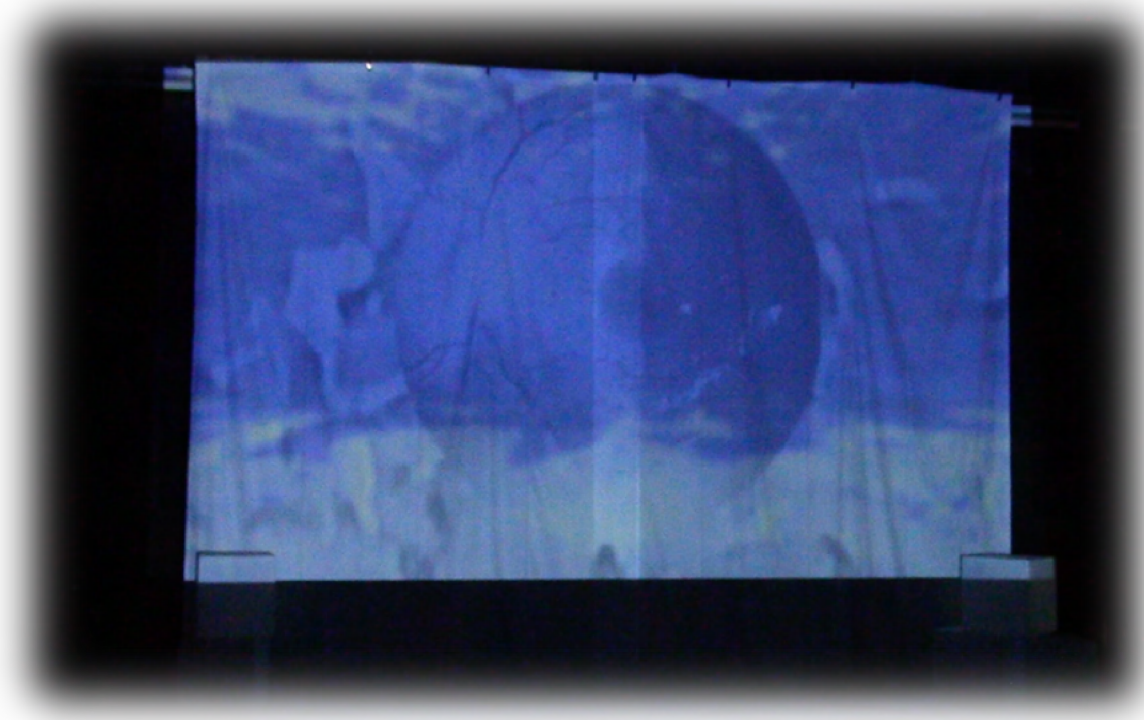


Figure 21. Photograph of the main screen projecting the live editing during *Contact Zone*, our first live cinema performance in Lisbon, 2024. Photo: Natália Gondim.

Although we initially planned to project the live visuals directly onto the venue's wall, the dark colour of the surface and the open access to the outdoor area made the projection difficult to see, particularly during daylight hours. Due to the limited visibility of the audiovisual content, we opted for a fabric screen measuring 5 metres high by 6 metres wide, which provided a more suitable display for the screening.

In designing the performance, we sought to create a circular environment, with visual and auditory stimuli enveloping the open room and emanating from multiple distributed points within the space. The live editing station was positioned diagonally to the left, opposite the live musician on the diagonal right, reinforcing this spatial intention. Speakers were placed to the left and right of the audiovisual performer, behind the audience's chairs, while the musician's speakers were positioned on either side of his station. Together, these elements shaped a circular auditory space for the audience.

Due to the limited number of projectors and the computer's ability to manage only one high-resolution video output at a time, we decided to project the live camera input exclusively onto the largest screen. The fabric screen, held in place with clamps, was attached to the ceiling to ensure clear visibility for the audience, as illustrated below:



Figure 22. Photograph showing the three screens used in ‘Contact Zone’, our first live performance in Lisbon (2024). Photo: Agnes Vilseki.

The setup helped foster immersion and a sense of circular space, as noted by some interviewees. Cardoso, an audience member in Lisbon, shared the following comment:

I don’t know if there’s more, I think... maybe just to try to convey what the visual image was, because that’s how I feel — like, when I remember that day, being in that space, that’s what I feel. Like I’m just a tiny dot, everything around me is dark, and in front of me there’s this... this blue. And on my right side — because Mbalango was on my right — there’s this experimental thing coming from him, and there’s this kind of instrumental audio, like the sound from the video coming through differently. And then there’s this... it’s really this image — you were talking about that circular feeling — like being surrounded, immersed in everything that’s happening around you.⁶⁸

With audience seats offering only a lateral view of the performers and side screens, attention was primarily focused on the main screen. This screen presented an approximately ten-minute linear narrative of documentary interviews, divided in brief clips of one or two minutes triggered at various moments. These projections were alternated with video interventions and real-time screenings of participants’ presence in the performance space, deliberately disrupting the linear flow and inviting the audience to engage in real-time interactions.

3.3.1.3. Participatory practice: Live camera and co-presence

In Lisbon, the live music was performed by Mbalango, a musician originally from Mozambique. We met in person at the event location the day before to set up the space and the

⁶⁸ Cardoso, A. (2025, February 10). *Interview with Admila Cardoso* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

improvisational format for the performance. We established a basic structure for our interactions that also allowed for improvisation during the live session.

Mbalango's expression evokes the significance of instruments from the cultures of the diaspora. These instruments, brought by enslaved peoples from Africa to the Americas and Europe, became not only symbols of cultural survival but also powerful tools for conveying messages, preserving oral histories, and sustaining communal ties. Through the sounds of his self-built *mbira*, Mbalango's performances bridge his ancestral heritage with his personal experience as a diasporic artist in Lisbon.



Figure 23. Photograph of Mbalango, Mozambican musician, projected onto a screen via live camera input during the *Contact Zone* performance in Lisbon (2024). Photo: Natália Gondim.

As a live editing tool for participation, we incorporated a live camera input, which played a more prominent role as a variable element in our session in Lisbon than in the other two live cinema performances. While a live camera input was present in Luanda, its use was less central there, and it was absent in Fortaleza.

In Lisbon, however, it became a crucial element of our participatory practice, capturing and projecting real-time footage of performers and audience members directly onto the screen and shaping the participants live cinema experience as it unfolded.

The live camera setup relied on two main sources: the laptop's built-in webcam, which captured the performer and her immediate surroundings, and a mobile phone running the NDI app, which transmitted real-time video to Resolume Arena via the Wi-Fi network. The live

camera input, was triggered as a clip that could be manipulated with visual effects, layered, and projected onto the screen in real time.

The mobile phone provided dynamic perspectives, while the laptop webcam offered stable video input. This configuration enabled the display of live interactions between audience and performers, layered with visual effects to create immersive and participatory qualities in the live cinema experience. In Lisbon, audience member Alessandra Montani Albertini described her experience of the live camera projection, which captured the co-presence of audience and performers on screen:

Yes. So, the first thing that came to mind was the feeling of being present. Like something that was happening all around, 360 degrees, and collectively. I remember... I have visual memories and... of the sound of the music. And of people.⁶⁹

She also described her experience of recalling the live camera input, specifically noting how her attention shifted between observing the live music performer and the projection that captured both performers and audience members. In her words:

For example, the artist playing, who really caught my attention, like, because of the sound... And sometimes, I don't know if it was something, like... When I focused on the video, sometimes I'd step away to see if it was only happening on the screen or if it was something else, you know, like... I kept going back and forth, I'd go in and come out.⁷⁰

Towards the end of this session, Mbalango performed an intervention in which he began chanting “amar ao próximo” (love one another). During our post-performance discussion, he explained that after listening to the interviewees’ speeches, he felt compelled to sing those words, intending to convey his own interpretation of our live cinema experience through this chanting. This moment highlights how the openness of our live cinema practice facilitates participation and welcomes performers to enact agency within our collective storytelling. Reflecting on this moment as both researcher and performer, I noted in my self-interview for this study: “They didn’t expect that; it was a surprise. And I wasn’t aware—I was surprised by Mbalango’s improvisation as well.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Montani Albertini, A. (2024, August 24). Interview with Alessandra Montani Albertini [Interview]. Lisbon, Portugal. (Translated from Portuguese by the author). Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁷⁰ Montani Albertini, A. (2024, August 24). Interview with Alessandra Montani Albertini [Interview]. Lisbon, Portugal. (Translated from Portuguese by the author). Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁷¹ Gondim, N. (2024, October 10). Self-interview with Natália Gondim [Interview]. Available at:



Figure 24. Photograph of the live-editing performer captured through a webcam during *Contact Zone* in Lisbon (2024). Photo: Natália Gondim.

Our live camera input captured audience participation—whether seated or moving through the space—and projected it onto a larger screen, amplifying the immersive experience described by interviewees. A mobile phone camera, connected via an NDI app and given to a volunteer, moved freely through the venue to record real-time footage of both audience and performers. This footage was then projected during the live performance, integrating the audience’s presence into the diegetic audiovisual narrative.



Figure 25. Photograph from *Contact Zone* in Lisbon (2024), showing a volunteer testing the live camera and its projection on the screen. Photo: Natália Gondim.

After illuminating the room, we invited participants to join a post-performance discussion with the event's curator, performers, Zelu artists, and audience members. The conversation addressed both aesthetic and conceptual aspects of the audiovisual narrative, as well as participants' experiences of the 'liveness' dimension in our session. This performance was the first live cinema experience for both performing artists and most of audience members. Together, we reflected on how the audience and performers contributed to shaping the collective narrative during this session.



Figure 26. Photography of 'Contact Zone' in Lisbon (2024). In the order of appearance from left to right: Graziela Pacheco - C.A. T's curator, Mbalango - live music performer and Natália Gondim - live editing performer and Admila Cardoso - Zelu artist. Photo: Agnes Vilseki.

During our post-performance conversation, audience members raised thought-provoking questions about the overlooked histories predating Portuguese colonisation and how these could be addressed through inviting Indigenous peoples to participate in our live cinema practices—as a means not only to acknowledge these histories but also to offer a space for Indigenous artists to express their perspectives on dominant historical narratives. Our discussions also highlighted the ongoing challenge of proposing change in educational systems and memorial sites across cities shaped by colonial histories.



Figure 27. Photograph of audience members and diasporic artist participating in the post-performance debate at 'Contact Zone,' Lisbon (2024). Photo: Natália Gondim.

3.3.2 Luanda: Intimate Semi-Circular Encounter

3.3.2.1 Performance location: Instituto Guimarães Rosa

The venue for our second live cinema performance was the Instituto Guimarães Rosa (IGR), the cultural institution of the Brazilian Embassy in Luanda. Over the course of a week, we observed the activities of Coletivo Jacá, a group of Brazilian artists who had travelled from Salvador to Luanda to host *saraus* (poetic gatherings) with the participation of Angolan artists at the institute.



Figure 28. Photograph of members of Coletivo Jacá and Angolan artists dancing during a *sarau*, a live, participatory poetry event, at the Instituto Guimarães Rosa (IGR) in Luanda (2024). Photo: Natália Gondim.

As Afro-Brazilian descendants, these artists shared their personal experience with the enduring presence of colonial legacies in contemporary social and political life of these cities. The gatherings provided a space for poetry improvisation by participants, with particular focus on the historical and cultural ties between Luanda and Salvador—cities historically connected by the transatlantic slave trade and the forced migration of African peoples to Brazil. Jaca's *saraus* at the IGR were documented through audiovisual recordings and integrated as audiovisual material in our session in Luanda.

We adapted our live cinema performance for an intimate setting, as the institute's main exhibition spaces housed *Coreografias do Impossível*, the São Paulo Biennial exhibit in Luanda co-curated by Grada Kilomba. The artworks in that exhibition also echoed the themes present in our performance and had been documented as part of our field observations in this study.

During our field research at the institute, IGR's director provided a small classroom for our performance. We adapted to the limited space by reducing the number of participants and using a single screen for the live editing projection. The room accommodated around ten people, and the performance lasted approximately thirty minutes, followed by a thirty-minute discussion in which participants shared their reflections on the live cinema experience.

3.3.2.2. Performance design: Single screen in a small classroom

Despite the small, square-shaped room, we maintained our intention to create a circular spatial configuration by arranging chairs along the walls, fostering intimacy and closeness among participants. The limited space for performers further reinforced this sense of togetherness with the audience. In this session, performers were positioned in a semi-circle facing the main screen, where the live visuals were being projected. Our performance design in Luanda thus promoted physical proximity, which participants described in interviews as contributing to their experience of intimacy and connection during the live interactions.



Figure 29. Photograph of live editing setup during *Contact Zone* in Luanda, November 2024. Photo: Márcia Raquel Lima.

For this session, we invited Vagné L., a member of Coletivo Jacá, to perform live music. He was positioned to the left of the live editing station, where our equipment was set up. The audience was seated along the walls on either side of the station, forming a semi-circular arrangement that ensured all participants had a clear view of the live audiovisual projection on the wall.



Figure 30. Photograph of live music setup during *Contact Zone* in Luanda, November 2024. Photo: Idalécio Melim.

Additionally, in the far-right corner, visual artist Márcia Raquel Lima performed live painting. She intuitively responded to the sounds she heard during the performance, as she could not see the live audiovisual projection. Although she faced away from the projection and her artistic process was primarily guided by her perception of the narrative through sound, the room's lighting and the soft glow of the projection remained visible in her peripheral vision. These subtle cues of the audiovisual narrative also influenced her creative work. In her words:

And well, unfortunately, what I most wanted to witness, but wasn't part of my role as an artist, was to see the visual part, which I didn't have the opportunity to see; I could only feel the music. I did catch glimpses, just the shadows of what was being projected, but that's my only curiosity, to be honest, because I really didn't get to see it, and it stays in my mind. However, on a personal and artistic level, it was an experience that greatly changed how I interact with other artists and how I see myself as an artist. I really enjoyed this collaboration, this experience... this exchange of talents. I don't know what else to say except that I have very good memories, a truly positive recollection, of it all.⁷²

⁷² Lima, M. R. (2025, February 6). *Interview with Márcia Raquel Lima* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>



Figure 31. Live painting performance by Márcia Raquel Lima during *Contact Zone* in Luanda, November 2024. Photo: Idalécio Melim.

In this session, our intention to create an immersive experience was maintained even with a single projection screen. Despite limitations posed by windows and power outlets, we arranged the performance space to optimally accommodate all performers and audience members while fostering a sense of closeness. Moreover, the audiovisual aesthetics and live interactions allowed participants to engage with immersive experiences through the multisensory stimulus of colours and sounds, in ways similar to our performances in larger or differently configured spaces.

In the following section, we will also share our participatory practices, along with first-person descriptions of performers and audience members in Luanda.

3.3.2.3. Participatory practice: Intimate encounter with live painting

During our session in Luanda, we were joined by two members of the Zelu collective, who had previously been interviewed in Lisbon for our audiovisual material. One of them, the Angolan artist and photographer Idalécio Melim, helped document the performance and operate the live camera via the NDI app on our mobile phone. However, due to limited mobile data and connectivity issues at the venue, this tool could not be used in the same way as during our first performance in Lisbon.

We were also joined by Márcia Raquel, an Angolan visual artist and Zelu member previously interviewed in Lisbon. She participated in live painting during our session in Luanda. For the live music performance, we invited Vagné L, whom I had met earlier that week while participating in activities organised by Coletivo Jáca at Instituto Guimarães Rosa in Luanda. Vagné is a Brazilian artist working with experimental sound art rooted in Afrofuturism and ancestral music production. His artistic practice includes the creation of unconventional instruments, sculptures, and sound installations through meta-recycling. Like Márcia Raquel, his performance marked his first experience in live cinema, fostering a sense of collective experimental engagement for both artists.

Vagné L. explored pre-recorded sounds from his experience in the Amazon region of Brazil, alongside sound recordings captured in Angola, which were recorded during his visit to villages outside Luanda. His live performance combined the textures of street markets, the ambient sounds of Luanda, and a vocal storytelling in the Kimbundu language, narrating a legend about life and death by Yanick, an Angolan man he met during a visit to Malanje, a region near Luanda. As Márcia Raquel describes, she noted the political dimension of this narrative discourse during Vagné's performance. Although she could not understand the speech in Kimbundu, she was able to grasp its connotations and underlying meaning. In her words:

There was also a part, I'm trying to recall it now from my subconscious, there was a part with a man speaking. I'm not sure if it was a dialect, but there was a man speaking repeatedly. And then there were echoes. And then there was also a part, I believe, that was political... I think it was political.⁷³

Vagné's live music performance featured self-made shaker instruments, and a custom-built MIDI controller constructed using Arduino technology. Through this device, he triggered *berimbau* sounds and incorporated a *cabaça* (gourd) as an instrument in his

⁷³ Raquel, M. (2025, February 6). *Interview with Márcia Raquel Lima* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

performance. In Brazil, the term *cabaça* refers to the gourd fruit. This fruit is commonly used to create musical instruments such as the *berimbau*, *xequerê*, and *cua*, as well as for crafts and utensils. It was brought to Brazil by enslaved African people and has become significant for musical instruments in Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian cultures across the Americas.



Figure 32. Photograph of Vagné, live music performer from Brazil and Hurya, audience member from Angolan at our post-performance conversations in our live cinema session, *Contact Zone*, in Luanda. Photo: Gabriel André.

The live editing performance integrated audiovisual material documented in Luanda. Drawing on my field observations in the city, I expanded our audiovisual narrative by capturing brief moments of street life, particularly historical sites and symbols of our cultural entanglements, as reflected in people's everyday movements and the urban landscape. Below, we present a comment from Vieira, an audience member who participated in this session, reflecting on his visual memory of it:

It happened when it started to focus more on it. It seemed like it was an African tribe, hmm, how can I say it? I just know that there were many, many Black men gathered, and it seemed like it was doing a quick eye pass and then it was coming back. Then there was something you did... and it was showing a young man, and the focus stayed just on that young man walking during the whole passage.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the

Our audiovisual content in this session included documentation of historical monuments commemorating political leaders who fought for independence from the Portuguese colonial regime in Angola. By integrating these visuals and juxtaposing them with our field observations of colonial memorial sites in Lisbon, we engaged with transnationality while exploring how colonisation is remembered differently across these territories.

This transnational audiovisual content was experienced by audiences through the live syncretic interplay of music, painting, and documentary editing. Alexandre Vieira's reflection illustrates how he navigated the complex relationships between these performative elements:

I kept asking myself, how is the performance going to fit into this documentary? Then I realised that the rhythm it was following seemed connected to the change of scenery. When it was calmer, he tried to smooth things out a bit; when it was faster and the image of the eye on the screen was more shaky, he tried to make something much more rhythmic. The brushstrokes of the artist who was also painting seemed to change with the rhythm of the music the musician was producing. Because she was relying only on what she heard, so the more rhythmic the music was, the stronger and longer her brushstrokes became. So, I tried to alternate between observing a bit of what Vagné was doing and what the artist was doing, without losing track of the film.⁷⁵

After reformulating his words to confirm my interpretation of his experience—an interview technique I learned during micro-phenomenological interview training with Valenzuela-Moguillansky—he affirmed that his central question was: “How do people get in sync like that?” I then asked him, “And how did you manage to answer that question?” to which he replied:

Hmm, the artist who was painting said that she relied heavily on what she heard, and that’s how she guided her painting, she just focused on that. And there were two sounds: what was happening in the documentary, and what Vagné was producing. She was essentially alternating between what she heard from both to create her work. So, I think I’d say she focused on just one sense, she focused entirely on hearing. But even though she saw what she was painting, it was probably a bit difficult because the environment was dimly lit.⁷⁶

I then asked him whether he had noticed this interaction between the artists and how he interpreted each one's interaction with the others. He responded:

author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁷⁵ Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: This interview highlights are available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁷⁶ Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Fortaleza/Luanda. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

Yes, basically each one was prioritising one of the five senses and gave it full attention in order to produce their art. Vagné was paying close attention to what he saw in the documentary, and he tried to follow the change of scenes with the music he produced. (...) The artist who was painting was mostly focused on listening to what was happening in order to guide her painting.⁷⁷

I further asked him about the live editing station and what he perceived regarding my role in the dynamic interplay he had interpreted as part of his attempt to answer his central question, to which he replied:

Basically, you were the director, the person steering the ship, because if the video stopped being produced, the two of them would be lost. Vagné wouldn't have anything to base the rhythm of his music on, and if he didn't have a reference, the artist who was painting wouldn't know how to begin either. In other words, the ship would stop. It was a collaboration, yeah, a collaboration.⁷⁸

As the lights came on, the audience began to discuss the screening. During our post-performance conversation, we reflected on how the audience perceived our aesthetic and conceptual audiovisual narrative, which enabled us to deepen our mutual understanding of what had been created and experienced together. Through the exchange of perceptions among all participants, we explored our awareness of the session's collective improvisation.



Figure 33. Post-performance conversation during our live session at the Instituto Guimarães Rosa (IGR), Luanda, December 2024. Photo: Natália Gondim.

⁷⁷ Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Fortaleza/Luanda. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁷⁸ Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Fortaleza/Luanda. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

As identified in our micro-phenomenological interviews with participants, audience members engaged deeply with the audiovisual narrative, reflecting on its temporal and spatial complexity. Vieira, for example, initially sought a logical structure but gradually recognised the intuitive and affective dimensions of the performance. His reflections reveal how the temporal and geographical layering invited a broader understanding of the narrative, beyond the linear logic. In his words:

I'll try to recall that video. At first, I was trying to find the logic behind all of it. And usually, I do try to find the logic in things. But it wasn't really about logic, it was more about just seeing what you were feeling. And when that game-like sound came in, it felt like maybe we're living in a simulation, and we're being controlled by someone. Then there was that eye, at first I associated it with a crystal ball. It felt like someone was there consulting it, seeing something, because there was that temporal shift, and that left me a bit confused... wondering why the shift in time? Then came the geographical shift, and I started to understand why that might be happening, but there were so many "whys" that I ended up confused. Then when you said it was your way of seeing the world, that's when it clicked, that was the connection. We don't just see the world in the present. We also analyze the past, how the past has affected the present, and how the present will affect the future.⁷⁹

Furthermore, Vieira reflects on how post-performance discussions deepened his understanding of the lived experience and the performers' intentions, particularly regarding their narrative choices, which unfolded in dynamically responsive ways during the live performance:

Then, when you said it was your way of seeing the world, it was like... ah, so that's the connection. (...) Yes. When you said that... after having watched your entire video, and then we moved on to the questions, and you said that the circle was your eye, and your way of seeing the world, I started to question and analyze everything I had already seen. (...) And it was a very deep experience, because it made me analyse how I see the world. In what aspects I find it interesting to see the world as beautiful, or what things in the world displease me when I look at it.⁸⁰

In the following section, we analyse our third performance, held in Fortaleza, during which we used audiovisual material documented in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza. This accumulation of recordings enabled a shift toward abstraction, which became the predominant aesthetic of the performance. This shift allowed for a more extensive exploration of the live manipulation of fluid transitions and visual effects in our live-editing performance.

⁷⁹ Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁸⁰ Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

3.3.3 Fortaleza: Expanded Abstract Immersion

3.3.3.1. Performance location: Porto Iracema das Artes

The live cinema session in Fortaleza was our third performance during the “Narration and Abstraction in Performance” artistic residency led by Arto Lindsay and Eric Barbosa at Escola Porto Iracema das Artes, a public arts institution. Over two days, we explored the artistic work of the participants and gained insight into our diverse research interests and backgrounds.



Figure 34. Photograph of artists’ conversation at Escola Porto Iracema das Artes, a public arts institution that hosted the live cinema session in Fortaleza. Photo: Natália Gondim.

We formed multidisciplinary groups to create our collective performances, which were presented in the institution's rooms the following day. Our fifteen-minute live cinema performance was followed by a group discussion about our work and that of the other residency artists. These artists were experienced live performers, but for most, it was their first participation with live cinema practice.

3.3.3.2. Performance design: Mirrored projections in dance studio

The room selected for the performance was a dance studio with mirrors and windows overlooking the school courtyard. During setup, we tested the ceiling-mounted projector and chose not to use the available movable white screen, opting instead to let the projection interact directly with the architecture of the room.

The musicians faced the live editing station, with Diego Lucena on the right-side playing bass and Henrique Gomes in the left corner controlling the MIDI interface for sound effects. We were joined by a live poetry performer, Lucas Lins, positioned with a microphone at the centre of the room, slightly in front of the musicians, facing the live-editing station and with their back to the projection screen.⁸¹



Figure 35. Photograph of the “Contact Zone” performance in Fortaleza, December 2024. Photo: Natália Gondim.

The audience had no designated seating and dispersed organically in the room, mostly leaning against the side walls or sitting on the floor in a semi-circle facing the projection wall. Speakers were positioned near the musicians, while the screening was visible frontally to both the live editing performer and the audience, from the side for the musicians, and from the back for the poet. The projected visuals reflected across the room’s mirrors, and the predominance of blue lighting created an immersive atmosphere, evoking an underwater environment in

⁸¹The use of ‘their’ refers to Lucas Lins, as the performer’s preferred neutral pronoun.

consonance with oceanic and whale sounds manipulated live by one of the music performers.

The stage created by the live poetry performer was adorned with objects evoking sea deities, particularly *Yemanjá*, the *orixá* (deity) associated with the sea and motherhood, who occupies a central place in Afro-Brazilian religious traditions. The stage elements included a bottle of water and a cloth decorated with shells and pearls, which the performer used to cover their face during the performance.



Figure 36. Photograph of the ‘Contact Zone’ performance in Fortaleza, December 2024.
Photo: Natália Gondim.

During the performance, Henrique and Natália were seated near their MIDI controllers, while Diego stood with his guitar. Lins remained seated for most of the performance, standing only three times to recite. The live-editing station was positioned near the back wall to stay close to the projector’s power sources, with the audience arranged along either side of the room. Two doors were kept open—one for entry and one for exit—creating a corridor-like performance circuit through the school space.

Our third live cinema session concluded in the school’s music room, where participants and audience members engaged in a final discussion about their experiences over the two days of collective artistic practice, sharing reflections on how they perceived our live cinema performance in Fortaleza.

3.3.3.3. Participatory practice: Abstraction in live poetry performance

In Fortaleza, we expanded the number of performers participating in our live session, we included local, Brazilian artists, Henrique Gomes, a cinema researcher and musician with migratory experience as a diasporic artist, who had studied and lectured on Latin American cinema at the University of Macau, and Diego Lucena, a physician and musician, who played bass in interplay with Gomes. During the performance, Gomes used his MIDI controller to manipulate the bass and remix whale sounds and deep-sea recordings captured by Lucas Lins, a performance artist, poet, and oceanographer. Lucas also contributed with live poetry, reciting their poems with a microphone during the live cinema session.

We incorporated performer's diverse artistic expressions addressing migration and colonial legacies in this session. By exploring *syncretis* throughout our visual abstractions, sound elements, and poetry by Lins, who recited three of their poems during brief interludes in the performance (see Annex 3 for my own English translations of them from Portuguese).

Their poetic interventions explored the endurance of the body within the ocean's waters we swim in today, evoking a deeper sense of co-presence with colonised peoples through the unperceived dimensions of their existence—revealing how their contributions to our history often remain 'invisible' within dominant historical narratives. Although we shifted towards more abstract narratives in this session, we remained focused on challenging the historical perspectives of Portuguese colonial legacies in postcolonial societies.

In drawing connections between our session in Fortaleza and our previous performance in Luanda, Vieira's reflections as an audience member in Luanda illuminate a key aspect of our live cinema experience: the limits of human perception. His response highlights what Lins describes as the 'invisible' in our perception of the world, an aesthetic and conceptual concern that resonates across our audiovisual narrative. Vieira described his interpretation of the live visuals, as a human effort to see something just beyond reach. In his words:

There was something I found almost, I'm not sure if it was irrelevant, but what made me stay more focused on the video was how the eye changed its color. I didn't understand the reason, but as the video progressed, it seemed like the eye would shift in color, from darker to lighter tones. And this happened regardless of the situation. It also seemed to follow the sound of the music, the more rhythm the music had, the more the eye seemed to tremble or glitch, like a blind person trying to see or focus on something.⁸²

⁸² Vieira, A. (2024, December 4). *Interview with Alexandre Vieira* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

In Fortaleza, we explored distinct modalities for conveying diasporic artists' perspectives, moving beyond the conventional use of interviewees' speech within our audiovisual narrative. Rather than displaying the pre-recorded testimonies, we privileged abstraction through our live visual manipulation—drawing upon documentary materials gathered across three contexts—while compensating for the absence of artists' direct speech through live poetry recitations that thematically resonated with the interviews' core concerns.

This performative turn was noted in Gomes's description, in which he mentioned the presence of Lins and his subsequent live interaction with the poetry recitation through sound manipulation:

There was that blue, and Lucas's text that talked about the bottom of the sea, he had brought some whale sounds for us to use, and I incorporated those sounds he brought as well. And the bass, it really has this ability to fill the space, you know? (...) I think with Lucas we had that first rehearsal, right, sometimes just reading a little for us to test the microphone, but I think I really felt his presence in the piece more when he put on that fabric, right? What he brought to cover, the mask, covering his face with a mask. And then I perceived him more as a performative figure, there, less from the realm of declamation and more from the realm of performance itself, you know? Then I remember, when the lights were off, he also had kind of shiny things, right? I think the light hit with a certain shine on that black cloth over it too. So, I think at that moment, a stronger presence was established, you know? (...) Ah, there was something he kept repeating. It was something like—I think it was: time, like—“time, time, time”, something like that. And then I added an echo of ‘time’, and several layers of his voice, I felt that at that moment it really connected his voice with the sound ambiance, you know?⁸³

Furthermore, in our audiovisual documentation in Fortaleza, we also included documentation of the public monument featuring the statue of Francisco José do Nascimento (1839–1914), an abolitionist leader from Ceará, who was born in Fortaleza and is also known as the *Dragão do Mar* (Sea Dragon). His historical significance is acknowledged by Fortaleza's prominent public art institution, the Centro Dragão do Mar de Arte e Cultura⁸⁴. This institution comprises several artistic spaces, including a cinema, a contemporary art museum, a theatre, a planetarium, and art schools—among them, Porto Iracema das Artes, the hosting institution for our live cinema performance.

His statue is located at the entrance of this cultural centre, celebrating his leadership of the *jangadeiros* (raft fishermen) in Ceará's abolitionist movement, pioneering in the abolition of slavery in Brazil. In 1881, he paralysed the slave market at the port of Fortaleza by refusing

⁸³ Gomes, H. (2025, February 11). *Interview with Henrique Gomes* [Interview]. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

⁸⁴ For more information on the Centro Dragão do Mar de Arte e Cultura, see <https://www.dragaodomar.org.br/>

to transport slaves for sale in the southern part of the country. He was a key political figure in the fight against slavery in both Ceará and Brazil.



Figure 37. Still image from footage recorded in Fortaleza, featuring the statue of Dragão do Mar, an abolitionist leader from Ceará, December 2024. Photo: Natália Gondim.

Another public monument illustrating parallel narratives within postcolonial spaces was documented in Luanda: the statue of Queen Nzinga, a key figure in the country's resistance against colonial rule. Together, our audiovisual narratives expose a contrast with memorial sites documented in Lisbon, which often glorify Portuguese figures for their roles in the colonial project — a system of domination historically supported by the state.

In this way, building on the accumulated audiovisual elements from our live cinema performance in Fortaleza, we emphasised a contemporary moment of 'rupture', in which the echoes of neglected parallel histories resurface in the present. As our documentary narrative engages with the historical moment we are living through today, we reflect a growing global effort to challenge national, mono-perspective narratives based on Eurocentric interpretations of colonial regimes—narratives that are increasingly questioned and no longer 'tolerated'⁸⁵.

⁸⁵ Peter Pál Pelbart, as previously cited in this research; see Pelbart (2016, p. 412).



Figure 38. Still image from footage recorded in Luanda, November 2024, featuring the statue of Queen Nzinga, a key figure in Angola’s resistance against colonial rule. Photo: Natália Gondim.

To explore this rupture aesthetically, our live editing practice in Fortaleza focused on abstraction, intensifying the fluid transitions and non-linear footage documented across these three cities. In this session, we concentrated on real-time visual manipulation, as the oceanic soundscape—a recurring symbolic and narrative element in previous performances—was already being delivered by live music performers. This allowed for more attentive engagement with live visual improvisation and its interplay with the other artists, leading to a more abstract audiovisual experience.

This abstract visual approach proved particularly evocative. Henrique Gomes, echoing Vieira's perception in Luanda, identified the blue projection from the live editing station as a unifying element. He described how it brought all performers together within the shared space, functioning as an aesthetic anchor that guided perception toward cohesion. In his words:

What I really remember from the video is the color—like, for me, the blue was what really stood out. I think it was the foundation of everything, you know? I feel like the projection was kind of like a sauce, you know? Like, there were these ingredients, but they were kind of separate, and then the projection acted like this sauce that brought everything together. Like, there was the pasta, the meatball, I don’t know... and then you pour that red sauce over it and suddenly it becomes one single dish—it becomes spaghetti, you know? But in this case, it was blue, because

of the color. So I felt that even in moments when I wasn't looking directly, I still felt the presence of that color, you know? It was something that really evoked that feeling of filling the space. That's why I think that the projection, for me, has this analogy with the bass in the sound too—in the same way that the bass was filling the space, the light, that blue light, was also doing that. It was really spilling out everywhere, you know?⁸⁶

In this session, we did not use the NDI app to manipulate a live camera input, nor the webcam to share the live editing performer's real-time capture. This, in turn, provided insights that contributed to the development of our live cinema model. As we will see in the next chapter, these variations were important for generating experimental knowledge that allowed us to explore the significance of engaging in live editing participatory practices—whether with or without live camera input.

3.4 Discussion

In this chapter, we presented our case study of three live cinema performances designed to develop a live cinema model conceptualised as an 'art of the contact zone'. This model articulates art and politics through participatory practices in post-colonial contexts, integrating a documentary filmmaking approach that involves the collection of audiovisual material through the researcher's participant-observer fieldwork, the filming of semi-structured interviews with diasporic artists, and participation in co-presence of live performers and audience in our live editing sessions.

In 2023, Eva La Cour and Joen Vedel presented "Never on Time: Live-Editing as a Mode of Research" at the International Conference on Artistic Research, co-organised by the Society for Artistic Research (SAR), in which they explored the experimental use of live editing as a research method, as follows:

Join us for a live-edited "film screening"! Although we now call it a film screening, as it will consist of sounds and moving images projected onto a screen, we still struggle to find an adequate name for what will happen. In fact, it is perhaps more precise to call it "an artistic experiment", as it deals with the question of how things are done, not only within filmmaking and artistic research, but to making as such in this time. We could also simply call it "a meeting place"; a meeting place between two artists both working with live-editing and their respective hard drives containing their research; a meeting place between production and presentation; a meeting place between different temporalities and political geographies; a meeting place between momentary constellations of imaging and reflections; a meeting place as an aesthetics of potentiality open to chance-encounters, glitches and traces

⁸⁶ Gomes, H. (2025, February 11). *Interview with Henrique Gomes* [Interview]. Fortaleza, Brazil. Translated from Portuguese by the author. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

of everyday life; a meeting place as a space for thinking together through the practising of live-editing. Yes, that's it: we hereby invite you to join our meeting-place!⁸⁷

Like the artistic experiment of La Cour and Vedel, our live cinema model blurs the boundaries between production and presentation. We created a meeting place, as a space of potentiality, open to narrative construction through the element of chance in encounters between performers and the audience.

Over the course of our investigation, we gradually increased the presence of performing artists in our live cinema sessions: from two participants in Lisbon (Mbalango and Natália Gondim), to three in Luanda (Márcia Raquel, Vagné L., and Natália Gondim), and four in Fortaleza (Lucas Lins, Henrique Gomes, Diego Lucena, and Natália Gondim). At the same time, the audiovisual narrative evolved across the three cities, becoming increasingly abstract through these iterative performances.

As a collective storytelling experience, our live cinema merged audiovisual projection with artists improvising across music, painting, and poetry. These interactions were mediated through documentary material—comprising pre-recorded interviews with Zelu collective artists—combined with real-time manipulation of live camera input and performer-triggered video clips documenting everyday street observations from Lisbon, Fortaleza, and Luanda.

The pre-edited documentary follows a linear narrative arc structured around diasporic artists' experiences and their participation in Lisbon's cultural events. The performer's non-linear interventions during live editing disrupted the documentary's linearity, while extra-diegetic found footage and live camera input—triggered by the editor—interrupted diegetic flow, establishing dissonance and criticality toward the film's thematic concerns.

This multilayered narrative emerged through live interactions between performers and audience members, each session shaped by the unpredictability of co-presence and the specificity of temporal and spatial contexts. Our model thus proposes a storytelling practice dependent upon the uncertainty of live performance itself. Yet, as Araújo (2010) argues, while technology engages social and political dimensions of artistic expression, it remains situated within power structures that condition cultural production, since “technological potentials are essential but not sufficient” (p. 136, own translation) to transform these conditions or reclaim artistic autonomy.

In our research, live editing tools are employed not merely to counter historically dominant narratives through documentation of transnational perspectives, but to create

⁸⁷ Eva La Cour and Joen Vedel. (2023). *Never on time: Live-editing as a mode of research* [Conference presentation]. International Conference on Artistic Research. Co-organised by the Society for Artistic Research (SAR). Available at <https://sar2023.no/node/211>

possibilities for its ‘actualisation’ in a collective storytelling experience through co-presence. In participating of these cultural moments, we engage in the narration of ever-changing parallel histories within the contemporary postcolonial context in which we live.

In our short documentary film *Contact Zone*⁸⁸, we juxtapose the pre-edited audiovisual narrative—initially developed for the live cinema performances—with the micro-phenomenological post-performance interviews conducted with participants. Within this audiovisual material, a ‘blind spot’ is explored as a conceptual metaphor for the epistemological limitations inherent in apprehending collective realities through embodied, singular experience, thus extending the critical gesture initiated in our live performances toward a sustained interrogation of knowledge production itself.



Figure 39. Still image from audiovisual material edited by Natália Gondim, resembling an eye, its dark central void suggesting a perceptual blind spot.

Goldstein’s *Sensation and Perception*, first published in 1980, has since evolved into its 11th edition, now co-authored with Laura Cacciamani (Goldstein & Cacciamani, 2022). The authors define the blind spot as the region of the retina where the optic nerve exits the eye, lacking photoreceptors and therefore insensitive to light (p. 43). They explain that we are typically unaware of it because our brain “fills in” the missing information based on the surrounding visual context. Goldstein & Cacciamani also point out how the previously discussed Crary’s notion of the ‘third image’ the overlapping visual fields from both eyes also help to mask this gap. In this sense, in our artistic practice the blind spot becomes a visual

⁸⁸ Gondim, N. (2025). *Contact Zone* → Live cinema performances in Lisbon, Luanda and Fortaleza (2025) [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/mz4pFsefRIE>

metaphor for overlooked histories embedded within the lifeworld, yet imperceptible to singular, embodied perception.

Our live cinema practice works to address these perceptual and historical blind spots by creating conditions for collective perception. Rather than unconsciously “filling in” gaps, we invite conscious, participatory engagement with layered temporalities and geographies that might otherwise remain invisible. This notion of embodied perception intersects with Tikka and Kaipainen's (2015b) concept of *narrative nowness*—the present moment experienced as a tension-filled intersection between memory and anticipation. They argue that nowness “is dynamically coupled to the protentive function, allowing a tension of anticipating coming events” and engages “the entire cognitive-perceptual and experiential apparatus, with its evolutionary hard-wired elements, such as emotions, logical inferences, as well as learned and culturally assimilated associations” (p. 100).

In our live editing practice, this tension manifests through an alinear narrative by simultaneously activating: the act of remembering—drawing from semi-structured interviews or brief pre-recorded memories filmed across three cities; the act of observing co-present interactions unfolding live; and the anticipation of emergent narrative meanings, enacted through participants’ personal associations and improvised interventions during the live cinema sessions.

We address blind spots as epistemological gaps by inviting both performers and audiences to contribute to collective storytelling. Our live-edited audiovisual fragments function as *protonarratives*—condensed narrative units—encapsulating multiple temporalities and geographies documented by the researcher. Audiences are invited not only to witness these recorded memories but also to actively participate via live camera input or other interventions. Through their co-present contributions within the hybrid structure of linear and non-linear narratives alternating on display, audiences shape the dynamically unfolding narratives during our live cinema sessions.

We use the term ‘participation’ rather than ‘collaboration’ to acknowledge that performer and audience interventions remain bounded by the pre-established format of our live cinema model. While some participants describe their experience as collaborative, ‘participation’ emphasises the bounded yet generative nature of this alinear structure, in which contributions emerge through live engagement within the study framework.

Our case study was developed by analysing variants and invariants across the three live performances. While artistic modalities and site-specific adaptations differed in response to each location’s spatial and technical conditions, the thematic framework of the audiovisual

material and the session structure remained constant. This balance—between a consistent structural framework and openness to site-specific variations—enabled meaningful comparative analysis across performances.

Although the initial phase of our research considered including Indigenous artists as participants, this was not possible due to their limited presence in Lisbon. Nevertheless, engaging with their contributions to contemporary political, cultural, and artistic debates remained central to our work, particularly through the perspectives of Indigenous philosophers, artists, and political leaders based in Brazil.

This absence itself led us to reflect on the unique position of Indigenous artists from Brazil, many of whom maintain strong connections to their ancestral lands despite histories of forced migration resulting from colonialism and the pressures of contemporary capitalist societies. This stands in contrast to the diasporic artists we encountered in Lisbon, whose lives and artistic practices are shaped by transnational movements between formerly colonised countries and Europe.

We also observed their distinct experiences, if we compare how diasporic artists report being distant from one's familial origins, and its influence in creating a sense of cultural displacement that shapes their self-identification as one marked by multiple belongings. According to Simmel's (2012) reflections on *El extranjero*, the 'foreigner' is a social condition that can generate both a sense of detachment and a unique perception of identity, based on mobility and a specific cultural space built through their physical and temporal presence in the society they live in. He explains:

The stranger we refer to here is not the nomad who arrives today and leaves tomorrow, but rather the one who arrives today and stays tomorrow; or, so to speak, the *potential* emigrant, who, although settled, has not yet overcome the absence of ties characteristic of coming and going. They have settled within a certain spatial circle—or a circle whose boundaries are analogous to spatial borders—but their position within it always carries qualities that neither arise from nor can arise from the circle itself. (p. 21, own translation)

Furthermore, we find resonance between Simmel's reflections and Milton Santos's (2018) approach in *O Espaço Dividido*, where he examines the political and economic tensions driving migration to urban centers. Santos observes: "Migrations—even if they do not represent the conscious will of those involved—can be interpreted as if the poor were chasing after the surplus value that was extracted from them, in order to pressure the economy into a less iniquitous distribution" (p. 371, own translation). He further underscores the conflict inherent in socially divided urban areas: "The large city thus emerges as a space where, increasingly, the

poor and their unfulfilled hopes concentrate. Today, it becomes a place of confrontations, and tomorrow, perhaps, a historic site (...)” (p. 371).

Although Santos’s analysis focuses primarily on economic disparities and their role in shaping migration and urban segregation, his reflections remain deeply relevant to our study. The tensions he identifies frequently emerge in our interviews with diasporic artists in Lisbon, who describe how these structural inequalities influence both their migratory experiences and artistic practices.

Whilst Santos exposes the material conditions underlying displacement and urban segregation—conditions our interviewees directly articulated—Freire (2014/2022) reminds us that changing political consciousness requires both intellectual engagement and emotional sustenance. Our live cinema sessions explored this intersection aesthetically, cultivating immersion through water sounds and oceanic blue visuals to provide a welcoming emotional space for participants to engage with dissonant narratives, thus enabling individual discomfort to transform into a collective critical reflection.

This approach proved particularly relevant given what diasporic artists interviewed for our film highlighted: the limited exposure to historical perspectives from ex-colonies within the Portuguese educational system. In this sense, our performance was designed to create ‘contact zones’—spaces where these marginalised perspectives could be acknowledged and where audiences could remain open to listening to narratives that may provoke discomfort.



Figure 40. Still images from audiovisual material edited by Natália Gondim, featuring an interview with Margarida Conceição, set against the backdrop of the Padrão dos Descobrimentos in Lisbon.

Sternfeld (2011) claims for ‘contact zones’ to be explored through Chantal Mouffe’s notion of *agonism*, which does not suggest that historical revisionism should be neutral, on the contrary. Mouffe’s idea enables legitimate sites of contestation where differing historical perspectives, affects, and memories can collide, be negotiated, and discussed publicly. As Sternfeld explains: “This enables a theory of democracy that allows for conflicts: Mouffe speaks of a ‘kind of conflictual consensus’ which opens up a common symbolic space for opponents as ‘legitimate adversaries’” (Sternfeld, 2011, para. 3, under “*Shared/Divided Places of Remembrance*”).

This notion also aligns with the idea of the ‘performativity of alliances’ as discussed by Butler and Krenak, as previously mentioned in this chapter. By considering our live cinema performances as creative spaces for ‘conflictual consensus’, we address Bishop’s critique of participatory arts that aim for ‘social consensus’ as a form of political engagement. Instead, our practice welcomes dissent from parallel histories—particularly those that have been historically marginalised or overlooked to this day.

To this end, we invited diasporic artists to participate in expressing, witnessing, and reflecting through multilayered storytelling. This approach acknowledges the conflict inherent in contemporary life within migratory societies. However, our invitation to attend a moment of co-presence in a live cinema setting does not seek a definitive answer, nor a radical political solution, but rather promotes experiencing the present through self-awareness of participating in a collective narration of historical events. Our commitment to political remembrance extends beyond dialogic engagement, situating our study in broader practices of collective memory.

In this context, Manning offers a poignant example in his discussion of the politics of remembrance within the Jewish community’s responses to historical injustices. He cites the Jewish writer Elie Wiesel: “Let us remember, again and again. For at the end that is all they wanted—to be remembered: their names, their faces, their silent songs, their secret triumphs, their struggle, and their death, one as awesome as the other” (Wiesel, as cited in Manning, 1990, p. 176).



Figure 41. Still image from audiovisual material edited by Natália Gondim, capturing footage of the memorial at Largo de São Domingos in Lisbon, which honors the victims of the 1506 massacre that targeted the city’s Jewish community.

Our research aims to contribute to collective remembrance initiatives by aligning with Manning’s position that a political response to victims of historical injustices must involve honoring their memory—an act that functions both as recognition and as a commitment to preventing such injustices in the future. This aim takes on renewed urgency in light of the ongoing genocide of Palestinians, which began with the *Nakba*⁸⁹ in 1948 and continues, with increasing intensity, as of this writing.

We recall the role of the politics of remembrance, in the following reflection: “Since nothing can be done physically to retrieve those who were lost in the Holocaust of World War II, Wiesel argues that the propagation of their memory will at least set a moral standard for their descendants today” (Wiesel, 1985, p.107, as cited in Manning, 1990, p. 176). Yet the question remains: how might live cinema practice facilitate the propagation of such memory and contribute to the establishment of moral standards in the present?

Our live cinema model, *Contact Zone*, offers one response to this question by engaging with Aitken’s observation that “in the act of memory, the person remembering is remembering

⁸⁹ The *Nakba*, meaning ‘catastrophe’ in Arabic, refers to the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the establishment of Israel.

his or her own past, whereas in viewing a film the spectator watches a picture of the past that is not part of his or her own past” (Aitken, 2013, p. 3). In this sense, through live interactions our practice addresses questions of agency and belonging by bridging this distinction through the simultaneous participation in the act of narrating their memories and viewing other’s.

We propose that the ‘auratic’ dimension of live cinema performance—its unique and unrepeatable character—creates conditions for establishing the performativity of alliances, as discussed earlier. Within this ‘contact zone’, participants engage in what may be termed a ‘conflictual consensus’: an acknowledgment of difference accompanied by a shared commitment to co-presence. In doing so, acts of remembrance are transformed into collective practices of witnessing individual histories within an irreproducible, shared experience of belonging to an interconnected present.

To examine how this sense of belonging manifests in practice, in the following chapter we analyse participants’ experiences across three live cinema performances. We investigate the intersubjectivity between their singular perceptions—as evoked through their recollections of each performance—and the shared experiential patterns identified across all three events. Drawing on micro-phenomenological methods, we explore how participants described their experiences and, in turn, how these accounts illuminate whether and how our live cinema model can foster agency—with or without live camera input—and cultivate a sense of belonging among diasporic artists.

CHAPTER 4

Lived Experience in Contact Zone: A Micro-Phenomenological Analysis

This chapter presents the micro-phenomenological method employed to conduct and analyse interviews with participants from three live cinema sessions held in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza. It includes interviews with three participants from each session—at least one performer and one audience member from each location—as well as the researcher’s self-interview.

Drawing on first-person descriptions, we explore intersubjectivity through participants’ experiential structures, investigating whether—and how—our live cinema practice can foster agency and belonging among diasporic artists in postcolonial migratory societies.

Our analysis followed an iterative questioning technique consistent with micro-phenomenological methodology, which builds on Pierre Vermersch’s *entretien d’explicitation* and was later expanded by Petitmengin (1999) in her studies of consciousness. The investigative process comprises both diachronic and synchronic dimensions, tracing the temporal unfolding of experiences and analysing specific moments relevant to our research questions. The chapter concludes with reflections on the insights gained throughout this process.

4.1. Micro-phenomenology: interviewing procedure

For this study, we conducted ten interviews using the methodology learned during an online micro-phenomenology training led in 2024 by Camila Valenzuela-Moguillansky, a cognitive science researcher specialising in experiential inquiry through enactive cognition.

According to the theory of enactive cognition, proposed by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch in *The Embodied Mind* (1991/2016), cognition arises through a dynamic interaction between the acting organism and its environment, rather than through the representation of a pre-given external reality. Cognition is thus understood as an embodied, situated, and emergent process in which perception, action, and emotion are fundamentally interdependent in constituting one’s experience.

In “Analysis Procedure for the Micro-Phenomenological Interview”, Camila Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Alejandra Vásquez-Rosati affirm:

In this context, micro-phenomenology emerged as a methodology aimed at allowing the study of experience in a systematic and rigorous way. It was originally created in 1994 by Pierre Vermersch as “l’entretien d’explicitation” (explicitation interview, Vermersch, 2011) and then developed further by Claire Petitmengin (2006) in the area of cognitive sciences. (2019, p.123)

Applied to our study, this means performers and audiences do not merely observe events passively; rather, they actively engage with it through their physical co-presence and attentional disposition when sharing a moment in time-space. Our approach thus aligns with first-order mediation, where the biological body serves as the primary interface for perception and interaction, grounding all further technological mediation, as discussed previously.

In elaborating participants' experiential structures, we created categories through intersubjective analysis to identify recurring patterns in their descriptions. As explained by Petitmengin (2006), micro-phenomenological interview protocols are used to access detailed descriptions of specific experiences focus on first-person evocations of sensorimotor, affective, and cognitive processes often overlooked in conventional verbal reports.

We adhered to these protocols to access and analyse participants' experiences as identified throughout our interview data. We thus collected participants' memories, whose evocations—documented in audio recordings—contributed to a collective narrative integrated into our short documentary film⁹⁰. All interviews were conducted after completing interview training and followed the suggested procedures.

By attending to the pre-reflective dimension of participants' descriptions, our methodological approach uncovered the unconscious dimension of artistic experience — revealing experiential knowledge often overlooked in reflective discourse. This aligns with the theoretical principles guiding this research, which recognise artistic practice as a means of accessing knowledge beyond reflective thought.

The interviews were video-recorded, transcribed, and analysed after I completed additional training in micro-phenomenological analysis procedures.⁹¹ To encourage wider public engagement, we selected audio excerpts to feature on our website⁹², extending academic knowledge beyond traditional formats. As Chilton and Leavy (2014) highlight, sharing such documentation is a significant aspect of artistic research:

Arts-based research facilitates this movement to involve the wider community through means such as theater productions, poetry readings, art shows, and online experiences (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Leavy, 2009). However, arts-based practices are also often local, ephemeral, and undocumented, commonly only presented to limited audiences or not even identified as research (Finley, 2011; Lafrenière & Cox, 2012a; Ledger & Edwards, 2011). Yet these forms can provide unique opportunities for enhanced public engagement and learning, livening

⁹⁰ The short documentary film is available at <https://youtu.be/mz4pFsefRIE>

⁹¹ A total of ten interviews were conducted by the author between September 2024 and March 2025: five in person (in Lisbon and Fortaleza) and five online.

⁹² This website page contains extracts from all ten interviewees who participated in the Live Cinema performances held in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza. Available at <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

content and making it accessible, useful, and potentially desired in communities beyond academia (Boydell et al., 2012; Keen & Todres, 2007). (2014, p. 408)

We planned to conduct and analyse a maximum of ten interviews, with three per live session, ensuring that each session included at least one performer and one audience member. Our aim was to achieve a representative balance between audience members and performers participating in the live cinema performances. Additionally, a self-interview with the researcher was included, bringing the total to ten interviews and providing sufficient data to develop our analysis.

In line with the micro-phenomenology interviewing procedure, participants were invited to take their time evoking meaningful memories, focusing particularly on moments they experienced as enjoyable, pleasing, or otherwise positive. The guiding question posed by the interviewer was: “Could you recall, and if so, describe, a good moment from your experience in that performance?”

By examining participants’ recalled experiences, we address our central research inquiry: whether live cinema practice can foster agency and cultivate a sense of belonging among diasporic artists. We further investigate whether liveness introduces an ‘auratic’ quality to the cinematic experience—characterised by authenticity and uniqueness (Benjamin, 1936/2020) and whether this dimension emerges in participants’ descriptions of their lived experiences.

As recommended during the micro-phenomenology training, the interviewer began each session by introducing the method and posing an open-ended question designed to evoke a specific memory. Throughout the process, the researcher facilitated interviewees’ descriptions whilst carefully avoiding influencing their responses.

According to Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati (2019), the interviewer must suspend theoretical presuppositions to remain open and responsive to interviewees’ descriptions, while interviewees must set aside habitual interpretations to accurately access and describe their specific lived experiences. Drawing on Husserl’s (1983) concept of the *natural attitude*, Celis (2019, p. 147) observes:

As Petitmengin, Remillieux, and Valenzuela-Moguillansky (2018) explain, one of the principal assumptions of the MPI is its focus on a single and situated experience, assuming that only the exploration of a single concrete experience allows one to practice *epoché*: to “bracket” or suspend preconceptions and theorizations and, notably, to suspend the implicit belief in the existence of an objective world, independent of experience. It means dropping our natural attitude of being absorbed in the content of experience (the “what”), and reorienting our attention towards the

way this experience appears to us (the “how”).

As outlined in the micro-phenomenology protocols, the interviewer systematically reformulates interviewees’ descriptions to help them remain anchored in the concrete evocation of their memories of a specific lived moment. This practice redirects their attention from reflecting on the content of an experience to focusing on how it was experienced. As Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati (2019) explain: “One of the aims of the micro-phenomenological approach is to redirect a person's attention from the content of her experience, which can vary indefinitely, to her experience of the content in which we can find stable aspects” (p. 132).

Using handwritten notes, I regularly reformulated interviewees’ words to ensure interpretive accuracy, explicitly inviting their corrections to remain aligned with their subjective experience. As interviewer, I also encouraged interviewees to focus on their sensory and perceptual memories of a specific moment, including sounds, visual elements, and tactile sensations. Following this approach, interviewees were invited to clarify their verbal expressions and gestures, and to articulate emerging insights, emotions, or bodily sensations as they recalled and described moments experienced in our live cinema sessions.

In the next section, we present our analysis of the micro-phenomenological interviews, focusing on the diachronic and synchronic structural dimensions. The chapter concludes with reflections on the interviewees’ experiences and their relevance to addressing our research questions.

4.2. Analysing the micro-phenomenological interviews

According to Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Alejandra Vásquez-Rosati (2019) the emergence of studies on embodied cognition was central to placing experience at the core of various fields. The authors highlight how this shift led to the development of methodologies for studying experience from a first-person perspective, with micro-phenomenology situated as a systematic tool for this purpose (p. 123).

The authors outline an analysis procedure that begins with data preparation and progresses to developing abstraction operations. It involves an iterative interrogation process to elaborate a generic experiential structure, either by identifying a sequence of phases unfolding over time (diachronic analysis) or by examining a specific moment (synchronic analysis). Their recommendations also emphasise the researcher’s subjective role in constructing these structures.

We apply the guidelines and principles of the micro-phenomenology analytical procedure to investigate and present our findings, aiming for intersubjective validation of our results. In their article (Figure 1, p. 125), the authors present a concertina structure that illustrates their suggestion for an analysis procedure. This structure is divided into five sections that correspond to five stages of analysis.: data preparation, specific diachronic analysis, specific synchronic analysis, generic diachronic analysis, and generic synchronic analysis.

Furthermore, any doubts or issues that arise during the analysis, as well as the criteria used to resolve them, are noted at each stage through an iterative interrogation process, as explained by the authors:

We identified a categorization mechanism that we called “iterative interrogation” that refers to the process of interrogating the data, allowing for the disclosure of the researcher’s categorization path. (...) The concertina-shaped structure permits the tracing of the analysis process whenever necessary, allowing for the evaluation of the rigor and coherence of our procedure, in order to be able to share it with other researchers and intersubjectively validate our results. (Moguillansky, C., & Vásquez-Rosati, A., 2019, p. 125)

Following the outlined analysis procedure, we began by transcribing the interviews, refining the data through the selection of relevant excerpts, and identifying satellite information. In the initial phase of identifying the diachronic structure analysis, we observed the evocation of specific moments characterised by similar qualities, which were grouped into abstract categories during the analysis of our interview data. These categories were further developed into synchronic units of analysis, each centered on a specific moment and the interviewees’ detailed descriptions of it. This allows us to examine the intersubjectivity evident in their descriptions and to construct experiential structures for these experiences across the three performances.

In line with the methodological guidelines of Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati, we adopted an inductive, bottom-up approach in our analysis. This procedure develops categories progressively from participants’ utterances, advancing from concrete descriptions toward higher levels of abstraction, rather than applying predefined categories as in deductive, top-down approaches (2019, p. 134). According to the authors:

In microphenomenology, the bottom-up identification is normally favored, since this method shares the phenomenological premise that a requirement for studying the structure of experience is the suspension of the “natural attitude” (Husserl 1983). In this way, in the identification of the structure of the experience, the intention is to “bracket” as much as possible, our preconceptions, theorizations and

previous categorizations of the experience under study. (2019, p.134)

Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati (2019, p. 131) indicate that synchronic analysis is typically conducted after diachronic analysis, since an experience must first be identified before it can be examined. However, the authors suggest that depending on the study's objectives and the data collected, synchronic analysis can also be performed independently. By following their suggestion, we first organised the data into diachronic units to construct a structured timeline of each interviewee's lived experience. This involved breaking the experience down into phases (sets of processes), sub-phases (a process), and sub-sub-phases (specific actions and events).

The construction of these categories involved abstraction operations by the researcher, described by Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati (2019) as classification (grouping utterances into experiential types), aggregation and disaggregation (defining the parameters of each category), and generalisation or specialisation (establishing their scope and nuances). In this way, our selection of categories was grounded in the interviewees' utterances and supported by a micro-phenomenological systematic analysis procedure that guided the researcher's interpretation of their lived experience descriptions.

We engaged in iterative interrogation to gradually reorganise our data and identify synchronic units by analysing significant actions or events within sub-phases and sub-sub-phases that could address our research questions. According to Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati: "The objective and research question give us the guidelines as to which moments or aspects of the experience are subject to a synchronic analysis and at what level of detail and depth it is to be carried out (2019, p. 131)." Synchronic units isolate experiences within participants' descriptions and form the basis for elaborating generic structures derived from the interview analysis. Through this process, we developed a generic structure of the experience of participants in our live cinema model, *Contact Zone*.

To illustrate our analytical process, we provide examples of interviewees' utterances used to identify intersubjectivity in their descriptions, making explicit the criteria used to define each category, including the rationale for selecting specific terms. Whenever possible, we prioritised participants' spontaneously evoked expressions, minimising interpretive bias and preserving fidelity to their first-person evocations, as recommended by the micro-phenomenological protocols developed by Petitmengin and further elaborated by Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati (2019).

4.2.1 Generic Diachronic Structure Analysis

Although our primary focus is on identifying synchronic structures to address our research questions, we first developed a generic diachronic structure of our live cinema sessions. As previously noted, this approach aligns with Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati's (2019, p. 127) suggestion that, while synchronic phenomena—such as the simultaneous interaction of perception, emotion, and cognition—are crucial, they cannot be fully understood without first considering how these aspects evolve over time. Understanding how the live cinema experience unfolds along a timeline enables us to gain deeper insight into when and how various components of experience synchronise.

In this subsection, we outline the evolution of participants' experiences in our live cinema model by drawing a diachronic structure, which will further contribute to developing our analysis of synchronic experiential structures — essential for addressing our research questions. We represent this temporal unfolding of events in the visual schema below (Figure 42), organised into four sequential phases as identified in participants' descriptions: Attentional Movement (Phase 1), Enacted Agency (Phase 2), Perceptual Attunement (Phase 3), and Cognitive Shift (Phase 4), as illustrated in the following diagram:

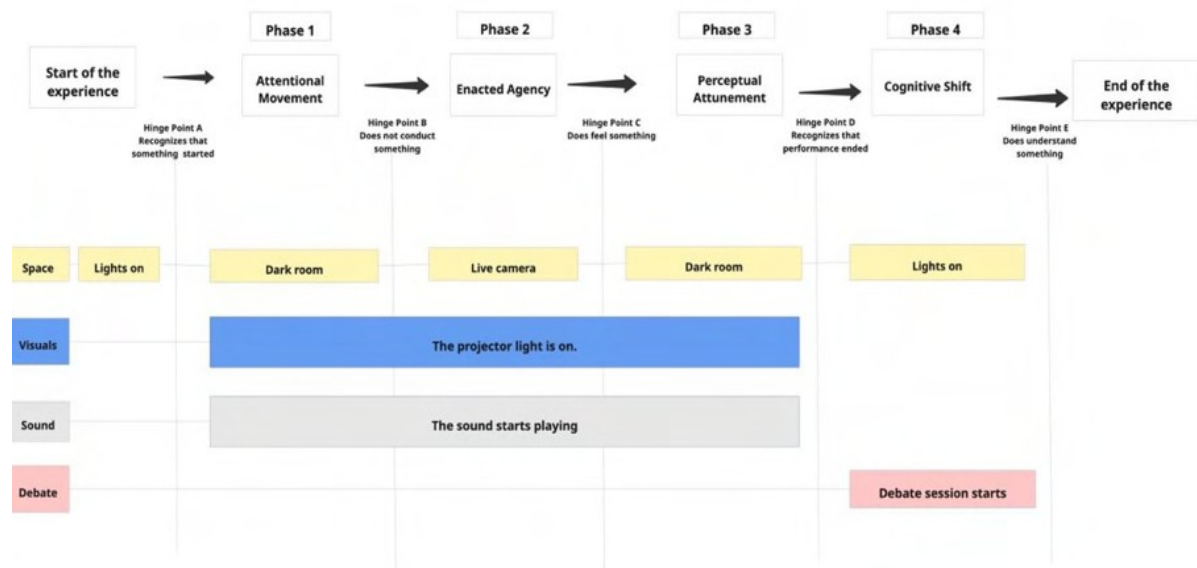


Figure 42. Generic diachronic structure and diagram of our live cinema dynamics in *Contact Zone*.

This diagram illustrates the diachronic structure representing the participants' experiences during our live cinema performances. The lower colored lines, indicating space, visuals, sound, and debate, highlight transitions within the dynamics of the live cinema

performance across these experiential phases. They mark the live performance shifts, such as transitioning from an illuminated space with ‘lights on’ to a ‘dark room’ and eventually returning to a lit environment. They also emphasise the interplay between the projector, sound, and debate sessions over time during our live cinema performances.

We also identified key transitional moments, which are pointed out as hinge points. They indicate shifts in participants’ perceptions throughout their experiences. In this way, our generic diachronic structure analysis revealed a common experiential structure based on the temporal unfolding of events that occurred across the three live cinema sessions. It is organised into four phases: first, ‘Attentional Movement’—this initial phase begins with ‘Hinge Point A’, where the participant recognises that “something starts”. This marks a shift from a perception of neutrality or passivity in a state of observation to one of conscious effort and focused attention. Spatially, the room lights are turned off, and the projector is switched on. A shift in participants’ perception regarding the live cinema performance occurs once they realise that the performers have started playing the sound or visual elements.

Secondly, in ‘Enacted Agency’, ‘Hinge Point B’ indicates a subtle but significant realisation that the participant does not actively conduct or control what is occurring. A heightened engagement begins to take shape as the room darkens, the projector activates, and sound and visual performers initiate. This phase reflects the early stages of experiencing participation, in which agency is perceived rather than enacted. In this sense, participants describe a feeling of becoming part of the event; although they feel called to take action, they do not necessarily intervene—a shift that relies on their awareness of the possibilities for decision-making as participants in this event.

Thirdly, perceptual attunement: at ‘Hinge Point C’, the participant begins to “feel something”, entering a deeper level of perceptual and emotional engagement. Particularly after a live camera input, or accidental event in the room enhances their perception of co-presence, creating a sense of immediacy. The ambiance in the room remains dark, preserving the immersive atmosphere and facilitating their emotional attunement with the collective narrative unfolding during the performance.

Our fourth and final phase is the ‘Cognitive Shift’: in this final phase, ‘Hinge Point D’ marks the recognition that the performance has come to an end. With the room lit again and the debate session commencing, participants were invited into reflective processing and shared meaning-making, followed by ‘Hinge Point E’, where they arrived at an understanding or insight.

While this generic diachronic mapping provides a valuable overview of the

experiential structure of our live cinema model, it will not be further detailed in our study. Instead, our investigation prioritises the following analysis of the generic synchronic units, in which we explore participants' utterances to examine intersubjectivity in specific moments of their experiences. This decision aligns with our aim of addressing our research questions regarding *Contact Zone's* potential to foster agency and a sense of belonging as a live cinema model.

4.2.2 Generic Synchronic Structure Analysis

In this subsection, we examine four synchronic units identified as participants' generic experiential structures of: immersion, agency, belonging, and revelation. To contextualise these diagrams, we include a timeline that represents the live sessions' dynamic elements unfolding throughout each synchronic experiential unit. Our aim is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences during these specific moments in performances.

Our diagrams illustrate specific experiences identified in participants' descriptions. We detail the four units through semantic networks that represent the categories constituting participants' experiences. As Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati explain: "The synchronic analysis seeks to understand how the structure of the experience is characterized at a given moment" (2019, p. 131). They argue that synchronic analysis involves identifying and organising the various aspects that constitute an experience at a specific moment (within a phase or sub-phase), as well as the components that define a single aspect of the experience at that moment (p. 131).

Throughout our analysis, we remained focused on the research questions: how the experience of liveness can bring new meaning to Pratt's literary notion of the 'arts of the contact zone' when applied to cinema studies—specifically through a live cinema model designed to foster a sense of agency—and whether, and in what ways, it cultivates diasporic artists' feelings of belonging within postcolonial migration societies. With these intentions, we also explored the potential for an 'auratic' quality to emerge as an added value in the live cinema experience.

In conducting the iterative interrogation process during the analysis of our data, we made recursive adjustments to ensure alignment with our research aims. As Petitmengin and Bitbol (2009) state, "the validity of our results does not depend on their correspondence with some 'true structure' but must instead appeal to the coherence of the operations that led to the proposal of that structure" (p. 381). In this sense, we present our analysis procedure in order to support the validation of our reflections.

As Petitmengin and Bitbol argue, interviews' analysis relies on "performative

consistency” for validating a first-person report. In their words: “The validity of a first-person report is a validity ‘in action’, which cannot be measured in static terms of correspondence between the report and the experience, but in dynamic terms of performative consistency of the acts which produce it” (2009, p. 400). Building on this, we present our analysis of the generic synchronic structures of the four units that we identified in participants’ descriptions of their experiences in our three live cinema performances.

4.2.2.1. Immersion

The synchronic units are illustrated through diagrams and examined using selected excerpts from participants’ descriptions of their experiences. Interviewees are identified by their surnames, with quotations numbered according to the chronological order of the live session dates and locations (P1 for Lisbon, P2 for Luanda, P3 for Fortaleza). For each synchronic unit, we analyse the categories that constitute these experiences, with each category including at least one evocation from both a performer and an audience member. To represent the generic synchronic unit of immersion, we developed the diagram presented in Figure 43.

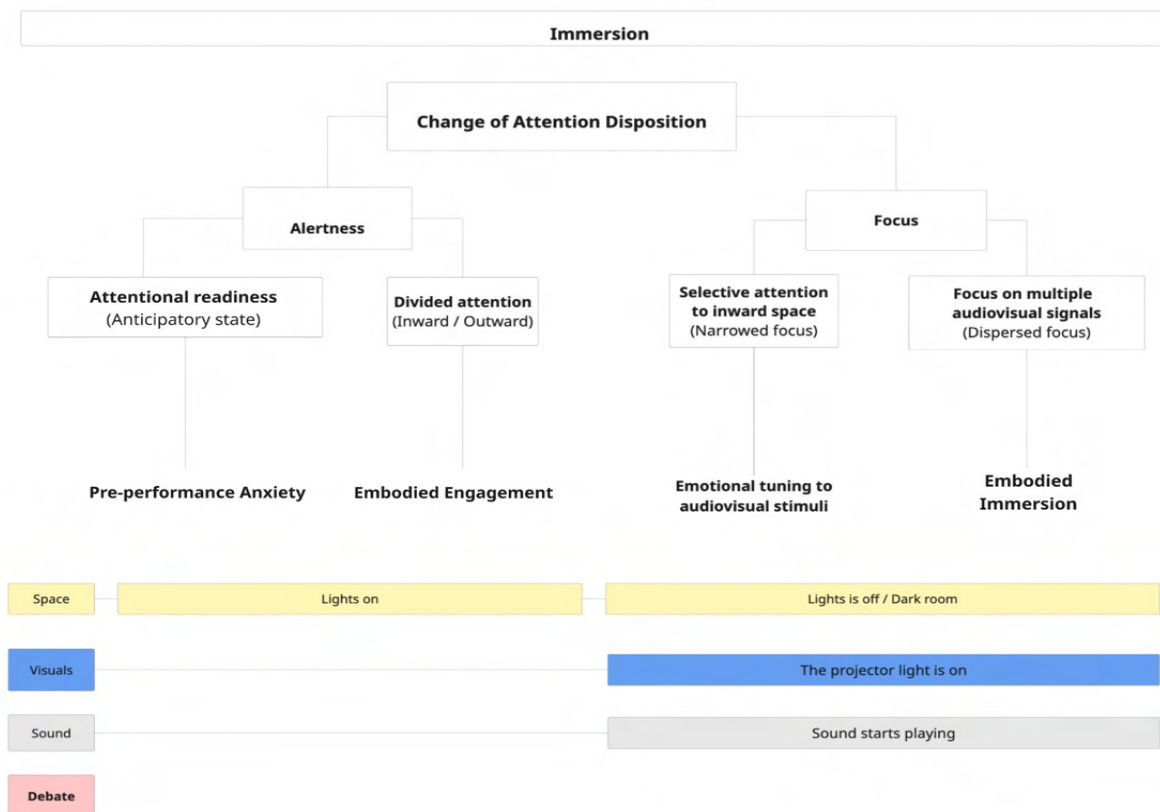


Figure 43. Generic synchronic structure of *Immersion* and diagram of live cinema dynamics in *Contact Zone*.

The generic synchronic structure of ‘Immersion’ consists of a change in attentional disposition, comprising two main aspects: alertness, which includes ‘Attentional readiness’ (anticipatory state) and ‘Divided attention’ (inward/outward), and two types of focus: ‘Selective attention to the inward space’ (narrowed focus) and ‘Focus on multiple audiovisual signals’ (dispersed focus). Each pathway concludes with key experiential states—pre-performance anxiety, embodied engagement, emotional tuning, and embodied immersion—exemplifying participants’ responses to actions or events. This structure provides a deeper understanding of the affective dimension experienced by interviewees during the live cinema sessions.

In this unit analysis, we identified a change in attentional disposition in participants’ experience of immersion, shifting between two distinct states: alertness and focus. In the alertness state, participants reported attentional readiness in anticipating the unfolding of events, often accompanied by pre-performance anxiety, alongside divided attention, oscillating between inward and outward aspects of the environment, which led to their embodied engagement with the upcoming event in the performance space.

In the focus state, participants’ emotional tuning into the performance’s audiovisual signals deepened as their attention narrowed toward inward space. They also reported distributing their attention across multiple audiovisual cues, which contributed to a sense of embodied immersion shaped by the live performance’s narrative, aesthetic, and conceptual elements.

Our diagram represents the categories that constitute participants’ experiences of ‘immersion’, as described in their interviews. We also included supplementary information on performance dynamics, highlighting shifts in the performance space—such as the transition from an illuminated to a darkened room, the activation of visuals (projector light), and the initiation of sound—which contributed to participants’ change of attentional disposition and led to their reported felt sense of embodied immersion.

The following statements by interviewees, translated from Portuguese to English by the researcher, include contextual information about performance dynamics. We observed that participants’ recall of their experiences often began before the official onset of the live sessions. They described how, during the preparatory phase, they began redirecting their attention toward the performative space and the emerging interactions of the live cinema event. Although synchronic analysis privileges static descriptions of isolated experiential units, we incorporate this contextual dimension to highlight how participants perceived the temporal unfolding of events. Participants’ earliest memories typically centred on observing the setup process. In their words:

P1-Cardoso: Yes, I mean it as an invitation, the preparation of the space. That's why, when I arrived, it was still being set up, and I could see the process of preparing the environment for what was about to happen. (...) So, I think the invitation is, in that sense, about bringing together all the little moments we want to create. Because it really is an active choice, like, "okay, I'm going to place this in this space." You could have chosen not to turn off the lights, or to use different ambient lighting, or picked another location for the projection. Any of those other choices would still have been an invitation, but to a different experience than the one we had. It could have taken place in an open space, and that would also have been an invitation, but to a different kind of activity, depending on what that setup was meant to be. And for me, the invitation comes from witnessing the preparation of the space and being, quite literally, invited to enter that environment. For example, being told, "sit here, and this is what's going to happen." That explanation...Not necessarily explaining what exactly was going to happen, but rather, as a kind of presentation. A presentation that worked as an invitation to experience.

Lima-P2: So, they managed to find another room for us, and we started moving things around, and what caught my attention the most during the setup was simply how we had expectations for something to happen, and suddenly, for some reason, you were having technical issues, and I could feel your distress. And I don't know, for a moment I thought, maybe she's a bit afraid that it's not going to work out, I think that's what I thought. But fortunately, it did work out. So that's why I remember the setup as one of the parts I recall fondly, a strong memory from that day, your dedication in trying to make sure everything would go well, even trying out some tests beforehand. Hmm, and I also really liked Vagné's part, him staying there testing things too, because the sound aspect also really stood out to me. And that's it.

In the following instances, participants described a heightened sense of alertness, anticipating that something was about to happen while acknowledging their embodied engagement with the emerging event. In their words:

P1-Cardoso: Yes, with what I was hearing you say, this word just came to me, "invitation". I think that was the invitation. That was your invitation, in the sense of when you enter that space, right? All that preparation creates this atmosphere of, like, okay, we're going to be here in this dark space, and I think that immediately the fact that it's a darker space already kind of heightens your, like, your perceptions. Because you're placed in that setting, and it's like your sight, your hearing, everything becomes more, like, more sensitive, more... yeah, I think it's something like that, a kind of awakening, this curiosity of "okay, what's going to happen now in this space?" So that word comes to me, an invitation to be there.

P1-Gondim: But it wasn't anxiety in a negative sense, not something that made me feel worried or uncomfortable. It was more like a positive anticipation, a charged expectation of what was happening right there, in that moment.

In participants' descriptions, they also mentioned their divided attention between the

internal and external ambience at the start of the live sessions, as follows:

P3 - Nastroynanni: And you also see an intervention that transforms that space, right? That already alters its architecture. Getting to know it for the first time and simultaneously discovering a poetic possibility of it was something truly striking. (...) So, my attention to the work you prepared, it was a bit more of a floating attention, you know? And at the same time, I needed to keep looking out the window, right? So, my attention was a bit divided. I had to look at the “shore” to know that soon we’d have to... transition to another place. For me, what was really striking was seeing you make that transition just moments before, and then seeing how, when the projection starts and someone is up front reading, something switches on. I think it was that shift, from the “before”, from the backstage space to the performance space, you know? And it was just moments before, this qualitative change, something you activate, that triggers a kind of poetics, an artifice. And when the work begins, actually, it happens mostly in dim light, right? The lights are on and everything, you're getting ready, and suddenly the lights go out, and that's it, you're on a journey. You're not in a defined place anymore, you're in transit, right?

As the lights dimmed and the visuals and sound began, participants described becoming increasingly attuned to the audiovisual stimuli of the performance, noting a sense of embodied immersion. This immersive state is characterised not only by a narrowing of attention toward the inward performance space but also by a withdrawal of attention from the venue's external environment, as described below:

P3-Lins: I remember that we decided... it was kind of dark, without much direct lighting. We placed some cell phones on the floor to create diffuse points of light. But it was very dark; there was a projection in the background, but it wasn't that super bright kind that you get with an overhead projector, you know? It was part of the environment, of the ambience, the moving water, the guitar, and the synthesizer with its modulations. And we had turned off the fans because of the sound as well. There was some interference from outside, some music playing, but it didn't seem to come through very strongly. It felt like a microcosm, which was really being created there in the room, in that darkness, with this sort of wave-like movement, this circulating flow (demonstrated through circular hand gestures coordinated with back-and-forth body movement).

The following excerpts also show how shifting illumination deepened their sense of immersion by redirecting attention from external stimuli to the live interactions within the performance space. Gomes remarks on this, stating:

P3-Gomes: So, music has this direct connection, you know? And I mention that moment with the light because the projection loses strength when the lights are on, right? So, when the light went off, your projection kind of took over the whole room, it filled the wall, but the light also spread out, right? And there was that bluish

tone all over the space. And then it felt like you... like you entered the process, you know? This process that had just been me and him kind of rehearsing, and suddenly it felt like you really became part of it. And then Lucas came in with the text, and when he spoke, I adjusted the effects, he would say, “add an effect here,” or not. So it was like you entered this process that, for me up to that point, had been mostly musical, but then it turned into something else as well. That’s why I talk about the blue light, it has to do with the projection gaining strength, filling the space, you know? And really becoming part of it. Because the sound already fills so much, right? We had two big speakers there, and it’s a space with massive reverberation. So any bass sound you play just fills the whole environment, everyone feels it. And with sunlight, the projection kind of gets lost. So, I think that blue light did something a bit metaphorical.

The room’s darkening, coupled with the performers’ audio-visual signals, also guided participants’ attention toward heightened awareness of co-presence within the inward space. Gomes elaborates on this perspective, noting:

P3-Gomes: Yeah. It was another process, it added another meaning, so that thing too. (...) Yeah, I think it added this issue of observing the space, of *voyeurism*. We can even make an analogy with an aquarium, right? Like we were inside an aquarium, and they were watching us inside this aquarium, like that. I think there’s this relation where I understood their place as observers within that performance, you know? And once I understood that I felt more at ease with it too. (...) For example, I mentioned the zoo, right? I think it’s more in that sense, this sensation of being immersed in something, in this water...Like, in this case, the light over there, and the deep sound that created this environment.

Moreover, the audiovisual stimuli initiated by the performers marked a perceptual transition toward the unfolding live interactions, which led to an attentional dispersion within the ongoing performance space. This reorientation toward the live performance’s audiovisual cues was prompted by the multiplicity of stimuli generated across the various layers of live cinema performance. This dynamic is illustrated below:

P1-Albertini: I’d be immersed, then I’d come out. I would look around, for example, and see him playing, and I’d see the people, right? So, it was this kind of back and forth, of... I don’t know, becoming aware? I don’t know, I just found it really wild.(...) I was watching, but I would drift in and out. Like, I wasn’t fully immersed just in the video.

Her statement, “I’d be immersed, then I’d come out”, along with her description of looking around at the performers and the audience, highlights the active shifting of attention across different sensory inputs, including participants’ awareness of co-presence. In this way, the dynamics of the live performance fostered a sense of immersion, as reported by participants in other sessions as well, as illustrated below:

P2-Vieira: Something about the painting, the dynamic of having three performances happening at the same time, created a sense of restlessness, because you were trying to focus on all three things. The young woman who was painting, the video that was playing, and Vagné's presentation, which I think was playing rhythms that sounded quite African. He was using a lot of beats and also had a *reco-reco*. (...) Yeah, I tried to focus on the painting, which was a bit confusing because I also wanted to watch the video. Then I tried to concentrate on the presentation, but that was also a bit tricky because music was being played through the documentary as well. So, he was syncing what was happening in the documentary with the music being performed live. And then I got so immersed that it felt like the music he was playing was actually the soundtrack of the documentary. It was a way of trying not to lose focus, of staying with the documentary.

Vieira frames his experiential state of immersion through the interplay of visuals, sound, and performers' interactions, producing a synthesised perception of live events in which the live music becomes part of the documentary's audiovisual narrative. In both Albertini's and Vieira's cases, immersion is characterised by a multisensory engagement: the convergence of multiple audiovisual cues within the performance space enables participants to shift from divided attention to external ambient stimuli toward an inward, immersive engagement with the performance space.

We also explore how the aesthetic and conceptual elements of the performance's audiovisual narrative—such as visual and auditory symbols suggesting altered spatial dimensions, whether higher or lower, as in the blue of the ocean and sky combined with the sounds of the ocean and whales, or temporal dimensions through nostalgic elements such as the sounds of children playing—provoked a feeling of transcendence in participants' immersive experience. These elements also encompass aspects of our performance design and participatory practices, such as the large screen size and the use of a live camera input. In the statements below, participants articulate the role of these elements in shaping their experience:

P1-Cardoso: There's this big element, like the giant scale of the video and the way it was being presented, and then this sense of immersion that came precisely from its live aspect, along with the shifts you were making: showing what was happening and, at the same time, showing as it was happening.

P2-Lima: Yes, and now I just remembered, there was also a part that was kind of... alternative electronic (music), I could say. There were some sounds that felt... I'd call them space-like, because I felt like they were the kinds of sounds used for space effects. And I sensed this more alternative part, with sounds that were kind of psychedelic, I'd say. Yes, I think that's what comes to mind for me right now. It also brought me the feeling, later on, of nostalgia. I felt I was in a very nostalgic atmosphere. I felt like I was going back, traveling through time.

As participants also explained, their awareness of the live interplay between auditory and visual stimuli deepened their emotional attunement to the audiovisual narrative presented by the performers. We noted that the convergence of audiovisual narratives—through sound performances and visual projections—as well as changes in spatial dynamics contributed to participants’ immersion experience. The multisensory convergence of ambient illumination, sound, and visuals not only prompted deeper reflection on the semantic content of the audiovisual narrative but also intensified their sensory experience, resulting in a felt sense of embodied immersion, as described below:

P3-Gomes: (...) Yeah, because I think there’s something about bass sounds, we were working a lot with low frequencies because the idea was kind of like an underwater vibe, right? There was that blue light, Lucas’s text talked about the bottom of the sea, and he had brought whale sounds for us to include, which I ended up using too. And bass sounds, they have that ability to really fill the space, you know? We hear them and feel them. There’s that reverberation, and the sound waves are bigger, and you feel the bass in your body. So, I think the blue and the bass sounds belong to the same world. They kind of share a connection. Because imagine the bottom of the ocean, you don’t picture high-pitched sounds, right? You imagine that sound underwater. If you’re under the water, everything sounds deeper, right? There’s that pressure... imagine the deep ocean, like kilometres down. There’s pressure, right?

Our analysis of this synchronic unit of immersion explored how a ‘change of attention disposition’ marked participants’ embodied engagement with the performance, transitioning from a state of alertness—comprising readiness and divided attention—towards a state of focus, characterised by selective attention to inward space and dispersed attention to multiple audiovisual signals during the live performance. Moreover, they reported how this narrowed focus on inward dynamics shaped the awareness of co-presence. As stated by Gomes, one of our live music performers in Fortaleza:

P3- Gomes: I felt as if they were invading our space, you know? We had created that whole space, that whole atmosphere, and then those people came in, invading it. But at the same time, I think it also triggered other things in that moment, which were interesting too. I felt that, from that initial moment of invasion, of that sudden shift from one environment to another—at the same time, once we started the performance, I could feel the audience entering a kind of observational state. Not just watching, but really observing different things in that moment. I felt that people were genuinely interested, overall.

Interviewees also reported that the darkened room and the performance’s audiovisual signals reduced their attention to external stimuli and redirected their focus not only towards

live interactions and participants’ co-presence but also towards their own embodied presence, while engaged in the live cinema experience.

In the following analysis of the generic synchronic structure of *Agency*, we explore a further shift in participants’ modes of engagement.

4.2.2.2. Agency

The synchronic structure of ‘agency’ captures a ‘shift in enacted strategy’ between two distinct experiential pathways: ‘attempt to conduct the narrative’ and ‘intentional release of control’. These represent the ways in which agency was both enacted and perceived, often coexisting within a single participant’s experience. Together, they illustrate the dynamic and distinct forms of participation that emerged in our live cinema sessions. Our analysis further reveals that the experience of agency was deeply intertwined with bodily engagement, emotional responses, and decision-making processes.

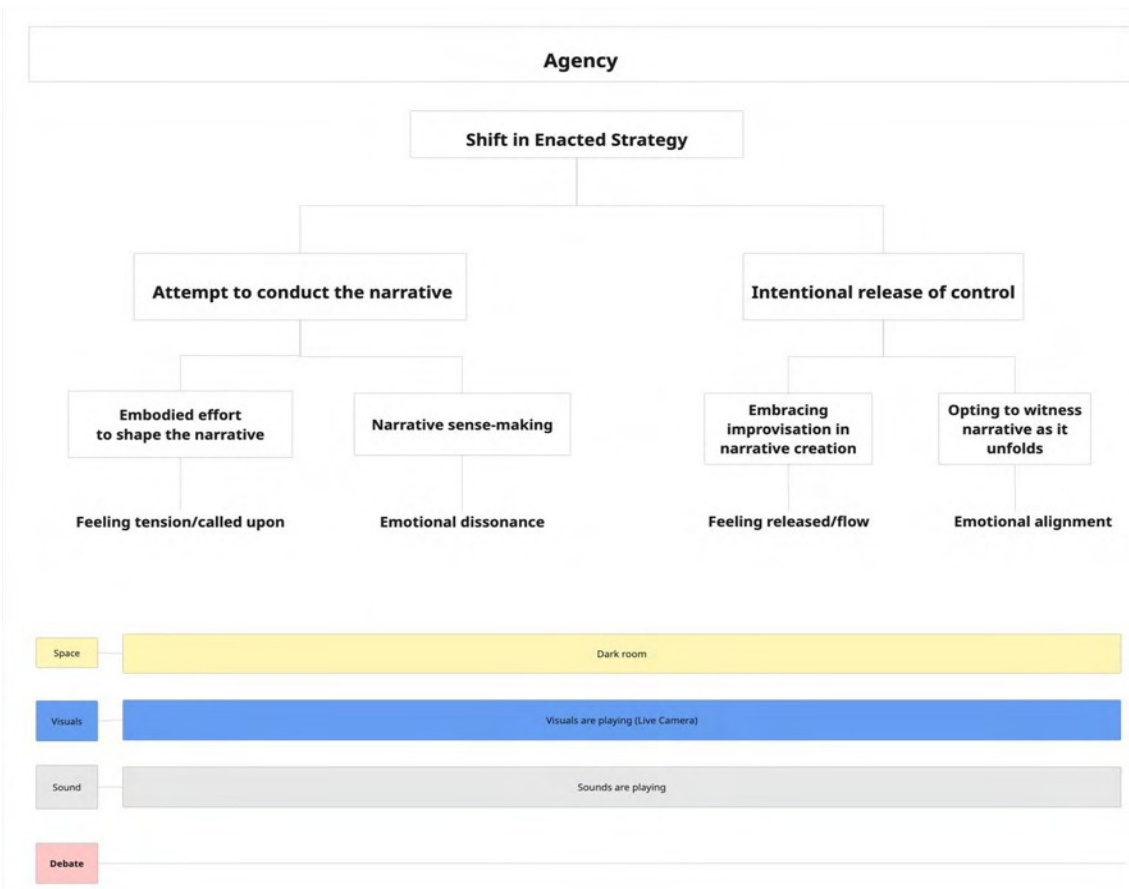


Figure 44. Generic synchronic structure of *Agency* and live cinema dynamics in *Contact Zone*.

In the left-side pathway, ‘Attempt to conduct the narrative’, some participants (both performers and audience members) reported experiencing felt tension from being called upon to act through ‘embodied effort to shape the narrative’. Others described emotional dissonance when attempting to interpret the unfolding narrative through ‘narrative sense-making’. In contrast, the right-side pathway, ‘Intentional release of control’, involves ‘embracing improvisation in narrative creation’ and ‘opting to witness the narrative as it unfolds’. As an outcome of this latter one, participants described a felt release, or flow, and emotional alignment.

We consider the tendency among performers and audience members to attempt to conduct the narrative during improvisation as an enacted strategy of agency, through which participants actively sought to influence the unfolding performance. Participants also described how their embodied efforts to shape the narrative often gave rise to feelings of tension in this process. This is exemplified in Vagné’s statement below:

P2-Vagné: Always, the anxiety (...) the attempt to control it, you know? (...) Because there’s no real control, but we try to control in order to make it happen. That’s really how I feel... and with that, the breath, like I mentioned. When I started to breathe in a calmer rhythm, that’s when I know I’m connected with that art. I can breathe that art, through my breath. When I was anxious, I wasn’t breathing either. I was all sped up. Then we start to do... I remember a moment now, I started counting the beats with my foot. I started marking time with my foot, keeping rhythm and listening to that music from the projection, and also to my own music. Sometimes, for example, when you’re working with electronic music being triggered, you might hit a sound but you don’t even hear it, you know? You just trigger it, and other people hear it, but you’re listening to it so much that you don’t even hear anymore. But there are days when you need to really listen in order to play other things, right? So, in that moment, I started to count with my foot, and I had this shaker made from PVC and PET bottle caps on my foot, and I started using that to keep time. (...)

By intentionally relaxing their bodies and embracing improvisation, participants described a shift in their enacted strategy of agency toward choosing to release control. As Vagné explained:

P2-Vagné: And the breathing, too, I think that was a physical moment where I know I relaxed. I started breathing more slowly, more calmly. Yeah, it flowed. I became aware of it, and realized I was already relaxed. I became aware that I needed to watch the film, to really dive into the experience that was being proposed. (...) Then my body relaxed with that. I started to feel that everyone there was also making it happen, it wasn’t just the artists, right? I mean, the “technicians”, in quotes, but also the audience itself was, in some way, giving energy for it to happen. And then yes, the body breathes, it relaxes and starts to enjoy it. (...) So, I let go

of the buttons. And I just started watching the film, just trying to be there. And I think there was a moment when we looked at each other and you also made a signal to me, kind of indicating to start listening to the voice in the video too, right? That's also a moment I remember, it's about the connections we make. Us there on stage, right? So, at that point, I was already calm. Like, I had passed the ball on from that phase, more or less like that.

As represented in the 'Agency' diagram, this attempt to conduct the narrative is marked by emotional dissonance, which emerged when participants struggled to make sense of the narrative in real time, leading to confusion or disorientation. In trying to interpret the meanings conveyed by the live audiovisual performance—while simultaneously tracking its dynamics and forming associations—participants often found themselves caught in this state of dissonance. They described it as follows:

P1-Vilsenki: I think from the middle to the end. I believe at the beginning you're more in the feeling, it's not very rational — you go more by the feeling and start to situate yourself and try to understand how it's all being organised.

P2-Vieira: I think I first observed everything, and when I stopped trying to find logic in what was happening and instead made a more subjective association with what I saw or heard, that's when things started to make a bit more sense.

In our analysis, we identified how participants sought coherence as the live cinema experience challenged their previous cinematic frameworks, creating emotional dissonance. By shifting their strategy to intentionally release control, participants described embracing improvisation by choosing to witness the spontaneity of narrative creation in real time—consciously releasing prior intentions to anticipate actions or make sense of the performance, and instead experiencing its unfolding. As an outcome, they reported experiencing emotional alignment. Lima describes her experience:

P2-Márcia: Before... before things started to flow, I felt, yes, I can say, I felt a tightness, internal pressure (she makes a circle gesture with her hands at chest height), nervousness. I felt a bit of adrenaline, too. I felt... how can I describe it? (The interviewee reflects silently for a longer moment and continues) It was a mix of... adrenaline, fear, apprehension, pressure... but once I trusted the sound, the sensation I had afterwards was that everything... I felt that everything was slowly fading into something that would make me feel comfortable and confident enough to go through with it. (The interviewee reflects silently again and continues) I tried not to create a final narrative in my head, like: "okay, this has to turn out like this or like that," because I couldn't, I had no way of knowing what the final result could be. I kept telling myself: "I can't imagine how the final result will turn out. I have to let it flow, and whatever comes out in the process will be the final result." Because if I start with a preconceived idea of what I want to put on paper, then I

wouldn't really be feeling the sound.

Lima's experience exemplifies this shift. By intentionally releasing control, participants embraced improvisation and witnessed the narrative unfold in real time, reporting a felt release and emotional alignment:

P2-Lima: Well, I remember feeling light and just letting things flow. A little bit of nervousness at the beginning, I admit, I was even shaking a bit, my hand was trembling at the start (laughs), but then I let it go, let it flow... and also, somehow, by allowing myself to concentrate on the sound, I focused only on the sound. What was happening around me, no... somehow, I stayed super focused on the sound. And what I liked about the sound was that it had a very attractive vibe for me, very alternative, very experimental, very unique, something that made me feel like, "I've heard this before." It was... it was a new experience, like listening to a song for the first time. I don't know, because when I hear something for the first time, I pay very close attention to what I'm listening to and try to somehow relate it to what I'm feeling in the moment. And that's what happened, I was listening and then transmitted that feeling. I still remember the feeling of holding the brush and pressing it directly onto the paper, of feeling the texture of the wall, because the wall had a lot of texture, so I could feel it even with the paper on top. I remember that too because the paper was very thin. I remember seeing the paint from the side, and I remember my concern about not splashing the paint onto the wall. I remember that very clearly, because I was really worried about it, since the paper was so thin, I felt the paint might bleed through, and I was very concerned... but yes, I hold a special memory and feeling from what that performance was.

Participants highlighted this transition as a conscious choice to release control. This enabled a pre-reflexive experience in which improvisation and witnessing allowed unexpected actions and meanings to emerge. This outcome aligns with flow theory's dissolution of self-conscious monitoring, as described by Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2021), who define it as an optimal state of consciousness in which individuals become deeply engaged in an activity and experience a merging of action and awareness (p. 280).

Our 'Agency' diagram also situates the performance dynamic within its spatial context. The dim lighting, combined with live visuals and music, served as sensory anchors that influenced participants' perception of audiovisual narrative during the performance. These components reflect Petitmengin and Bitbol's (2009) emphasis on the connection between environmental cues and inner micro-dynamics, suggesting that even subtle changes in the sensory context can influence how the experience of a moment is perceived.

In this sense, we consider participants' shift in their engagement strategies following the introduction of the live camera input on the main screen as a factor that shaped the internal micro-dynamics of their experience and impacted their sense of agency, particularly during the live performance in Lisbon.

Albertini, an audience member interviewed in Lisbon, describes how the live camera input triggered her curiosity about identifying the people around her, resulting in an experience that diverges from the conventional cinematic experience she is used to. This emerging co-presence awareness is illustrated in the following excerpt and further explored in the next synchronic unit of 'Belonging'. In her words:

P1-Albertini: I have visual memories, especially of the projection—like seeing the people who were sitting next to me appear on the screen, and I think that made me start looking around. Because it was... I found it funny. Actually, I thought it was great. When it appeared, people would look around to see if the ones on screen were the same people sitting there, you know? And I loved that—I don't know if I actually saw myself, but I definitely saw the people who were right next to me on the screen.

Cardoso provides another example, detailing how the live camera input altered her experience during the live cinema session. As she concentrated on the projected video and sound in front of her, she was unaware of the people behind her in the performance space. The real-time projection of participants' physical presence, including her own, fostered a sense of sharing a unique moment in time and space with others present in the session. She recalled becoming aware of co-presence while experiencing the live cinema performance. As she put it:

P1-Cardoso: About the space, about being there, I think that during the performance, yes... When there was that projection of the space, it brought me this kind of thing, like seeing the chairs, seeing the different faces and realising, like, okay, because I think that this transmission was also what brought brightness. Like, on this side, in the sense of being able to see, since I was also very much at the front, I was kind of just in front of this projection, watching the video and hearing the sound, and the rest was behind me, right? So, when you brought this image, I could see like what was behind me. In that sense, when you projected on the screen that was in front of me, the video of the space where it was happening, then yes, I could have that visually, of course I had it, right? I had that feeling and, I knew I was in the space with people, but I also think that the immersion of being so focused on the video also made me kind of forget that constant sense of like, okay, there are more people here. But when you brought the transmission, it was like, yeah, then I could see myself on the screen and see what was behind me in that, how do you say? The inside of the inside, of the inside of things.

In our third performance, in Fortaleza, we also explored how unexpected events during co-presence in our live performance can foster agency as an experience of collective improvisation, with or without real-time camera input. Sarah Nastroyanni recalls a moment during our session when someone accidentally hit a light switch, causing a brief flash that illuminated the entire room. Although unintentional, this unexpected event reminded her of co-

presence during live performance, it also disrupted her immersion, which had been sustained by the dim lighting of the room and the continuity of the audiovisual narrative. In her words:

P3- Nastroyanni: And what was interesting is that someone, at a certain moment during the performance, which was already happening, someone accidentally touched the light switch and there was a flash, right? The room lit up, so for a moment I went back to that control panel image, to that image of, you know? Like someone had quickly turned on the room's light and then switched it off again, kind of awkwardly, right? But it was super interesting, because it also added a layer of the mechanical functioning of the thing there, you know? That was happening in the dim light. (...) It was kind of a *déjà vu* feeling, you know? Because you... It's a bit like that state we get into when we're about to take a long overnight bus trip. People are putting away their luggage, the lights are on and everything, you're getting ready, then suddenly the lights go off, and that's it, you're on the journey. You're not in a defined place, you're in transit, right? And then, suddenly for some reason, you're surprised by an abrupt stop, the lights come back on, and you don't know, wait, is it time to get off? Is it just a fuel stop? What's going on? And you're kind of like, huh? Like, oh my God, how long have I been here? How many hours have passed, where are we? Wait, let me check the map, is there internet? You know that feeling of, whoa. It was like a jolt, in that sense.

The following excerpt illustrates another participant's metaphorical interpretation of the same unexpected event during this performance:

P3-Gomes: Oh, just to comment on that, I even mentioned it that day, I think I was talking to Eric and some people outside. I said, man, that moment when we were performing and someone turned on the light in the middle of it and then quickly turned it off again, I felt like, you know when you're in the bathroom, sitting there, and you didn't lock the door, you were just chilling, thinking about life, and then someone opens the door and you're caught off guard? So yeah, I felt like that, you know? Like I was doing my thing, and people were watching, and then the light came on, and I felt totally caught off guard.

This accidental event added a new layer of meaning to their experience by triggering awareness of the participants' co-presence during the performance. This shifted Nastroyanni's self-perception—from observer to active participant in the collectively emerging narrative—which she experienced as a call to act within the unfolding events, as she explains below:

P3- Nastroyanni: Yes, even for us who, up until that point, were in a more passive role as the audience, there's the question of how we choose to proceed from there. It could simply mean switching the lights off again, right? Or it could be, no, not that, like, what if someone suddenly flung open both side doors, right? Things become a bit more unpredictable. And then we find ourselves in this ethical space of sustaining the continuity of the action, knowing what it was intending to do, right? Whether to restore the previous state, or not. It could just as well have happened that way too, right? To suspend that perception in that moment.

Nastroyanni's description illustrates how this shift in her self-perception was driven by 'chance'—a key element of our live cinema practice. During live cinema performances, unexpected events can create unanticipated possibilities that foster awareness of co-presence among participants, similar to how the live camera input functioned in Lisbon. In her words:

P3- Nastroyanni: Exactly, and that you are revealed, and the spectator themselves is also revealed in that moment, right? Because the light turns on for everyone, not just for the people performing, right? So, yes, in some way, you become implicated there, when that semi-darkness fades and things are revealed, right? You come face to face with everything else.

Interviewees described becoming aware that their co-presence within the performance space positioned them as participants whose real-time interactions—whether intentional or not—contributed to the collectively emerging narrative of the live sessions. In their words:

P3-Gomes: I felt that from that initial moment of invasion, of that jolt, of going from one space to another, at the same time, once we began the performance, I could feel the audience in a certain state of observation, you know? Not just watching but observing different aspects of that moment. I felt people were engaged, overall. And that initial feeling of our space being invaded ended up turning into something almost pleasant, like zoological, you know? It wasn't an invasion, it became a moment of *voyeurism*, to put it in less aggressive terms.

P3- Nastroyanni: The first thing you do when the light comes on is look around, right? And you see that everyone is looking back at each other, so we come out of that comforting opacity, right? A pleasing opacity where the audience hide, right?

P3-Lins: I remember it in a very comparative way, thinking back to another experience I had, which was in a more enclosed space. (...) In that first experience I had, it was more rigid. There was more of an awareness that someone was watching — that there was an audience, and that bothered me in a way. I kept my eyes closed for a long time. But not in this one. I don't know if it was because of the darkness too, but it seemed like the people who were there were more involved. We had also spent two days together, so there was a sense of complicity. Not exactly expectation, but a kind of willingness to be part of it too, because everyone was coming from a shared process. Everyone was putting themselves into the improvisation and the performance. And even though we were watching what each group proposed, there was this connection, you know? That everything there was part of it, everything was inside that sphere in the dark room. It didn't feel like a performance with people watching. I don't know, it's kind of strange because, in a way, the structure was like that, right? It wasn't necessarily planned that way, but the physical setup of the room made that possible. And somehow, not through the material but through the immaterial, we managed to do it differently. The experience wasn't rigid, it wasn't locked into that separation.

In our analysis, we observed how participants described their physical presence being

revealed to others, and how this feeling of being seen influenced their shift in strategy. Either by choosing to enact an embodied effort to shape the narrative unfolding in real time or opting to embrace improvisation and witness the interplay of interactions enacted by both performers and audience. In this sense, their co-presence awareness shifted their self-perception toward seeing themselves as active participants in a collective improvisation within the live cinema experience.

We also observed how both the live camera input and the element of chance played significant roles in our live cinema practice by fostering co-presence awareness among participants during the sessions. This heightened awareness transformed their sense of agency in the collective act of improvisation, enabling an alinear narrative to emerge—an outcome we identified as central to the live cinema model. The statements below, from participants in the Fortaleza session, illustrate these dynamics:

P3- Nastroynanni: Called. Yes. (...) Yes, you can either respond or not, right? To a calling. The call exists, there's an opportune situation, and you may or may not choose to engage. And I think that when I feel called, I feel a kind of opening, you know? A space, a gap. where suddenly... it becomes a subversion of the relationship between the one who watches and the one who is on display, right? Thinking from a more scopophilic angle of performance. It's a moment of openness, this calling is the opening.

P3-Gomes: A moment where it's like, "This is my space, I'm here, but I'll let you peek in a little through the crack." And what I thought was really cool, really interesting, is that it added another layer. But then it's funny, I told Diego, and he also said, "Man, honestly, I thought the rehearsal was way better," because we were much more at ease there. But that's very common, I think, in all areas. A lot of musicians say the same thing, like, "The rehearsal was way better." So, I think there's this aspect of performance, it's another element, right? Especially when it's something like this. We were in a room, and they came into the room and stood off to the side. I think there's something about that... the audience really becomes an extra participant and helps complete the format of the work itself.

In the following instance, Lins compares their experience to another performance in which they had previously participated, by stating:

P3-Lins: So, there it was a rigid structure, and what I proposed came as a foreign body. It seemed like it couldn't quite reach the place of active listening, of involvement. But in this experience we had, it did happen. I felt it happened, that availability of people, you know? Not necessarily because I had the gesture of wanting to say something, or of knowing them, but of feeling a wave coming too, beyond the wave I was creating there in the middle, that we were creating. I say 'I' because I started to feel this cycle of the sound waves, the words, the images, right? These were flows that condensed there. And one of those elements that condensed was the people, right? The presence of the people.

This unit explored how participants shifted their enacted strategy of agency in our sessions, transitioning from attempting to conduct or interpret the narrative to embracing improvisation and witnessing the unfolding of a collective narrative. The pathway of the ‘intentional release of control’ characterises participants’ decision to witness and attend to live events, privileging the felt embodied experience over rationalising the live cinema dynamics or attempting to make immediate sense of its narrative meanings. As an outcome, emotional alignment is identified in this pathway, contrasting with the emotional dissonance described in the first pathway. In the generic structural analysis of the next synchronic unit, we will further explore participants’ emotional alignment through the lens of their embodied experience.

4.2.2.3. Belonging

In this unit, our analysis explores how participants experienced a sense of belonging during the live cinema sessions. We elaborate on the generic structure of this experience, as identified in participants’ descriptions. The unit of ‘Belonging’ encompass a perceptual attunement, which we delineate through two distinct pathways, under the categories ‘Shift of Perception of Reality’ and ‘Deepened Embodied Experience’. Additionally, our performance dynamics are illustrated in the lower coloured section of the diagram below, as a complement for demonstrating how the spatial, visual, auditory, and discursive elements contributed to the emergence of a sense of belonging throughout the live cinema experience.

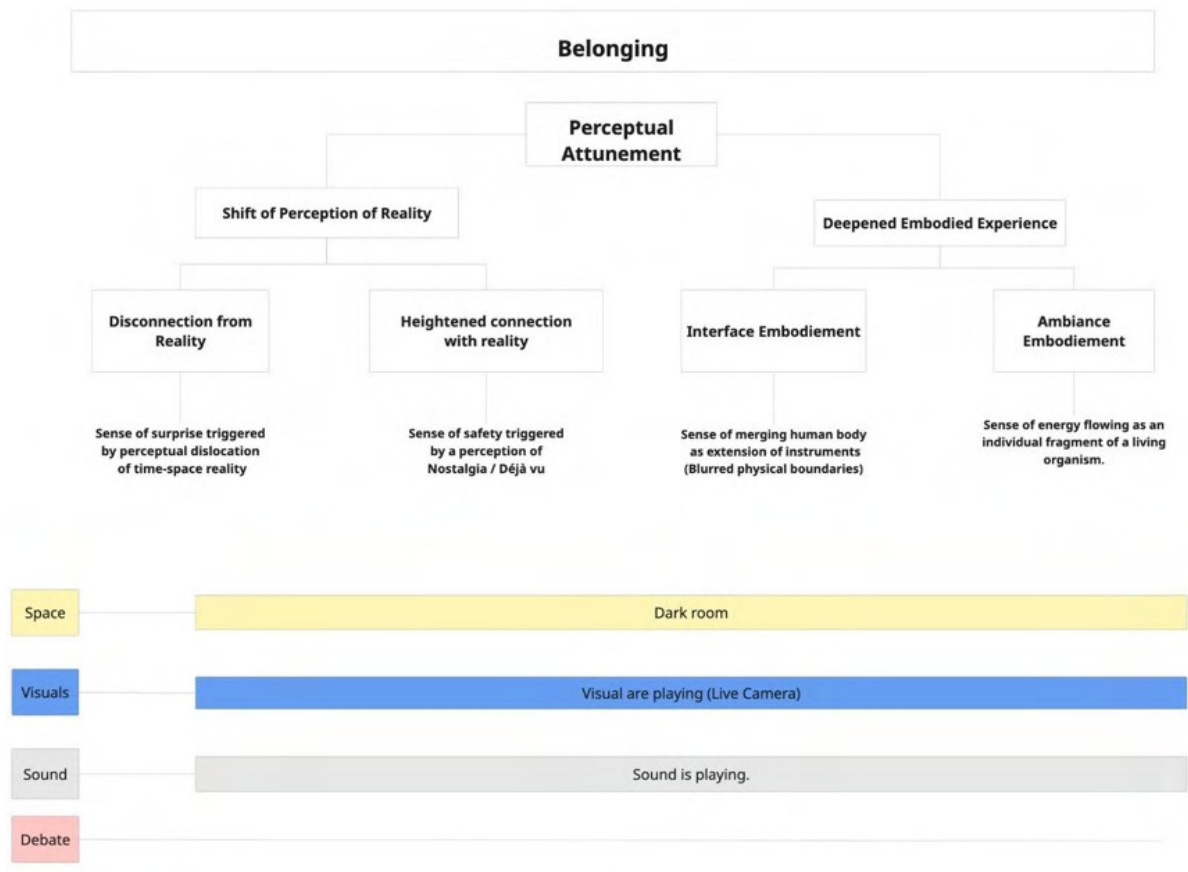


Figure 45. Generic synchronic structure of *Belonging* and live cinema dynamics in *Contact Zone*.

In our analysis, we identified participants’ ‘Shift of Perception of Reality’ in their description of experiencing either a disconnection from reality or a heightened connection to it. The state of disconnection was characterised by feelings of surprise or estrangement, often triggered by disruptions in the perception of time and space. In contrast, heightened connection involved a sense of safety and familiarity, frequently associated with phenomena such as nostalgia or *déjà vu*.

In ‘Disconnection from Reality’ participants described a sense of suspended reality when encountering the ‘liveness’ dimension of the performance. The affective states expressed in their interviews reveal how this experience often culminated in feelings of surprise, *déjà vu*, or nostalgia, as their perception of reality seemed altered during the performance. This is exemplified in the following statement from Lima:

P2-Lima: So, it also brought me back, the feeling afterwards was one of nostalgia. I felt, I felt like I was in a very nostalgic atmosphere. I felt as if I were rewinding and, at the same time, returning to the past (...) The sound of children playing during recess, out on the street, took me back to childhood, I felt very nostalgic. (...) I don’t

remember it very clearly, but out of everything, what stays with me most are the echoes, and the children playing, and hearing the sound of children playing, running around, something like that. Something that really brings back that feeling of joy, of free time, of fun (...) I remembered that... What stayed with me the most was the echo of children playing in the street, the sound of asphalt, of flip-flops... flip-flops almost worn out from playing outside, a feeling of “this is familiar, but at the same time, so distant. (...) Distant, distant, it’s very familiar, but it’s distant. How can I explain it to you? It’s like feeling something... like experiencing a *déjà vu*. I felt like, ‘I think somehow I’ve heard this before, but at the same time, I haven’t’. I felt maybe some tricks of my subconscious, maybe it triggered memories that were blocked in my subconscious.

Their perceptual attunement includes a second pathway identified as ‘Deepened embodied experience’, in which some participants report a sense of ‘interface embodiment’, described by them as sensing their bodily boundaries becoming blurred while they play their instruments or interfaces. This is exemplified by the following statements from participants:

P2-Vagné: No, so at the beginning, when I started playing, I was really focused on the operation, you know? The technical part, making sure everything was working... I was very concentrated on everything, on the instruments there. But then I started reflecting, right there in the moment, on what I was actually playing. What was the real purpose of it all? The purpose was to create that live production, that whole experience, in connection with the other artist. So I started watching the film and forgot about the buttons—I was pretty much operating everything without even looking. I was just playing while watching the film. And then came this feeling that the interface and the body were one and the same.

P1- Gondim: But mostly, I think, because my attention was focused on what I was doing with my hands, and the projection on the screen. But I also don’t think I was... I couldn’t really see what was going on. I just had this really blurred memory of the blue screen, and I think my focus, at least my mind, was more focused on my hands and what to do with my hands. Especially because I had this touch task, of touching, manipulating with touch the MIDI interface, for manipulating that image. So it’s kind of like my attention... it was mostly in my hands, but I had this visual periphery of where this big blue screen was. That was the strongest image I had, specifically. And so I had this first image, I felt in my body doing this... I felt a really strong sensation running from my chest to both of my hands.

Moreover, participants also referred to a holistic experience marked by an embodied sensation of energy flow and a strong sense of unity. In this state, they perceived themselves as individual fragments of a living organism, momentarily becoming part of a unified whole. Below, we present examples of participants’ statements that illustrate this experience:

P1-Vagné: This feeling through my gaze, you know? I was watching, connecting with the other artist, and my body was already responding automatically. I wasn’t

focused on the operational part anymore, you know? It was like I had become one with the whole thing, I was seeing, and my body was already moving and doing what needed to be done. Without worrying whether I was doing it right or wrong, without focusing on the operation or the reasons why I was doing it. And as I said, in that moment I already felt free. I was no longer tense, wondering if it was going to work or not. It was already flowing, I was already connected. Then the three artists came together, in communion, creating one single work, each doing their own part, but all connected. I think that was the big experience, the big learning of that night.

P1-Gondim: I think that... I... what I feel is a sort of being entangled with the whole room. In a way that I wasn't really paying attention to the screens, nor to the people, or even to the musician who was playing the sound. But it was as if that whole ambiance, the presence of people, and even the visuals themselves were all part of that spiral feeling, and everything was involved in that movement. I could feel it taking part in my whole body. Yes. Because I was doing this performance standing, I wasn't sitting, I was standing. And as I tried to recall, I could feel it from my toes. It's like a feeling that my whole body is involved in this feeling from my toes, like I'm moving from down to up. It's very different—very different from the feeling I first assessed, which was something like from the chest; it was the opposite. First, it was more like—not my head, but mostly my chest to my hands, and it was very specific from here to here. (She points to her chest and arms.) And it was more intense, let's say, or more local. And the second feeling that I recognised in my body, as I was trying to access this moment, is like a spiral, like I can feel it from the top up. It's as if it takes the whole of me, you know? Yeah... In some way, it took the whole room too. I wasn't thinking about my hands or my screen. It was like everything was part of it together, but the strongest thing was the sound. Yeah. The intensity of the sound, its repetition, the intensity as part of this movement.

P3-Lins: Ah, I think it's like a... I don't know, I'm not sure if I can fully reach the place of understanding, but there's something that, when I get to certain deeper places inside, I stay in this kind of movement, like... I feel as if I'm riding a wave, you know, of energy passing through, but it's not necessarily matter moving. It's something I try to understand in a really ocean-like way, something connected to flow and energy. And I'm very much like that physically, going back and forth, back and forth, moving in a circle, like a pulse.

Both pathways illustrate how their sense of a 'deepened embodied experience' relates to an emergent perception of connection to a 'whole'. Participants described losing the sense of separation between self, others, and space. In our analysis, we examine how this correlates with a meditation-like experience, as Cardoso reflects below:

P1-Cardoso: Yes. Like, in a state of just being, it's totally that...it really is, it's what you're saying, it's that...like, it's the here and now, and being there, in that moment, and okay, I didn't know what was going to happen next, like constantly, and I wasn't worried about it either. I knew I was going there to see a performance, but I had no idea what the whole video would be like, right? And then came the live music too, and I think that's it...the live aspect of the music brings you to this "okay,

what's it going to be? what's going to happen next?" But not in a worried way, not in a questioning way...it's more like a bodily feeling, where you're just there, and you don't know what's coming. And it's not recorded music...it's not something you know, right? It's something being created right there in the moment, always, constantly in the moment. I agree with everything you said, the only thing in terms of memory is that, even if I don't remember the chords or the exact melodies, when I think of that image, or the visual that comes from the sound, it's not about remembering exactly what was being played or the exact instruments.

Not like that.

It's more like, even if I don't remember, I know there was this ambient tone, let's say, that was present and that brought this feeling of comfort, this feeling of presence in the air. It really brings me this image of, like, I don't know if this makes sense, but I do this thing when I lie down or I'm just sitting and, I put on a sound. And it's like my only task is to be there and to be in the unfolding of that sound. And that's what brings me to the here and now in that sense. Or also when I have a sound connected to something, or when I'm watching something, a video or a film or something I want to see, there's this preparation, like, okay, I'll choose this to listen to, I'll choose this to watch, and you put yourself in that state of doing just that. Maybe it's more active in that sense when I'm the one choosing exactly what I'm going to watch and so on, but it's still the same feeling, like, I don't know, if it's something I've never seen or heard before, I don't know what's going to happen. It's like, now, during this time, I'm here, having this experience of sound and video, of image, of space. It's kind of like a meditation, just the intention of placing yourself there, to see what comes.

P1- Gondim: As I remembered, it's kind of as if I could re-access that feeling...the same that I felt during that moment. Sort of... not numb but like in meditation. When you meditate and you... I am used to doing meditation. Like, when in meditation practice you can easily get access to this state when your body vibrates, in your hands. Let's say I could feel that as soon as I closed my eyes and I remembered that scene, which I described, the performance. I started feeling in my body, from the chest to the hands, mostly this area, vibrating in a pleasant way, and, like, more like... a bit of excitement. Not like relaxing, a vibration—but awake. Yeah... An anticipation, maybe a little bit of insight, in this sense. But then alert also, maybe in the zone. But, yeah, then I also could hear the sound of just the... just like the background of the song, played by the musician, Mbalango. And, yeah, I could remember the sound when I closed my eyes. And the moment that this sound was stronger, I could feel that my body was circulating. Like the energy of a circle became more and more present. And all this energy that I started feeling like this, it started to be that, like a spiral ascent. It was very clear, and I could feel that movement in my body. And that's it. I think this is the main memory that I just had access to when I closed my eyes and remembered that moment.

Furthermore, this meditative state is also identified through interviewees' expressions of an emerging sense of "being part of something larger", as well as "being part of a fragmented unity", as the statements below illustrate:

P3-Gomes: I think there are two aspects, like, there's the unity of the piece, right, which is something I see, these elements coming together, and these elements worked really well, and I believe it created a kind of concise presentation—that's me trying to rationalise the thing, right? And then there's the side of me, as a person who is part of that piece proposed by other people too, you know? So, it's not because I consider something a unity that I was always in unity with you all, like, I think there are moments when I drift away, there are moments when I come back. It's not like, "we turn off the lights and from now on we're all in sync until the end", right? No. I think there are things that come and go, right? And there are moments when you can see it's working more, like, one time I'm playing something and another sound fits perfectly, and I didn't even know I wanted it, but it fits and I go, wow, you get that feeling of union. But then there are times when things don't seem to match that well, and then there are moments when I play a sound and I'm like, damn, the video is really... that's it, like, it's the sound of the video. And then, suddenly, the video goes somewhere else and I try to go with it but then I already get lost and then I already go like...not really in sync. So there is this unity, but there are moments of more or less unity, it's a fragmented unity.

P3-Lins: I think that... I don't know if I can say it's very tactile, but it's like there was something closing like this, and fitting together, a bit of starting to roll, in both senses, right? Of happening but also of spinning, as something that embraces, that envelops, not necessarily just because of the sound, right? But that sound layer is part of this sonic enveloping. The visual... it was curious that it was behind me. I was watching at the beginning, but when that moment came, I was already with my back turned. And I wasn't seeing it, but I was feeling the image too, from behind. And I don't know if the materiality itself of the floor and of the microphone, and of the guys also playing, was so much part of that sphere, but there was something that tied it all together and condensed there. Yeah, I think what makes more sense is that it was like a condensation of that space, of those people, of that sound, and of that darkness too—also because it's... kind of curious, like, darkness gives the idea of vastness but for me, it has something more of enclosing. It feels like things get closer to you, rather than an open space, I don't know, it feels more like an embrace than an opening, really.

In the following synchronic unit, we present the analysis of 'Revelation', drawing on participants' reflections on their experiences during the post-performance debate sessions. It deepens our understanding of structure of participants' experience of an 'insight', including their experience of 'aura' in this specific moment, as identified in their interview evocations.

4.2.2.4 Revelation

In this unit, we analyse participants' descriptions of experiencing 'Revelation'. Our analysis identified a cognitive shift that emerged through two pathways: (1) making sense of the live cinema experience, and (2) recognising their post-performance inner experiences.

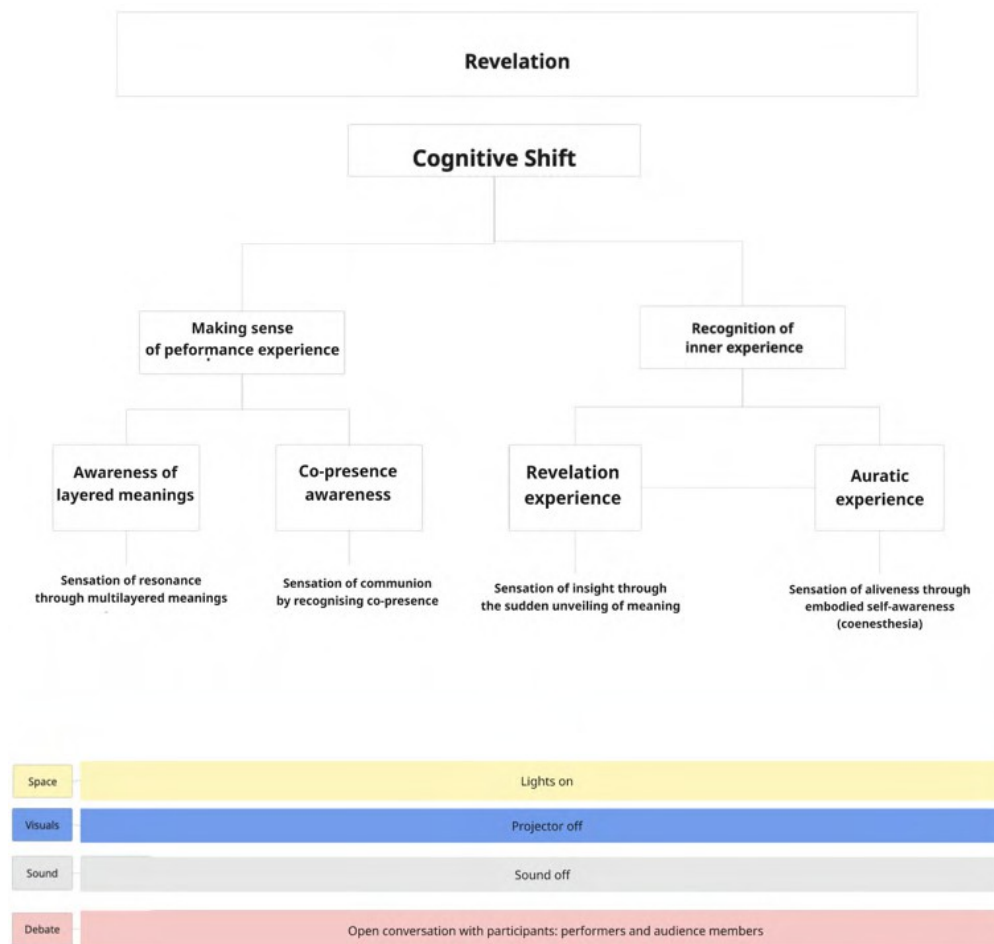


Figure 46. Generic synchronic structure of *Revelation* and live cinema dynamics in Contact Zone.

In post-performance debate sessions, participants described experiencing a cognitive shift while interpreting our live cinema performances. By exploring its multiple conceptual layers, they reported a sensation of resonance that emerged from understanding how these elements intertwined to shape their overall experience. The excerpt below illustrates this:

P3- Vilsenki: It's good to listen to those people, right? Because they bring us another... anyway, they bring their perspective, of that reality, and... And there's this thing of the actual meeting of people, right? Of people gathering and being in contact to tell their stories and... And all of that layered over the lives of those people in that place, because then we see images of Lisbon, we see images of people doing things, we see images of the city that is still, but at the same time, images of

that flow of things happening. And that's it. Then we access things we don't stop to think about, for example, this thing with the statues, I think it's so... it stayed with me so strongly, and it's so powerful because it's really... we walk past those things all the time and we don't see them, right? It's almost like that, you walk by and you don't see, you don't know what that statue is, you don't know what that thing is, you walk by and it doesn't mean anything, but then when you hear something and you become aware that there's a story there, there's a historicity, there's a context that affects people's lives, that affected and will affect... and then it starts making sense, it creates layers, builds layers that give you an understanding. So, I think that's why at first it hits you hard, because it's all really absurd, but then as things build, you begin to understand that it's much bigger, and there's much more underneath. Anyway, I kind of went off there... (laughter).

The following excerpt from an interviewee illustrates their process of making sense of our audiovisual narrative through self-reflexivity:

P2- Vieira: Yes, there was the moment when the connection was made between Angola and Brazil and Portugal, and then it was spoken about the similarities that each people had. I think there's a certain feeling of belonging. Because it was also talking about us, that is, if it is talking about Angola, it includes the Angolans, and if it is talking about the Angolans, then obviously it includes me. So, there is that feeling of belonging.

They also reported how their co-presence awareness resulted in a sensation of communion. The following participant statements illustrate this:

P1-Alessandra: Because, I don't know, since I was just watching, I remember being constantly observing everything around me. There was a video in front, and on the sides. I looked a lot at one of the side screens too. And at the music playing. And this feeling of not being alone. Like, there were people, you know? I don't know, when I watch a movie, I usually get very... it's not exactly introspective, but it's just me and the film. And there, I felt it was me and other people. There were people. And things were happening beyond the visual stimulus, you know?

P1-Cardoso: So that was interesting in that sense, I remember, like... the lights went out and then, "okay, now we're in a space that's already more common to everyone", like... I mean, the previous space was also common to everyone, but I think when it's in that darkness, I see more of this individual thing of each little person, like, me in my space, because everything around me is dark, and I'm having that experience with the audio and the image. And when the light comes back, it's like, ah okay... all these people are here next to me too, and then we also switch, I change my position, right?

Regarding the second pathway of cognitive shift, we explore participants' recognition of inner experience through a sudden unveiling of previously implicit meaning. This process, which we refer to as 'revelation' aligns with Petitmengin's studies on the source of human

thinking. Drawing on Daniel Stern's work on children's early experience, she describes it as "not a world of images, sounds and tactile sensations, but a world of forms, movements, intensities and rhythms, in other words, a world of transmodal qualities, which can be transposed from one mode to another, and which he calls vitality affects" (2007, p. 11).

Building on this framework, Petitmengin (2007, p. 23) further highlights that we can access this experiential dimension of life. She refers to 'the source of thoughts' as a dimension that remains continuously active. Applying these concepts to our data, our analysis identifies the experience of 'revelation' as a self-reflexive process of recognising inner experiences—not as isolated intellectual thought, but as somatic-affective insight, as described below:

P1- Ágnés: It's... it's a sensation, you know? The sensation of insight, like when you have insight about things. It's that, right? That something gives you a kind of understanding about something, and that thing of insight, you know? Ah, this is like this because of that. I don't know exactly how to explain it, but it's like that, insights that happen, things like that.

P2-Alexandre: It's like that feeling when you're looking for something and then suddenly remember it's somewhere you didn't expect, or like when someone says, BINGO! You know? Yes. As if I had found the answer to all the questions I was asking at the beginning.

The lower section of the diagram illustrates the dynamics of the live cinema performance, including the room lights being turned on, the cessation of visual projections and sounds, and the initiation of a post-performance debate session. During this conversation, we observed that participants' pre-reflective sensations transformed into explicit understanding through the meaning-making validation that occurred during intersubjective exchanges among audience and performers. In this context, they reflected on the relevance of the debate to their 'revelation' experience, as illustrated in the following statements:

P1- Cardoso: I think that it was really cool because of the exchange that happened with the audience, also that sharing, again, yet another layer of invitation, like, okay, now let's talk about the experience we had. I was facing the video, and then, meanwhile, I'm with my back to what used to be the video, and that already brings me another perspective of the space, also right there in that moment. And then, obviously, like, listening to the audience and seeing what they thought, and us talking about it, that memory I had of the images that were shown in the video and of the day we gave the interview, that also brought yet another layer of experience. Which again, it's no longer double, it's like, triple in a way, because it starts adding other layers of things, of switching perspective, of switching place, it's like that.

P2 – Vieira: So, it was quite confusing. But it was also a very deep experience,

because it made me reflect on how I see the world. In what ways I find it beautiful, or what things bother me when I look at the world. So, it was a kind of revelation.

We also identified an ‘auratic’ experience, related to participants’ immediate, embodied self-awareness, felt as a sense of aliveness. Interviewees’ description of perceiving both ‘memory’ and ‘presence’ can be analysed through Crary’s (1988) discussion of Maine de Biran’s use of the term *coenaesthesia* to describe “one’s immediate awareness of the presence of the body in perception” and “the simultaneity of a composite of impressions inhering in different parts of the organism” (p. 7). In a more recent interpretation, Alessandra Schilhab (2024) explains that ‘coenaesthesia’ reflects a model of embodied subjectivity located at the intersection of physiology and philosophy. She emphasises how bodily sensation plays a crucial role in the formation of self-awareness. In her words:

In the moments immediately following awakening, the body is grasped through the immediate feeling of existence (or pure sensory coenesthesia), now clearly distinct from immediate apperception. In rare and transient moments like this, the body reveals itself to us not so much as a *corps propre* (as something that belongs to us as an object of effort and will) but as a living body: as something that, while being close, intimate, and familiar, still remains constitutively inappropriable. A silent companion that is with us at all times and never abandons us, the living body is only noticed by us momentarily in exceptional circumstances, such as moments of awakening, states of bodily discomfort, sudden illuminations, or moments of distraction and reverie. (Aloisi, 2024, p. 51)

This self-observational experience is identified in participants’ descriptions of becoming aware of their own role as participant-observers in our live sessions. As Cardoso articulated in her interview, the live cinema experience triggered a sense of simultaneous presence, through viewing her personal memories, previously recorded and then displayed in our documentary narrative, while she was simultaneously affected and transformed by the live interactions in our sessions. She shared how watching our audiovisual documentation from the past, while simultaneously observing herself in live transmission, provided immediate insight into how future memories were being created during the live documentation. This heightened her self-awareness of being present in a collective social experience. She described her memories of this specific moment below:

P1-Cardoso: Yeah. This is something I experience a lot, seeing myself doing things, or seeing myself being in a space. And when there’s a camera present, it’s in that moment, like, it’s different from recording a video and then watching it later. I often have this thing of going back to watch and thinking, ‘okay, that was

happening’. But when it’s live, that’s it, there’s no gap between the moment of recording and watching what was done. It’s like everything is being captured right as you’re doing it. There’s no distance between... I didn’t watch the interview video and think, like, ‘oh, that was just a video.’ Watching it brought me back to another moment that had already happened, and I was being transported back there again. And then I started to feel the bodily, auditory, and visual sensations from the day of the interview.

In this sense, the juxtaposition of multiple temporal layers of audiovisual documentation—pre-recorded interviews, live camera input— and participation in live cinema sessions—catalysed participants’ self-reflection. Their simultaneous engagement with these temporal layers merged into a unified experience of becoming self-aware as participant-observers, immersed in a social process characterised by ongoing and relational transformation. Cardoso further articulated this layered temporality in her observation:

P1-Cardoso: When the image of the present moment is projected, it’s like I see myself, like right there, and it brings me a different feeling. I don’t know if I can exactly explain the necessary words to describe how this feeling is... It’s really a sensation, the double meaning, that’s it, you know? It’s that image when you see yourself, like, you have the other thing out there, seeing you directly. I think it’s really that, like, okay, there are two Milas, one is seeing, the other is being. In that moment, like, while she, the other Mila, is being, she is also seeing the other Mila who is being. Yes, yes. The recording is very much that, like the recording is memory, and the live performance is presence.

This heightened sense of presence in the moment was echoed by other participants. Albertini similarly described the dynamic quality of simultaneous engagement:

P1-Albertini: Yeah, it was very dynamic. (...) It was about being present. Like, realising that it was also happening around me, that what was being projected was also part of the present moment. And so, that’s where this awareness came from, of being there, of that happening right there, in that moment too. Beyond the documentary. (...) Yeah, it was this feeling of becoming aware of being present, of presence itself, of feeling myself there, in that place, in that event.

A further recognition of inner experience was described by Márcia Raquel Lima — the artist performing the live painting during our live cinema session in Luanda — who shared a spontaneous comment immediately after her interview concluded. She described experiencing a self-reflexive state through which she felt a renewal of her ‘auratic’ dimension:

Lima (interviewee): You’re welcome, darling. Now I’m very apprehensive about this. But, and...I don’t know, I also really liked the fact, the exit, when we left the museum, no, the institute, actually. I had never been there. Well, as I told you, it was my first time... and I liked it, I felt a completely different aura being there.

Gondim (interviewer): Yeah, in what sense?

Lima (interviewee): In a positive sense, in the sense that... I don't know, I felt that after that performance, I left that room as if I were a completely different person. Yeah.

Gondim (interviewer): Can you develop and try to describe it to me?

Lima (interviewee): No, I can't darling. I think the idea is to say, I left there with a completely different aura, but in a positive way.

Gondim (interviewer): An aura, you said?

Lima (interviewee): Yes, aura, aura.

Lima (interviewee): What did you hear?

Gondim (interviewer): No, it's just because that word is the one I use in my work.

Lima (interviewee): Yes, yes, yes, with a different aura, I left confident and positive, I felt artistically rejuvenated because it was an experience, as I said, that I had never done before, so it added more value to it.

In the following section, we present our final observations from this analysis to better understand how our live cinema model fosters a sense of agency and belonging among diasporic artists. Specifically, we examine how the model functions as an 'art of the contact zone' that, through 'liveness', contributes to the 'auratic' dimension of the live cinema experience.

Throughout this chapter, our analysis of the four experiential dimensions—immersion, agency, belonging, and revelation—has explored how shifts in participants' attentional disposition, engagement strategies, and perceptual and cognitive processes shaped their experiences during our live cinema performances. These analyses reveal how our live cinema model creates an experience that fosters a sense of agency and cultivates belonging by promoting a space for diasporic artists' participation and co-presence awareness. In what follows, we synthesise these findings to demonstrate how 'liveness' activates the 'auratic' dimension within live cinema sessions.

Final Notes

In this chapter we presented a micro-phenomenological analysis of our live cinema performance, *Contact Zone*. We collected interviews with participants from the three sessions and elaborated generic experiential structures to demonstrate the intersubjective experiences identified in their first-person descriptions of 'a good moment' across the three cities. We also

explained the rationale for formulating our interview question in accordance with Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, as we aimed to explore the extent to which participants' experiences aligned with flow experience through its autotelic, process-oriented motivation, as discussed in previous chapters.

Although not all participants could be identified as having entered a flow state in the strict psychological sense, we recognise similarities with the set of processes identified in the generic synchronic structures of immersion, agency, belonging, and revelation, which together created relatable conditions for experiencing it. These patterns closely resemble the experiential phases of a flow state as conceptualised in Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2021):

Under these conditions, experience seamlessly unfolds from moment to moment, and one enters a subjective state with the following characteristics: intense and focused concentration on the present moment, merging of action and awareness, loss of reflective self-consciousness (i.e., loss of awareness of oneself as a social actor), a sense that one can control one's actions, that is, a sense that one can in principle deal with the situation because one knows how to respond to whatever happens next, distortion of temporal experience (typically, a sense that time has passed faster than normal), experience of the activity as intrinsically rewarding, such that often the end goal is just an excuse for the process. (p. 280)

We argue that the participatory aspects of our live cinema sessions posed a challenge, identified in participants' descriptions as a call to action, which manifested in their attempts to shape or interpret the narrative. This was accompanied by feelings of tension and confusion, which dissipated once they embraced improvisation and opted for acting as witnesses to the unfolding collective experience.

We interpret this shift towards releasing control, through the lens of flow theory, as an experience characterised by emotional alignment, reduced self-consciousness, altered time perception, and an autotelic quality (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). We noted how the liveness dimension in our cinema sessions not only facilitated participant's agency but enabled experiential patterns that are consistent with the dynamics of the flow experience. This framing situates our observations on participants' initial experiences of tension and anxiety, leading to a sense of alignment, and communion.

Moreover, as discussed in the experiential unit of 'belonging', we identified a perceptual shift among participants in their experience of reality. This shift was accompanied by emotional resonance—including feelings of nostalgia and safety—itself evoked by audiovisual elements of the performance. Henrique Gomes described it as a "union of fragmented parts". They further described experiencing a cognitive shift, which we refer to as 'revelation'. Through analysing their descriptions, we connect participants' experiences with

the flow processes described by Csikszentmihalyi's theory:

Following a flow experience, our self becomes more complex than that it had been before, due to two broad psychological processes – differentiation and integration. The self becomes differentiated as the person after a flow experience feels more capable and skilled. Flow leads to integration because thoughts, intentions, feelings and the senses are focused on the same goal. After a flow episode, one feels more together than before, not only internally but also with respect to other people and the world in general. Differentiation promotes individuality while integration facilitates connections and security. (1990, p. 3)

With regards to the autotelic quality of our live cinema practice, we illustrate Vagné's description of shifting his enacted strategy of participation through a conscious decision to release his intention to control the narrative. To illustrate this, we highlight a phrase from his earlier excerpt, where he stated: "What was the real purpose of it all? The purpose was to create that live production, that whole experience, in connection with the other artists." In the following, we present examples of participants' descriptions in which we also identified this autotelic dimension of their experiences. They often emphasised their engagement as intrinsically pleasurable and something they are eager to repeat. In their words:

P3-Lins: Ah, I think it's that kind of overused phrase—"it was really great!"—but it really was something rich in many ways, because it was very improvised, right? We didn't know each other, and we managed to put something together there that we hadn't rehearsed. We kind of micro-rehearsed a little bit just before. It was like, "Oh, I want to do this," "I have some images," "I'll bring the guitar," and it was really great because one of my intentions was exactly not to do everything myself, you know? We all have our limitations when it comes to experimenting, and it felt like this collective that we managed to form really went beyond the idea of authorship, beyond the "me," the "what I'm proposing," and instead reached this place of connection with everyone there. Because everyone was open, everyone was bringing something—even the people who were there just to watch. And I think that's already a lot to bring, too. It wasn't just me proposing something—it was a meeting of many people proposing something together. I think that was really, really special. There are certain places you can access when you're alone, right? But there are other places you can only explore when you're with others. And I think that's what happened. It's like another big realization dropped for me in terms of art—in the sense of doing things together, not even in the sense of collaboration, but the very relationship that improvisation brings. It's not just Diego playing the guitar and me speaking, or Henrique and you projecting...It's the floor itself, the heat, the outside music that in the beginning felt out of sync but eventually became part of it—it came in as a thread that wove itself in, you know? I think it's... well, I'll say "curious," so I don't say "interesting."

P2- Lima: Yes. I say that this practice, this performance, really changed my perspective, because I'm not used to stepping out of my comfort zone to engage in artistic expression or collaboration with other artists. It's something I had never

done in this way before. I was a bit nervous, I admit...And it made me see that there was really no reason to feel pressured to do it, because I was somewhat insecure about the act itself, I confess, but at the same time I wanted to try and I decided to take the risk to see how it would go—and in the end, I actually liked what I did. Even though it wasn't planned, I followed the sound, and... I don't know, it's a technique, an exercise that I believe I should practice more often—on my own, with other artists, in other spaces too, in different environments and contexts. And yes, it changed me in a positive way.

Furthermore, we explored the correlation between participants' descriptions and the experience of coenesthesia. Aloisi (2024) explains that this concept was discussed in both Germany and France during the nineteenth century, particularly by Théodule Ribot. However, Maine de Biran was among the first in France to engage with the notion, becoming familiar with it in 1823 (p. 49). Aloisi further comments that this term provided Biran “with a conceptual tool to focus on a series of issues related to a possible theorisation of the unconscious” (p. 48). As she notes, “It is often claimed that one of the great merits of Biranian philosophy consisted in having highlighted the existence of two different ways of feeling and knowing the body, one objective and the other subjective” (p. 50). For her, Biran's conceptualisation of the ‘immediate feeling of existence’ stands apart from both objectivity and subjective immediacy, suggesting a third mode of perceiving bodily existence. This idea aligns with Petitmengin's (2007) observations on the pre-reflective dimension, previously discussed in our study.

In this way, Biran's definition of *coenesthesia* relates to our question of whether and how live cinema performances can foster a sense of belonging among participants and contributes to our analyses of the experiential exploration of cinema through liveness. We observed that, our live cinema model, beyond mediating a social experience through co-presence, simultaneously intensified participants' immediate embodied self-awareness. This experience was described as an ephemeral encounter with one's impersonal, often unconscious dimension. As Aloisi explains:

The feeling that the self has of its existence corresponds to this subjective experience of the *corps propre*. However, there is another way of feeling the body from within that remains irreducible to the experience of the *corps propre* as we have just defined it: this is what I would like to refer to when speaking of *corps vivant* [living body], according to an expression borrowed in particular from Biran's *Considérations*. Generally overlooked because of its fleeting nature (...). (2024, p. 50-51)

We also explore this aspect of participants' experience, in its similarity to non-duality awareness (NDA) during meditation-like experiences. In this sense, we argue that participant's ‘immediate feeling of existence’ is consistent with Amit Goswami (1993/ 2015) suggestions

that consciousness is not a byproduct of the individual brain but the fundamental reality from which all material phenomena arise. He further argues that non-dual awareness, the experience of undivided, universal consciousness, is experientially accessible through meditation.

Amit critiques material realism through principles from quantum theory, enabling arguments against radical objectivity in analysing our perceived reality. In this sense, he also refers to the optical illusion previously mentioned by Crary, by stating: “You still see only one of the images at a time, but your consciousness has expanded so that you are aware of the duality.” (2021, p. 65) His view challenges the dualistic assumptions underlying our perception of the world by presenting subject and object as unified expressions of a single field of awareness.

In the field of neuroscience, Zoran Josipovic (2014) describes non-dual awareness as a foundational mode of consciousness that precedes conceptual thought and intention, allowing various perceptual and cognitive experiences to be contextualised without fragmenting them into the usual subject-object dualities. This background awareness integrates experience as a unified whole rather than dividing it into separate self and environment components, providing a neuroscientific framework for understanding the non-dual state experienced in meditation.

In our analysis of experiencing ‘belonging’, we illustrate how participants describe the loss of their sense of separation between self and others, a finding that we align with the concept of non-duality in the meditation studies. In his article “Neural correlates of nondual awareness in meditation”, Josipovic claims that:

Dualities such as self versus other, good versus bad, and in-group versus out-group are pervasive features of human experience, structuring the majority of cognitive and affective processes. Yet, an entirely different way of experiencing, one in which such dualities are relaxed rather than fortified, is also available. It depends on recognizing, within the stream of our consciousness, the nondual awareness (NDA)—a background awareness that precedes conceptualization and intention and that can contextualize various perceptual, affective, or cognitive contents without fragmenting the field of experience into habitual dualities. (2014, p.1)

Josipovic’s study of NDA in Tibetan Buddhist meditation describes this background awareness as “ordinarily unrecognized [and] in the background of all conscious experiencing” that is “unitary and unchanging”. He characterises it as a form of awareness that, though empty of specific content, is clearly felt and accompanied by bliss, “whereas various sensory, affective, and cognitive contents, and the various states of arousal appear to it as dynamic processes or, as a well-known metaphor states, like images in a mirror” (2014, p. 2).

Participants' reflections revealed a parallel phenomenon: they perceived their live cinema experience through this same holistic dimension, describing their individual perception of live events as interconnected and dynamically related to others, with elements interacting within a unified experience. Aligning with this approach, Lins critique the academic tendency toward specialisation and fragmented knowledge, emphasising instead the importance of an integrated perspective on lived experience. In his words:

It's really interesting because in the hard sciences we tend to segment everything, even though the arts are also divided, there's still a kind of spark that allows connections, to cross boundaries, and to understand that—it's not like that, there are tangles, knots. As Prof. Cassi told me, when science began with the naturalists, they didn't confine themselves to chemistry alone; they engaged with chemistry, philosophy, religion—it was all integrated. Only later did disciplines split.⁹³

He further develops his observations by providing an illustration of how his academic education in oceanography has structured knowledge: "A classic example from oceanography: the left leg of the blue crab is studied separately from the right leg, or in different months. It doesn't work like that; everything is interconnected. Individual parts—one leg, then the other—belong to a body, and that body is part of an environment with other creatures."⁹⁴ He completes his thought by explaining how his live cinema experience, as an artistic practice, did not provoke a division for him, but rather a unified dynamic: "It feels like a loop, a spiral."⁹⁵

To demonstrate the intersubjective findings in participants' experiences across our sessions in different locations, we conclude this chapter by comparing Lins' verbal description of the live cinema experience in Fortaleza with the live painting performed by visual artist Márcia Raquel Lima during our session in Luanda. This comparison reveals common structures that support the intersubjective findings and contribute to the development of our live cinema model. The following excerpt shows how Lins described external interventions—what he called 'lines' entering a sphere-like space and becoming entangled. He invokes the image of 'particles' orbiting an atom, but emphasises that these elements "aren't separated", indicating a holistic, interconnected experience:

I don't know, it seems like something crossed through and got involved in that sphere, kind of got tangled there, but it wasn't necessarily what started it; it wasn't

⁹³ Lins, Lucas. (2025, February 13). Interview with Lucas Lins [Interview]. Fortaleza, Brazil. Available at: [\[https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights\]](https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights)

⁹⁴ Lins, Lucas. (2025, February 13). Interview with Lucas Lins [Interview]. Fortaleza, Brazil. Available at: [\[https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights\]](https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights)

⁹⁵ Lins, Lucas. (2025, February 13). Interview with Lucas Lins [Interview]. Fortaleza, Brazil. Available at: [\[https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights\]](https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights)

the sound that started it, it came and became part of it. I don't know, I'm imagining something very... an image, there's a sphere here, then some lines come and start tangling and it continues, something like an atom particle, right? There's something and, there are things spinning around it that are also part of it, that aren't separated.⁹⁶

We noted how Lins' detailed description of the live cinema experience in our Fortaleza session resembled Márcia Raquel Lima's live painting during our session in Luanda, which is illustrated in Figure 47.



Figure 47. Photograph of the live painting by Márcia Raquel Lima in *Contact Zone*, our live cinema session at Instituto Guimarães Rosa, Luanda, November 2024.

⁹⁶ Lins, Lucas. (2025, February 13). Interview with Lucas Lins [Interview]. Fortaleza, Brazil. Available at: [\[https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights\]](https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights)

In Lima's reflections on her improvisation experience, she mentions: "I let it flow, but if you look at the drawing, if you still have in your memory what I created, a part of the drawing, for me, somehow represents sound waves. That fluidity, those curves, it's as if they were waves."⁹⁷



Figure 48. Photograph of participants in *Contact Zone*, our second live cinema session in Luanda (November 2024), holding the live painting by Márcia Raquel Lima at Instituto Guimarães Rosa.

To conclude this chapter, we highlight evidence of the effective application of micro-phenomenological protocols through the reflections of interviewee Admila Cardoso. As our conversation came to an end, she remarked that—much like the performance itself—the interview had suspended her *natural attitude* and enabled a pre-reflective disposition, revealing dimensions of her lived experience that had previously been unconscious to her. After the formal interview ended, while we were still recording, she spontaneously reflected on her experience with the micro-phenomenological procedure, stating:

⁹⁷ Lima, Márcia R. (2025, February 13). *Interview with Márcia Raquel Lima* [Interview]. Available at: <https://www.zonadecontato.com/interview-highlights>

P1-Cardoso: Thank you, now I'm going to stop, reflect, review, and kind of go back to that space again, because just being here talking about this also brings those memories of what happened that day. So, it's also nice to remember, like, and to feel again that sense of comfort from that day and... wow, wow, it was so nice, like, that experience. And I'm remembering that because, yeah, when we don't talk about it, it still stays in the body, it's there, right? But it's not necessarily something I'm actively remembering. And here, too, it's this other invitation — like, inviting myself to actively remember what happened.

I think I didn't have it so visually. I think I had more this image of the space, but being here with your questions and trying to remember what had happened gave me again that field of presence — of just letting it come and remembering the feeling from that place. Like, I didn't know what to say because I didn't remember anything. What was I going to say? I had no idea. So that surprise, as well — I didn't know, I didn't really have an idea where your questions were going necessarily.

So, I was surprised in that whole space, and like, I also arrived here not having any idea on what was going to happen and, well, I just started talking and, yeah, that's it. (...) Uh-hum, yes, because I think when you said "interview" I was very much in the mindset of, okay, questions about that day, and at the time, before even [this interview], I was trying to revive the memory of that day and so on, but like, not being able to locate it in a specific space, because I didn't know what the questions would be.

So, "what could I allow myself to remember that made sense to add, to bring in?" Since I didn't know what you were going to ask, it's like I had forgotten it. Then so much time passed and now, today, in this moment, it's like: let's activate that place again. And in that activation, yeah, I can vividly see that blue, and be in that space again, and see the images, and I can have another kind of experience — like remembering watching on my phone screen the recordings I made that day. So, little images from that moment start popping up.

And making those connections — which is that thing of trying to describe that space and that sensation — in the context of our conversation made me relate it to another activity I do, and I went like: "ah, okay", which brings a similar feeling, right? Like we were saying — I put on sound to be there in that moment — and trying to revive that memory also brings up another memory from another situation that has nothing to do with what I experienced that day, but which brings the same — like, the same texture, a sensory field, but through a different activity. (...)

Yeah, yes, yes, even before you asked, I wasn't aware that we had that conversation and all the exchange, so it was when you brought it up and I was like, "Ah, we did that", "And the others, "Oh right, okay." I wasn't conscious of it here either, I also think you kind of led it from an initial moment — like going back there, and then kind of walking through it until, let's say, the process was complete. That's very interesting, it's really very difficult.

Through this description, we observed how both our live cinema performance and our

post-performance micro-phenomenological assessment served as methods for accessing a pre-reflective dimension of experience that typically remains unconscious and is often unexplored in knowledge production. This was facilitated in our sessions by the liveness dimension of unpredictability derived from participants' co-presence interactions. As well as in our post-performance interviews through the researcher's open-ended questions and non-inductive guidance in interviewing, which is central to anchoring the interviewee in retrieving memories during their experiential descriptions. Such an approach supports participants in accessing, evoking, and gradually articulating the temporal unfolding of their embodied, sensory, and affective memories of a specific event.

This methodology renders the typically implicit or tacit dimensions of our lived experiences explicit, through iterative process of analysis that further supports our intersubjective investigation, enabling the elaboration of generic experiential structures of participants in our live cinema performances. The generic diachronic and synchronic structures of their experiences were developed through abstraction operations such as classification, aggregation, disaggregation, generalisation, or specialisation, which allowed for a careful reconstruction of both its synchronic and diachronic dynamics (Petitmengin, 2006), as demonstrated throughout the diagrams presented in this chapter.

In this sense, we argue that our investigation enabled the exploration of the often-overlooked subjective dimensions of experience in both film production and viewing, by analysing micro-phenomenological interviews on participants' lived experiences in *Contact Zone* live cinema performances.

Conclusion

In this research we investigated how live cinema, when approached as a participatory documentary practice, can foster both agency and belonging among diasporic artists situated in post-colonial contexts. We conceptualised our live cinema model as an ‘art of the contact zone’, drawing from Pratt’s (1991) notion of spaces where cultures meet, interact, and negotiate power asymmetries. We illustrated this through two key elements: first, autoethnography, in which the artistic researcher’s own diasporic perspective was embedded within the audiovisual narrative; and second, transculturation, in which the use of Portuguese—a language imposed by the colonial regime—served as a tool to challenge dominant narratives rooted in Portugal’s official and mainstream discourse. This reflects Ortiz’s view (as cited in Pratt, 1991) that the colonised can appropriate the cultural tools of the colonisers as a form of political agency.

Throughout our study we explored how incorporating a dimension of liveness into participatory documentary filmmaking can convey a sense of immediacy, allowing artists to express an ‘inner necessity’ (Kandinsky, 1911/2008) through ‘automatism’ (Goodfellow, 2023), ultimately reaching what Jung (1959/1980) describes as the symbolic language of the collective unconscious. We also reflected on Dewey’s notion that artistic expression relies not on technical ability alone, but on artists’ use of practical skills for mediating the manifestation of their emotional experience in order to become art (2010, p. 160).

The experimental hybrid framework we engaged with combined linear and non-linear narrative modes within a collective improvisation that enabled an alinear narrative to emerge during our live cinema performances. This finding forms the foundation for our elaboration of a live cinema model based on a dynamic range of narrative modes.

For this investigation, we applied a micro-phenomenological approach developed by Petitmengin (2006), through which we analysed the intersubjective experiences of participants across our sessions in Lisbon, Luanda, and Fortaleza, and identified four synchronic experiential units: immersion, agency, belonging, and revelation. These experiential units were examined through participants’ first-person verbal descriptions of their memories of a ‘good moment’ from their lived experience in our live cinema sessions.

To address our research questions, we drew on interdisciplinary reflections connecting Hall’s (2019) work on cultural identity and diaspora, Auslander’s (2012) theory of liveness, and Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) flow theory. Furthermore, Claire Petitmengin’s (2007) writings on the experiential pre-reflective dimension, as a fleeting access to an embodied experience that precedes reflective thought, provided the theoretical foundation for understanding participants’ evocations of their lived experiences.

As identified in our analysis, participants' descriptions indicated a suspension of their ordinary reality perception and a deepened embodied experience, leading to a sense of 'belonging', often evoked as a felt embrace, comfort, or welcoming. We also identified an auratic experience, which we correlate with Biran's studies on the concept of *coenesthesia*, defined as the sense of being alive through an immediate feeling of embodied self-awareness.

Participants' experiences also resembled states of flow and non-dual awareness, as discussed in our previous discussion of these concepts by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), and Josipovic (2014), respectively. In our analysis, we also noted participants recalling moments when their physical boundaries between self and others seemed to blur, as if the distinction between subject and object no longer existed—an experience some described as “being part of a fragmented unity”.

It is relevant to note that even when co-presence was perceived through live digital mediation, our practice remained grounded in participants' physical co-presence, shaping their heightened embodied self-perception of co-existing with others in a shared time-space. Thus, we conclude that our live cinema model enables fostering a sense of agency and belonging among diasporic artists participating in our live editing performances through different artistic modalities, and local audience co-presence. This model contributes to attributing an 'auratic' dimension to cinema, through their process-driven and time-bounded collective engagement within our live sessions.

Our analysis of participants' first-person descriptions answered our research questions regarding whether and how 'liveness', as a participatory documentary practice, can foster agency and belonging, and whether it adds an 'auratic' value to cinema. We demonstrated this through our micro-phenomenological generic structure analysis, showing how this experience unfolded from a temporal perspective across four phases: attentional movement, enacted agency, perceptual attunement, and cognitive shift. We also outlined four synchronic moments during their experience, particularly examining states of immersion, agency, belonging, and revelation.

We also propose that the unpredictability inherent to liveness during collective improvisations in performance is central to alinear storytelling. By incorporating spontaneous events triggered by chance, we move beyond the linear/non-linear binary. These emerging events, whether arising through live camera input or other unplanned interventions, are integral to the alinear narrative mode.

Furthermore, on a political level, our research critically engaged with the ethical challenges present in contemporary debates on postcolonial identities. In this study, we

identified how our focus on the postcolonial condition of diasporic artists — characterised by migratory experience, multiple belongings, and a sense of foreignness — could benefit from future expansion by including Indigenous artists as participants within the contact zone. In this sense, future research could foster intercultural dialogue among Indigenous peoples, diasporic artists, and artists who identify with former colonising cultures (such as Portuguese artists). By bringing together these three positionalities in future performances, we could create a broader contact zone that moves beyond exclusively diasporic experiences, enabling intercultural exchange across a wider spectrum of identity positions within contemporary migration societies.

Inspired by Krenak's (2023) insights and Donna's (2016) call to “stay with the trouble”, we advocate for creating spaces where historical narratives are neither dominant nor erased but can coexist and be critically discussed through co-presence and collective improvisation, such as performed in our live cinema sessions. As Krenak reflects in a recorded interview, we usually see outsiders “very poorly”. He suggests that if we think about this diversity of microcosms, perhaps the persistence of diverse peoples narrating their memories through various storytelling traditions “can reveal to us other ways of seeing the very idea of the world, because the idea of the world is entirely defined by culture, isn't it? World, vast world” (Casa Museu Ema Klabin, 2023, 1:22:00–1:24:00, own translation).

Freire's (2014/2022) ideas on the political role of education, in which he argues that “abstractions that engage in knowledge production, but do not propose a rupture with the objective situations, can only be an approximation to them” (p. 60, own translation), inspire our elaboration of a live cinema model that proposes a participatory practice for documentary filmmaking. This model engages with political change through acts of remembrance and innovations in hybrid narrative structures that enable collective storytelling—addressing the contemporary consequences of colonialism and acting upon its legacies within the migration societies we live in.

To conclude, our study suggests that live cinema—particularly when situated within contact zones— can mediate parallel narratives into coexistence through a framework grounded in autoethnography, transculturation, and participatory practice. Within this framework, aesthetic and conceptual dimensions serve as means of generating experiences through audiovisual syncretism or asynchrony, performed during live editing interactions with music performers. This interplay also evokes emotional states that contribute to sustaining moments of discomfort during exposure to contrasting narratives that might destabilise the previously inherited knowledge from dominant mono-nationalistic versions of history that

remain prevalent today.

Overall, our artistic research offers a replicable model for live cinema mediation in politically and culturally contested spaces. As I return to Brazil, I intend to expand this model to include the participation of Indigenous artists by creating space for their historically silenced histories to coexist within the territories in which we live today. In doing so, I hope this research contributes not only to artistic practice and academic discourse, but also offers tools for critical self-reflection—enabling participants in postcolonial societies to cultivate awareness of co-presence and their role in social transformation.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Semi-structured interview with Margarida Conceição, conducted in-person, Lisbon, August 2023.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I'd like to ask you to introduce yourself, and tell me about your beginnings, where you grew up and what were your first references with the arts, where your interest came from and your first artistic activities.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Name, profession, place, blah blah blah, ancestry and how I started with the arts thing?

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Uh-huh.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Ok. Do you want just like “statements”, like, I'm Margarida? Don't you want a “hello”? Or nothing like that? Just like...

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Yeah, you can do it your own way. I usually, while you're talking, I'll really just interrupt very little...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay, normal...

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Because I prefer it to be more continuous really, but then, at a certain point when we feel like it, I'll move on to the next question.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay.

My name is Margarida Conceição, I'm known on social media and by some people as Creating Daisy or Daisy, I'm a multidisciplinary artist and I focus more on tattoos and painting and drawing, of Macanese and Portuguese descent. I live in the suburbs of Lisbon, in Arruda, and basically art was always something that was part of my life, my parents were architects, my father painted, my mother too. I have quite a few people in my family including my sister, one of my sisters, and uncles who also pursued artistic careers, so it was always something very much lived, talked about and experienced at home, so it was quite natural to pursue this career. It's not easy, but I think it's worth it. I don't know if there's more, you can go on if you like...

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Yeah, you can talk more about the moment you chose to do art? How was that relationship, if your family supported you, how it all happened...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Ok.

Even though it was something that was always lived at home and always shared among us, our love for the arts, my father wanted me to be, well, a doctor or a scientist, something like that in those fields, not arts or humanities. So there were some discussions at home, the traditional ones, about which area I should follow in secondary school, but after many discussions, I went into visual arts, I did high school in visual arts also in Arruda, and then I entered the Faculty of Fine Arts in Lisbon and studied painting, and I was there for 4 years. During the summers in high school I did several short courses in the areas I liked the most, mainly the ones that attracted me the most — painting and drawing from life and nude models, either at Ar.Co or also at Fine Arts. And after finishing college, I opened the studio. I always wanted to be a tattoo artist. Since I was 13, 12 years old, I knew that I wanted to be a tattoo artist. Going into painting was always

more of a plan B than really the career I wanted to follow, but I think that, since there's the possibility to live both versions at the same time, I think I'll try to follow that path of being a tattoo artist and painter at the same time, and a visual artist at the same time. And after finishing college I opened the studio, and at the same time decided to enter university again to do a master's degree, and I ended up also getting a post-graduation in literature and comparative studies, which has always been a special interest of mine too, books, and I ended up mixing everything like that into a kind of blend. That's it...

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I'm going to ask you another question now, because I remembered our conversation at Homies, when you were telling me your parents had that more political, anarchist education...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Ah, yes, yes...

Natália Gondim (interviewer): And you said there are people in your family who are artists, and still your father had expectations of a whole different career...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yes, yes.

I think it was more... it was a difficult time, well... Portugal has always had difficult times, right? But yeah. My sister had gotten into university, she's 9 years older than me, so she went to university almost 10 years before I did, and it was at a time when basically the state was funding university degrees for a lot of young people. My sister was one of them. And at that time there was that promise that if you got a degree, you'd get a job, right? And that you'd be well-paid and set for life as soon as you had a degree. But my sister got a degree and it wasn't really like that after she left university, and she was the first in the family to get a university degree, well, except for my uncles who were graduated in the arts and my parents who went to polytechnic but didn't obtain a bachelor's degree. I was the first in the family to get a degree in arts, at the time in design and communication in Porto Alegre. And since my father saw her going through the difficulties of the job market with a degree and still not finding work in the field, he was afraid I'd go down the same path.

And since I always had pretty good grades in basically everything, art wasn't really my only option, I could literally go into sciences or humanities or whatever I wanted. So maybe it was more like, "well, since you're also good at everything else, try the other things before going into a career that's basically guaranteed unemployment." And then I started seeing people a bit older than me leaving university and ending up in the same kind of situation that my sister talked about, and I was like, well, if I'm going to get a degree and still end up unemployed, at least let me get a degree in something I like and won't get sick of and that won't basically make me miserable forever, being in a job that takes all the life out of me. So, if I'm going to be unemployed, at least let it be from a course I actually like. That's more or less how the discussion went.

It wasn't that he didn't believe in me or didn't think I had the ability to... to survive off my art. It was more really about the political and social context Portugal was going through. So, I think it was more about that in his narrative at the time. And I didn't think like this back then... I just thought, like, "my dad doesn't want me to be an artist." But yeah, now it's passed, I can look at that kind of talk he had with me with some distance, and obviously this was kind of the situation that was happening. Even though the education they gave me was always like, "you do what you want," it's your life, you choose how you want to live as long as you respect others and help them to grow and support them to make the community you're in flourish a bit.

There was always this extra worry just because they saw that the opportunities they more or less had when they were my age were starting to disappear, and they were more afraid that I wouldn't have the ability to become independent. I think that's more where he was coming from.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I also wanted to ask if you can talk about your origins, and what kind of references you had? In Brazil we hear very little about that. It's rare for conversations about ancestry or past generations to be maintained, unless you really go and research it yourself.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Not all families grow up with the influence of origins from other places...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): We know very few people from Macau...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Strange because my father went to Brazil.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Oh really, so tell me about it...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): My father went to Brazil, my cousin is also there, my aunt also married a Brazilian and they have, yes, Macanese-Brazilian children. My two sisters are also Brazilian-Macanese. And before coming back to Portugal, Macanese people usually went to Brazil, to have kind of a gap year, basically, mostly to Rio. Where are you from?

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I'm from Fortaleza, and I studied in Rio. Yeah, in Rio I only knew one Macanese restaurant...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yeah, that's it, they went a lot to Rio, São Paulo too, but not as much. But Rio must have a little community somewhere. So they have... okay, my ancestry...

So, I'm of Macanese-Portuguese descent, from my father's side. My father was born in Macau and came to Portugal at 18 to study at Técnico [Instituto Superior Técnico]. My mother is from Beira-Alta and also Vila Real, and they met in Lisbon. And it was during the time I was in university that a joke started among my group of friends, that my family was the Benetton family, because at the time that was the only clothing brand that always had campaigns with people from various nationalities and ethnicities. And my family is literally a portrait of Portuguese colonialism. My mother, before marrying my father, married a Mozambican man and had my sister, who is Portuguese-Mozambican. My father, before marrying my mother, married a Brazilian woman and had two daughters who are Brazilian-Chinese. And then there's me, Portuguese-Chinese. So it was always a melting pot of multiculturalism, so to speak, at home. And my parents always made a point that we all experienced each other's cultures.

Mostly through food and music, because we never had much access to everything else. And also since we didn't really have much contact with other multicultural families or even families from any of the individual ethnicities that were also part of us, it ended up being a bit hard to live or learn deeply about our culture or our ancestry, so to speak. We had a lot of what my father remembered from Macau, and even then... Macau, in the last...

Basically since it returned to being a Chinese colony—and maybe I shouldn't say it like that—but since Macau returned to China, it has changed a lot. And the Macau my father knew and lived in basically doesn't exist anymore. And even though I still have some relatives there, we're not very close, so we never really had much cultural exchange between us. So, we mostly relied on food, the memories my father could still bring, and a few books from there, and some of the experiences he had in Brazil when he met Elisa, the mother of my sisters. And my mother also had some experiences and cultural learning from her ex-husband, my sister's father. So, we ended up mixing everything a bit. We tried to watch films from all cultures, we tried to speak a bit, we were constantly asking my dad questions. Even though all of my dad's stories were literally things we weren't supposed to do, and not really moral lessons, they always gave us a different perspective on the culture they lived in. And since my father was the son of the administrator—I think he was the administrator, yes, administrator of Macau—he ended up having an extremely privileged life and at the same time was in contact with many of the economic and also historical and social inequalities experienced in Macau. So that gave us a lot to talk about, all the social narratives that existed because it was a Portuguese colony and at the same time belonged to Chinese territory. So, what were the back-and-forths in the discussions with the State, what were the possibilities once it stopped being leased to Portugal, what was going to happen, if there were any internal conflicts what would happen to them, what was the dynamic of being partly Portuguese, partly Chinese in Macau, what languages they spoke... So it was kind of like that, we had all of that political context.

Also, at home—because, yeah, we questioned our dad out of curiosity about what life was like in Portugal—and here, they don't talk about that at school. So, my dad always taught us to keep a low profile and just say that the teachers were just repeating what was in the textbook. Because, well, according to him, those books were written by the winners, and history wasn't written by the winners, so we couldn't really trust the books completely. So, we ended up creating this kind of family dynamic that was a bit ostracised from the rest of the people we lived near in those little towns. Not only because we were the only multicultural family with so much diversity, but we were also the first Chinese family to move to Arruda, and that wasn't an easy experience. So, on top of all that, we had to deal with prejudice and racism that already distanced us a lot from the rest of society. And then we also had this whole mindset we were raised with by our parents, which made things even harder—because I was that kid who always contradicted the history teachers, the Portuguese teachers, because I didn't say things "correctly", because I spoke with a Macanese accent or used some vocabulary from Macanese Patuá. So, it became kind of hard to be accepted in the community where we lived.

And it was more this ostracisation from the community where I lived, and me feeling forced to try to be more like them in order to be accepted by them during my teenage years. But then when I got to university and started meeting people who liked me simply for being me and not for what I pretended to be, then I started feeling some freedom to go back and explore my ancestry. Not just in the way my dad had taught me—because, let's be honest, he hasn't lived in Macau for 55 years or so, and hasn't been there since I was born, which is almost 30 years ago—so I started looking for people with a similar background to mine.

Even though I don't really know many Macanese people here, I researched, I read books about Macau... well, basically anything I could get my hands on, I would explore it. I would ask questions, I started consuming art from those regions—looking at their inspirations, their mythologies, the cultures, the religions they were trying to represent or recreate, so to speak. Then I started trying to introduce some of those elements into my own paintings or tattoos, and I started to realise that I really identified with what I was creating. So, I kept introducing more and more and more elements, and now I'd say that almost seventy percent of the imagery I use comes from that.

Without denying the rest of my Portuguese background and also my interest in various Western cultures, but... I don't know, I'm not from just one culture—I'm from both. So, the mix makes more sense to my identity than trying to be fully one or the other. So, yeah... it's a hard but fun battlefield to navigate.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I wanted to ask you, besides the references from your family, did you get in touch with other people here with the same background? Do you participate in...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Hmm, I tried several times to ask or encourage my dad to reach out to people from... his past who might help me in this search, basically. But a lot of them aren't around anymore, or just aren't accessible, let's say. So, I ended up trying to search on my own.

In Portugal, I don't know, I always had quite a hard time—because it was only in the late 1990s, early 2000s... no, actually more like 2008, 2009—that there was a big wave of Chinese immigration to Portugal. So, basically throughout my whole childhood, I didn't know any Chinese people outside of my own family. And by the time they started arriving, my experience had already been so specific and so unique—not only because I was Chinese, but until I was like 20 or 22, I was almost the most Chinese person that most people around me had ever met.

Then after that, I went from being “the Chinese girl” to being seen more as a mix—Chinese and Portuguese. So, it was always hard to identify either with the Portuguese or with this new wave of Chinese immigrants, who were just... Chinese. They weren't mixed, they were fully Chinese. So, I didn't really have much to relate to with them either, and that made things kind of tough.

What happened more was that, once I started tattooing and started sharing more about my Chinese heritage, a lot of Portuguese people with Chinese ancestry—many of whom didn't even know they had it—started reaching out to me. They'd see me sharing certain experiences and things we did at home, and they'd relate to it. That led them to go and ask their own families questions, and eventually realise that they also had Macanese heritage. So, they'd come talk to me, and we ended up connecting through that—because even though they didn't grow up with the same cultural mix, we had the same ancestry.

And through tattooing—not just because of what I shared, but also because it's a job that allows me to travel a lot—I got to go to places like London and various cities in the UK, where there's a huge Asian community. I ended up meeting quite a few people from Hong Kong and Taiwan—people from more rural backgrounds—who actually had more in common with my own culture. We ended up identifying with each other, and they'd introduce me to other people. I would talk about the things they taught me, and I'd ask them about things I was curious about but never had the opportunity to learn otherwise. So, I'd end up asking them a lot.

Then here in Portugal, there were also some guest tattoo artists passing through Lisbon who ended up contacting me—or I'd reach out to them—so we could meet up. And I found out some of them had similar ancestry too. So, in the end, we ended up forming a kind of small international community. I still don't know many Portuguese-Chinese people, and most of the group is more online-based. Thankfully, with technology today, it's possible to build that kind of community. So, I've been reaching out more, searching more, but honestly—I've found more people like me in other countries than here in Portugal. I'd like that to change a bit, but... that's something for the future.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Now, I wanted to go back to the story about your dad before we move on—because you said something that made me curious. He has two daughters in Brazil?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): No, they're here. They were born here.

Nátália Gondim (interviewer): But he went to Brazil first, and then came to Portugal—and his daughters are Brazilian?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yeah, so—he came to Portugal, didn't finish university, but he got a degree in design here in Portugal. Then he went to Brazil, got married there, and came back to Portugal with his wife—Elisa. They had two daughters here. Then he separated from her and married my mom. But they live here.

Nátália Gondim (interviewer): Ah, so his wife was Brazilian, but the daughters were born here?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yeah, they were born here. We all grew up here. My Portuguese-Mozambican sister was also born here—we're all *tugas* (a slang for Portuguese people).

Nátália Gondim (interviewer): And about the collective, I wanted to ask you—did you take part in other collectives before? And also, could you tell me how *Zelu* started? Where did the idea come from? Does it have anything to do with the life experiences you've shared?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): I think it kind of started during my time in university. It was one of the first moments in my life where I really started exploring the art tied to my ancestry, so to speak. I started looking around and, well—it was a mostly white university. We probably had, you could count them on your fingers, maybe ten non-white people in the whole school. And that made some conversations... I don't know, hard to have. They were uncomfortable. So, we were always kind of on the margins, as usual.

And when I left—also because I didn't put much effort into making it the best experience it could have been—I ended up distancing myself a bit from the degree, even though I still got average grades, whatever that means in the arts world... Anyway, when I moved away from that and got into tattooing, it was something I talked about with Élio. I was the only Chinese woman tattooing in Portugal. And considering that Macau was a Portuguese colony for 500 years, it's kind of weird, right? That there aren't Chinese people in Portugal who feel comfortable enough to pursue an artistic career—whatever the medium.

We basically don't know of many Chinese artists with Portuguese or Macanese heritage in Portugal who have any kind of recognition. They're just not known.

I was actually raised pretty closely with my cousin, António Maria da Conceição Júnior, who has international recognition—or at least he did back then, and still does—artistically speaking. But he mostly lived in Macau. He taught in Portugal, also studied fine arts, but most of his artistic work was based in Macau. And I don't know... since I couldn't really relate to any artists, nor find any inspiration from people who shared my heritage—and then on top of that, being a woman in Portugal with zero representation in the Portuguese art world—I kind of felt like, “Well, maybe this just isn't the place for me.”

But once I started tattooing and people started actually saying that it was important to have representation, and that they saw a bit of that in me, I was like... okay. It was a pretty heavy weight to carry—not exactly the kind of role I was looking to fill—but I ended up stepping into it anyway. And nowadays, there are a few more tattoo artists of Chinese or Macanese descent, and Macanese or Chinese women tattooing in Portugal, which is amazing.

But back then, when I started, there was *nothing*—no painting, nothing at all. I think it was about two years ago, maybe a bit more, that I met Élio... two or three years ago? I don't know. Anyway, we were tattooing, I was tattooing him, and we started talking about this. He was sharing his own experience too, saying that he also didn't really see much visibility or representation of his heritage in Portugal either. And then, half-jokingly, we were like: "Well... neither of us has it—so, I don't know, what if we get together and do something?"

And that's it. That idea just kind of stuck in our heads for a few years. Every time we saw each other or were tattooing together, we'd joke around about it. And since we'd already come such a long way individually in terms of our artistic journeys, we started thinking—why not actually create something and be proud of what we've been building? Why not come together and maybe bring in a few more artists and start thinking more collectively and in terms of community?

And trying to use the knowledge and the contacts we'd already built, and the paths we'd already walked, to share what we knew—or to open more doors for other people who had a similar background to ours. People who also felt a bit left out when it came to artistic opportunities in Portugal—who didn't see space for people like us to develop a creative career.

So, we started gathering a group of people I already knew, people I'd studied with at Uni [University], or who I'd tattooed a long time ago, like Lu, Renato, and Sofia. I knew, from later conversations, that they also went through similar things and had the same kind of mindset as us. And, so, it kind of happened spontaneously—we just said, "Hey, let's start a collective and try something out," and that was it.

And it took off. We started meeting more people who shared our values, who had the same drive to create something. And then, some of them already belonged to other collectives doing similar things in their own fields. So, we started collaborating with them too—exchanging ideas. It all grew in this kind of organic way. So yeah, the collective came out of what you could call a "serious joke."

Natália Gondim (interviewer): And one thing you all talk about—and I'd love to hear your thoughts—is doing things that go beyond just representation, like the in-person events, the playshops...

Margarida Conceição (entrevistada): Yes, yes...

The idea behind the *playshops*, the events themselves, actually comes from the collective's whole mindset. It's not just about creating the representation that we didn't see in Portugal's art scene—it's also about making art feel *less elitist*. Like, separating the idea of being an artist from needing to be well-connected or have money, or even from needing to be "recognised."

Because often, to even *practice* your art, you need money—for materials, for lessons, for time. And if you don't have financial support, or even moral support from others or society in general, it's hard to even begin creating.

So, we try to bring that into the collective: we provide the materials, the space, and people who are already artists and can help guide the way. But more than anything, we try to create a space where people feel safe to just *explore* artistic expression.

And maybe they won't even like it—but at least they'll have tried. At least they can say, "I'm not into this because it's not for me," rather than, "I never even got to try because I had to choose economics or something else."

And that's not to say they don't like economics or don't want to keep working in that field—but at least for a few hours, for a little while, they get to reconnect with that old dream or ambition they had before they had to figure out how to survive in this society.

It's about showing that art is a part of everyone's daily life. We're *constantly* consuming art. We're *constantly* producing it, even when we're not aware of it. So, we try to bring that into our events and into the collective—that intention of making art more accessible. Some collectives are already doing this, of course, but we're trying to keep pushing that idea: that art shouldn't only belong to a very specific, privileged niche in society.

So yeah, we focus mostly on BIPOC folks—Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour—and it's not just about giving them “opportunities,” it's about giving them the *possibilities* and *tools* they might not have had access to on their own. We try to be present, or rather, we try to offer support so they can practice in a space that's safe and free of prejudice—where they can just explore something new, see if it's something they enjoy or not, and then decide if they want to keep going with it or if they're okay with the path they've already built for themselves. That's it.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): So then, I want to ask you—since you mentioned how art is present in our daily lives all the time—what's the role of art in *your* life?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Well... that's always been a question, even back in Uni—we had that classic class, “What is art?” You know? And it's one of those ambiguous questions—actually, more than ambiguous, it's impossible to answer. But for me, art is everything that involves creation. Like we were saying—everything we speak, think, make... it's all art. Science is art. Philosophy is art. Writing is art. Everything we do in our daily lives, for me, is art. Cooking is art—everything.

So, for me, art is everything. It's breathing, it's living—it's how we interpret and try to represent our reality. And that can be done in *any* way. Every person creates in their own way.

And that was something I was always encouraged in my house too—this idea that we should be able to express ourselves however we want.

I never focused only on painting. Painting just happens to be the form that interests me most and allows me to express visually what's going on in my head.

But I also really enjoy writing—even though I'm dyslexic, *very* dyslexic, I still write quite a lot. I love sharing my texts and thoughts with people. And I found that a lot of people actually *relate* to what I write.

And that opens up discussions around the things I just expressed—or even through my paintings. Seeing that people connect with what I've represented, even though they don't have the same experiences or background as me... there's this moment where realities kind of crash into each other.

And I find that really interesting—to talk about these different ways of perceiving the world. I think it's about exchanging stories, exchanging narratives, and opening up space for healthy dialogue—where we're genuinely curious about other people's realities, and we're not just stuck in our own little world.

We start to realise that everyone is a universe of their own. And it's not such a bad thing to come into contact with other universes once in a while. That can actually bring value to our

own.

So yeah, that's it. Art is *everything*. It's *everyone*. Every person is art. Every way people express themselves—every way they represent their world, every attempt to show what's going on inside their minds—that, to me, is all art.

Even the “bad” things, which might be “bad” just from my point of view, can be good for others. Yeah... everything is art, everything we do...

It's the same as asking: “How would our reality be without the internet?” Well, it's impossible, it's already part of us.

Or, “How would our reality be without breathing?” Well... it's literally intrinsic to us. I can't say how life would be without art, but if art suddenly ended? It would be impossible. And, in my opinion, life wouldn't be worth it. Art has always been part of us.

It's possibly the oldest practice ever—religion is art, everything is art. All knowledge was passed down through art, through stories, through oral traditions, so literally everything is art. So no, no way to separate it, it's part of us. It's literally the same as breathing, yeah, no way around it—art is everything.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I want to ask you about two of your works I saw—one is that painting I filmed, “*no tengo drogas, ni armas, señor guarda*”, and also on that day when you were tattooing with all those references, the vases—what do these symbols mean for you?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay, I'll start maybe with the painting. So, I think when we started university, it was around 2013 or so, and there was this Snapchat craze—I don't know if you remember it or experienced it—but there was this huge Snapchat fever, and memes had started popping up around my eighth or ninth year of school, that whole meme craze, whatever. I don't know if it was a coping mechanism, comedy, of sorts, mixing memes with Snapchat, which I really used a lot. I basically used Snapchat to make comic, ridiculous stories for my friends. I would take photos with stuff I had at home or just try to literally live out my 90s or early 2000s coming-of-age movie, or “American Dream” type of movies—which were terrible—and bring a bit of comedy to my friends' lives, even if it meant making a fool of myself or being ridiculous in front of them, just to bring some lightness to life, which is hard enough as it is.

I think it was from university that I started to capture and take certain forms—some were staged but even the staged ones are amazing—of things so characteristic and at the same time so caricatured of my friends; or extremely specific phrases from a person or a look that was really that person's. Things like that. I ended up capturing them in photographs and then painting them.

So, it was a representation of a representation of reality. And it has always been really fun to do that, and then bringing my friends to exhibitions and seeing themselves portrayed that way was always something to laugh about—it was just funny. And I never really made... no, actually, I made two or three self-portraits like that, and they were always quite fun but very sober, never in those really caricatured moments that showed how I saw myself at the time.

Until, maybe two years ago, my friends started doing the same thing—capturing all the stupid things I did in photographs. And there was a time when we started making WhatsApp stickers from those photos to use as reactions, and yeah.

And last year, in the summer, a friend of mine had a birthday and threw a party. She said, “Daisy, it’s a rave, so it makes sense to dress like you’re going to a rave.” And at my birthday, which had been a week before, she gave me a dinosaur crown, and I went with my most “raver” outfit—even though I’m not really a raver—so I went kind of... flashy, but it worked, and that’s what matters. I was completely covered in glitter, totally, and obviously I wasn’t going anywhere but the party.

We were driving there, because, well, it was an illegal party, somewhere abandoned. On the way there, we got stopped by the police and I didn’t realise it was the police because their headlights were right in my face, so I couldn’t see what kind of car it was—I just saw the lights. Then the police car signaled me to stop further ahead and so on. I was dressed all covered in glitter and wearing a dinosaur crown, all velvet and netting and stuff, with two friends of mine also dressed in the same style in the car, and I was like “oh, fuck, this is going to go badly.” And inside, I already had a certain dislike for the police, so I was like “why now? Not now...”

So, the police told me to stop and open the doors and simply started asking what I was doing, if I didn’t see I was going the wrong way, something like that... and well, I wasn’t going the wrong way, but I was just waiting, I didn’t know where I was, that was more it.

And, I lied, I basically told them my friends had sent me the wrong address and I didn’t know where I was, and that I was looking for the address on my phone, blah blah blah, and that was it. And once he saw my outfit, he started with the flashlight pointing at the rest of the car and blah blah blah, but I was doing my best role, which is the dumb girl who doesn’t know what she’s doing, like, oh look at me, I’m female, please, I’m so dumb, please, and that always works, guys, if you want to play this, it always works. I played that little role and that was it and then he started pointing the flashlight at the rest of the car like, does the girl have drugs or weapons in the car? And I answered, “I don’t have weapons or drugs in the car” and everyone in the car started laughing, and I said “guys, I love you, but this is not the moment to laugh, okay?” We laughed about it later, but not now.

And obviously they had drugs, I didn’t have anything, but they had, and I was like: “I’m fucked”, whatever. I said no, right? obviously, officer, I don’t have any of that, how is that, for God’s sake, here in this car, all innocent, no. We left, the police stopped us twice again, but we weren’t stopped, like, I ran away, that’s it. And then I was telling that story and someone just took a picture because I was literally looking at the guy, full of fear, and well, a friend of mine took a picture of me at that moment and made a meme on Whatsapp the next morning, all hungover, like, and she’s Spanish, Basque, so she was like “no weapons or drugs, officer,” and sent it to me and it basically became a reaction sticker on Whatsapp and I was like, yeah, that’s me, so I have to make a self-portrait of this, and since it fit within the rest of the event’s screens, I was like, okay, makes sense, let’s do it like this. And that’s how the story of the portrait “I don’t have drugs or weapons, officer” came up, so incredible, for God’s sake.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Can I laugh now?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yeah, you can now, go ahead.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): And weapons? Where did they get weapons from?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): I don’t know, I don’t know. The only weapon we have is this face. No, I was like “Oh my God.”

Natália Gondim (interviewer): And I want to ask you to explain about the tattoos...About the

vase. And the others too, right? I think that other tattoo of the waves... and the other references.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Ah, the one with the waves.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Let me just confirm the name of the artist of the waves, who is a Japanese artist...

Natália Gondim (interviewer): There were, I don't know if there were, the vases, the dragon...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Uh-huh. Ah, there were dragons?

Natália Gondim (interviewer): There were the waves...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay, I just want to confirm something... (she looks for a reference on her phone). Okay, tattoo references...

Yes, I started tattoos with Renaissance and Baroque statues, and flowers, it has always been like that, a very specific taste of mine, and then when I started exploring my ancestry, I started trying to explore a bit more their imagery, and I came across a book by a Japanese artist called Yusen, I don't know if I'm pronouncing that right, but that's it. And I started exploring the lines he made, which were really amazing, so I began to represent those lines a bit and then started creating them myself, meaning I had already redone similar lines so many times that they kind of "entered", in quotes, my brain, and since they were more organic on the body compared to traditional Chinese waves, I ended up adopting more the Japanese waves and a bit of Chinese imagery, like a mix, and I just started drawing on my body and some friends began saying, like, I liked that, from what you did, that, and would you do it freehand on me? And I was like, great idea, scary, but great idea if you're comfortable. And it worked out, so now it's like a trend line, my trend mark, the waves.

Everything else is what I have at home, basically, at my house, shortly put, it's a very... I live in the countryside, so it's a very rustic house, and then I have a lot of Chinese imagery and elements, I have the three pure ones at home who are Taoist deities, I have pallets and pallets of vases that my parents bought, or that were given to us by my grandmother and things like that, and vases have always been, I don't know, I've always liked vases for the vases themselves, but since I started tattooing, I love seeing vases on people, I think it looks, I don't know, I don't know, I love vase imagery.

So, I started creating vases, I started, at first I copied, no, I didn't copy... I represented the vases we had at home. I did it on Ricardo, Rick, who is my friend, so I have one of my vases from home on his arm, it's funny, seeing him with one of my vases on his arm, it's fun. Then I started inventing vases, and I ended up creating a concept about... well, I make vases myself, but I liked so much the... well, the whole process of creation, everything, all the moments of creating a Chinese vase, and that's when I started exploring that, and I went to see what was the meaning of the imagery, the shape of the vase, the things they used, some pigments, the types of glass—how do you say it in Portuguese, I have no idea—well, the types of glass they used, the symbols and blah blah blah, and I ended up creating that in tattoo form, meaning I have an option in my tattoo besides the waves, which is basically, you create your own vase through the meaning you want to give it.

I can choose the shape of the vase, I can choose the color the vase will have, the symbols the vase will have, blah blah blah, and you give the meaning to your own vase, and I was like... well, I ended up creating that too and then it's... it's showing all your vases with plants, and well, I live in the countryside and I was born in the countryside, it has always been something

very intrinsic to me — me and nature have always been inseparable — well, that's true for all of us, we're all nature, well, whatever, so I always end up bringing little plants into my environment, my studio is full of plants, it's a forest, so, well, I also brought that to my work environment, and it's mixing a little bit, I mix a bit of what I have at home, other things I learned, then references I gained throughout my research and blah blah blah, then I ended up creating a kind of fusion with dragons, because the dragons have a Chinese body, but the face isn't Chinese, it's a Western dragon, and I don't know, I love Asian dragons but I don't identify with them, I love to see them, but I don't feel like drawing them, I don't feel they are mine, so I ended up making a mix of the two and they are literally my children, they're also a Portuguese and Chinese mix, so I created those dragons and even though the things are extremely... well, they refer a lot to all my other works, the dragons are a bit apart because, well, like I said, it's a mix... it's a... it's me, basically, and then I can make little vases with flowers, and then the little waves, and that's it, a cauldron of references and ideas in this brain extremely full of ideas that will never get on paper. But these, at least these three ideas — the waves, the vases, and the dragons — ended up working, so I'm very grateful they worked out because I really like them.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I remembered that in Kabbalah the explanation of... how can say it? Well, it's that we are a vessel.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Really?

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Yes, basically, it's like after the Big Bang, let's say, there is a source of life that needs to be received, and you receive it like in a vessel. And then it's always said that you have to keep the vessel clean.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Are you going to send me this? How beautiful.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Aham, yes. And now, I'm going to ask you this actually, two things maybe connected...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Uh-huh.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): First, this question of improvisation, if you have that thing of... for example when talking about music, we talk a lot about the stage, right?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yes.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): What happens there on stage, what comes that wasn't planned...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yes, yes.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I think in your case there's also that thing about starting to do free hand...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yes, yes.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Could you talk a bit about that, what your experience with it is like?

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): And here's another thing — do you think about it in a spiritual sense? I've been reading texts in my research about the creative act from Duchamp...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Yes.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): And he talks about the artist as a mediumistic being... and the artist's coefficient, with all their references and intentions, and there are things that happen, that come out that you didn't intend but happen there, and he talks about it as an arithmetic of art, the coefficient of art... anyway...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay, spirituality, contextualising. And how did you say it? Improvisation. That's it. Okay, it started with improvisation.

Okay. Okay, I'm going to talk a lot oh my god, this won't be a documentary, it'll be a 12-hour feature film (laughs).

Okay. I'm basically a control freak, so my art doesn't exactly make much sense or at the same time, yes, we are complex beings... whatever.

In all my artistic practices, I don't like to plan. In painting, the composition comes to me on the spot, I don't do sketches multiple times, I probably should because sometimes I mess up, but sometimes not, so, well...

And honestly, I don't really care, like, perfection for me is not achievable... it doesn't exist, so it's never my goal in my practice. And even in cooking, I'm the queen of improvisation at home, basically it's... what is the best you can do with what you're given?

That's basically always my mentality in any kind of art, that's why free hand in tattoos makes so much sense, because you can plan a tattoo all you want, but until the stencil is on someone's body you don't know how it's going to look.

You can have the person's body and draw directly on the body, but you're drawing on something two-dimensional, and from the moment you transfer your drawing — which is something two-dimensional — and turn it into something three-dimensional, everything changes, everything changes.

A line will have to change, or it will also have to be enlarged in some places, it will have to be reduced in others, you never know until it's the moment and it's never the moment, so you just have to do it. That's why free hand allows you to have that freedom, meaning you don't create too much expectation of what will come out, so you're not looking for perfection, you look for something that makes sense, something *organic*, that *fits*, that manages to transpose what you had in your head, and it's never perfect because, as I said, perfection doesn't exist.

So, I don't know, it allows you to feel this more, realer, more, as I said, more in tune with what you want to create and also what the other person is expecting to receive. And yes, in tattoo terms but also in everything else, for example even in paintings and drawings, I prefer things that look unfinished or simply left halfway, because, I don't know, it allows you to create the rest in your head or simply accept that it is like this, that it should stay like this, that this is what the person had in their head, that this is what you're going to receive, that's it, period. It's accepting what you're given and doing the best you can with what you're given, that's it.

And I don't know, I don't know if this can... it's very much my experience. I've always been, like I said, a big control freak, I like to have everything at least minimally planned, check in my

practice. I paint like a piece, I don't force myself to paint every day, I don't force myself to be constantly creating things and I hate when someone tells me you have to do it this way, no, no, it's art, there are no rules, there are, like, suggestions, and even those are irrelevant, so it's all irrelevant, do what you want with what you can. So, it's always been a case of simply going with the flow with what you feel, that's, like I said, trying to represent your reality. And your reality is lived, right? It's not basically, how do you say? You do a sketch and then you have the final form, what is that called?

Like you're constantly tinkering, you're seeing like you do a sketch of the same text, like text, then you keep working on the text, you have the... you have the draft and then you have like the final work, but life is all draft, you don't have, you make a life choice and it's not really like, oh, I'll perfect this later. No, the choice is made, it's made, don't touch it, move forward, deal with the consequences of the choice, not attaching the consequences of the perfection or refinement of your choice. It doesn't exist, that's what I see in art, art is what it is at the moment.

Like, it can be, like, you see the art later but the act of creating is in the moment, it's a choice, it's a... it's a set of decisions made in that moment, then decisions on top of decisions, on top of decisions, on top of decisions, but it's still a decision in a moment. It's always a draft, it's always a draft, there is no final product.

Exactly! Final product. There is no final product, the final product is death, that's for sure. It depends on perspective, on religion, on spirituality, but you were talking about maybe this connecting to spirituality, and I said a phrase that makes sense with spirituality, because I mostly identify as a spiritual being, but if I had to put it inside a square, a box, I would say I'm Taoist, that's it. And it's always the idea that the world has a way of being and you simply go with it, there's a flow, there's a path, there's a Tao, you trace it, and you just follow. Like, if you have desires, it's because you have needs, if you have needs it's because you need those needs to be fulfilled, so... why would you fight against your need when you're going to be happy when you reach that need?

So, it's not... it's that, like, if you want to create, create, if you don't want to create, rest, watch a movie, read a book, because you should consume art, guys. Go... do your math, which is also art to me. Go, I don't know, hang out with your friends, work, do what you feel like doing. Obviously, there are so many rules and blah blah blah, but whenever you have the possibility to simply do what your soul calls for, and what you feel, what's intuitive and instinctive for you to do, do it, because... I think for me that's something that makes art good.

If we're talking about qualifying art, I think the only thing that makes it good is that it's true to you. That is, from the moment art reaches that level of "this is what I wanted," — and it will never reach that level, but as long as it's close to that level of "this is what I wanted," the art is good because it's always subjective, it's a matter of taste. But for me, it's always something that has to come out naturally and can't be forced. I never did well forcing things, which is why I basically didn't value the university as much because, like I said, we had rules, deadlines, we had to create specific works for specific classes by specific times, and the moment I have something that resembles even the slightest bit of authority, for me it's like, yeah, no, it's not going to happen. So, I can't have any authority in my life, I can't have anything that even resembles any authority, it has to be something that comes out naturally, something I want to do, something that will come out true and honest and that will be the representation I want to achieve.

And that applies both to my art and to my way of living. I won't be with people if I need to be alone. I say, look, I really like you all, but today I don't want to be with people, I want to be

alone. And that's okay, everyone lives their own reality, as long as we don't disrespect each other and accommodate ourselves within what's possible without... burning each other out, I think it's just living our reality as honestly as possible. And that is difficult, but it's possible, so I think yes, the art and the way I... at least my need to improvise in my art, makes sense with my spirituality. That is a very good point, thank you for bringing it up.

Natália (interviewer): And before I ask you again, I just want to comment something — I'm reading a book they gave me at university, there was an event and when we left, they were handing it out, she offered it to me and I said yes, I want it. It's *365 Days of the Traveler* with Chinese traditions...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): I think I have that at home.

Natália (interviewer): Yeah, I read it every day since the start of the year — I think it was at the start of the year.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): And did it change your life?

Natália (interviewer): No, here in Lisbon.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): No, no, did it change your life when you read the book?

Natália (interviewer): Ah, it's great. It's good. I actually do this with other books already.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay.

Natália (interviewer): Yeah, every morning I try to read, I have books on Sufism, I have books on... and it's good because it's not just Taoism, it's more like Chinese classics, so some things are poems or sayings, but really... it's about religious philosophy...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): For a long time I was... hmm, Hindu? Taoism? Hindu? Taoism? But after a while I started reading Taoist texts and I was like, yes, it's Taoism. It's not even relative because it's... well, just live your life, like, nothing else to bother, just live. Respect us all, but we live in our reality, and that's all right.

Natália (interviewer): And I'm going to ask you about that digital thing you mentioned, how you see it... and I talked a lot with Admila because we were talking about materials, the materials she uses...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Uh-huh.

Natália (interviewer): And I was asking her, like, if cameras didn't exist? Like, what kind of artist am I if there was no camera, if I could still express myself or create... we were thinking about materials because there she... actually, we went to Casa da Cerca, and they have workshops on plant-based materials, where she made paper with papyrus there...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Very cool.

Natália (interviewer): And she works a lot with that...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): That's so cool.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Yeah, and I was thinking about this... and I was going to ask

you, like, what's your opinion on, actually you already mentioned this, what you said about us using technology, and that it's already in us, and there are authors who talk about the body itself already being a technology. And more about the digital tools too, this thing about connecting with people from another country and the pros and cons of that, basically.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Okay. I think it's our generation... Well, I think we're from the same generation, what year were you born?

Natália Gondim (interviewer): In '92.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Well, you're even older... but anyway, from our generation, millennials, zillennials... I think it's a very characteristic generation and I've said this many times, that we lived our childhood half analog, half digital and that transition, and the fact that we're living the huge boom of digitalisation and never... never has technology had such a big boom, so fast, as in our lives, we went from brick computers and phones to literally a mini computer in our hands, and man, it's scary.

But there it is. I think it's something that's part of evolution — whether good or bad, evolution is evolution. It's a matter of us adapting. Think about things that were invented a thousand years ago: people probably also feared adopting them or lacked the ability to use them, so it wasn't easy to simply make them part of daily life. And there are people nowadays who don't have the ability or time to do it. Obviously, we've become so dependent on this technology that now those who can't or don't want to make it part of their daily routine have difficulty inserting themselves in society because literally everything is digital.

And that makes things a bit harder and more dependent, so to speak. But sorry, that's it, I think it's a necessity in the sense that it allows us so much, if done consciously. Obviously there are pros and cons, like everything has pros and cons, but I think the pros can possibly be bigger than the cons and there's another thing, which is the fact that we can't remove this from our lives, it's literally impossible to take away the internet, or a phone, smartphone, digital cameras, TV, computers, digital systems — to go to another country you need to check in, check out, buy food online, all this is literally impossible to take away.

And not only that, I think we also see this in a very selfish way, like, what's my existence dependent on this type of technology, but we don't see the point of view that this kind of technology allowed freedom to many people with mobility issues, motor difficulties, speech impairments, whatever, like, we forget to see that this technology was also possibly created or made easily accessible to allow other people to have a quality of life and a living standard at the level all other people have too.

So, I don't know, it became something, it's something necessary, it makes sense in my view, because there it is, tattoos used to be passed by word of mouth. Nowadays it's internet, Instagram, TikTok, this, that, whatever, like, do I like it? No, but it's my profession, it's part of the reality where I live, no point in fighting something I know... it's that mentality, if it's outside my control, outside my head, I can't control Instagram's algorithm.

I miss when Instagram was chronological and when all my friends and all my followers had access to everything I shared, and not just 10 percent of my followers to see if the material is good enough for the rest of the *plebs* [plebeian]? Well, I think it's ridiculous, yeah... but like, it is what it is, that's the reality. I can adapt and try to do the best I can with what they give me, or I can just be constantly going against it and be mad at everything. Well, I'd rather it be word of mouth, yeah, partly, and some of my clients do come from word of mouth, but mostly they come from the internet, and it's incredible because that allows me to travel.

If I didn't have the internet and I didn't have Instagram to share my work, how could I be constantly traveling, wherever I go, and have people who want my work? It wouldn't be possible, because people wouldn't know my work, I'd be an unknown in that world and wouldn't have... wouldn't allow myself this possibility to travel, which is a big passion of mine, and to share my art in other countries and with other people from other cultures, and to hire people from other cultures and make friends in other countries and different ethnicities and different cultures and swap houses with them and talk with them and allow all this globalisation, out of nowhere, and the ease of getting in touch with everyone else.

And I think that's incredible, obviously there are bad things, bad people do bad things, so that's a bit irrelevant, but also... I think it's an extremely big necessity and not just for us... I think for us it's... scary because, like I said, we saw all the growth, my nephews for sure, they're like 15 years younger than me, probably won't be so afraid of this technological growth.

We saw everything, we went through everything, our parents went through all these changes, went from nothing to having everything in their pants pocket, basically. And it's scary, it's scary, the growth this technology had is completely scary. What have we managed to do in just 30 years? Yeah, I can't understand it because I don't understand anything about technology, I just consume it, but for me it's scary. But it's incredible what it lets us do, the fact that we don't have to depend on state-controlled media to know what's happening on the other side of the world.

We can have someone with a smartphone on the other side of the world telling the reality of how they're living? Incredible! Scary... Incredible! Does it bring other kinds of political and social problems? Yeah, but at least you know the reality told by the people living it and you're not being fed propaganda by the state. Incredible!

Being able to see someone else's art from the other side of the world and identify with it and be able to contact and say, look, this moved me, I identified with it, I want to talk with you, can we meet? By video call... Incredible! The possibility that this world allows us is incredible, again, it has to be conscious consumption, but that's consumption of everything. We can't believe everything we see, we can't believe everything we consume. But again, it's about educating ourselves, creating our own filter, understanding what is true, what is false, doing research behind it.

And that's something I also learned a lot, well, not just in college, but it was always my thing to do research, I love researching, it's understanding what is true and what is false. It's about trying to filter everything that's fed to us and create our own conclusions about what we're living and what we're filtering, because not even what's told to us as truth or what we pressure ourselves to see as truth is the truth—it's simply our perception of a reality, that's it.

And so, it's this flexibility we got to have, and that we have to create and educate ourselves, and also educate others about it, which is possibly difficult and creates so much resistance around accepting this. But, well, I don't leave the house without my iPad, like, my iPad is basically my arm, and it allows me... I spent an absurd amount [of money] on it, yes, without a doubt, but it was one of the best purchases I've ever made in my life. I barely use my computer, which is already like 12 or 13 years old, or more, it's basically a dinosaur in terms of computers. I don't use paper except when I create things with my drawings, illustrations, and stuff like that... and that's it. I use paper, but back in the day, I would spend like 20 sheets of paper making flash sheets, nowadays it's like, I open a new page on Procreate, I draw, see if I like it... I like it, but I don't like everything... and I redo it. I consume much less.

It allows me other things, it allows me to have references, it allows me to share everything on the same device, it allows me... well, that's it. You have many possibilities, you also have many downsides, but I don't think adapting this reality into our daily lives is as harmful as people make it seem, as long as it's done consciously, and again, like...I don't like it, I love photographing analogically, I also love vinyl, but until a certain point, vinyl was something like... what is this? You can reproduce music at home? Like, what the fuck? Like, everything, everything is created, everything is new, and at a certain point, everything becomes banal, everything, I don't know, evolution isn't good or bad, it's evolution, period.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Now that you mentioned vinyl, I'm reading a book for my thesis where the author says that the term 'live' was created in relation to vinyl played on the radio, because they had to say something to people to differentiate it from the performance, on the radio, right? Like, from what was recorded in the studio and what was performed live on air, you know... since you simply consumed what the person was playing, and they had to say what was live and what was recorded. But I was going to ask you, what was I going to ask? It was about that, you were talking about doing things consciously, and that's exactly what I think in relation to Zelu as well: using it to bring people closer rather than isolate them.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): Uh-huh.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): Right? Because how many times, do we... I, myself, stay at home and you get the false impression that you're having social contact with people just by following their day, but personal meetings don't happen...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): It's conditioned, yes, yes.

Natália Gondim (interviewer): And can you talk more about the events Zelu promotes... the in-person meetings... and that, yes, many times people connect through digital means.

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): That's it. The internet and technology are part of our daily lives, either we learn to use it as something beneficial for what we want, for the message we want to transmit, for the kind of reality we want to live, or then we let ourselves be consumed by it...So basically, in all my practices, whether tattoos or the collective, we use it to reach people who will identify with the message. Because, for example, many of the people we have today in the collective wouldn't know the collective if it weren't through social media. Many of the people who come—actually, the majority of the people who come to the collective's events—wouldn't come if we weren't on social media; people wouldn't come to our events. And even though... for many people, the internet came to replace social interaction, that's not the main goal, for some people, no, but at least for us, for the collective, and for me, it's not that goal. It allows us to reach other people, and to reach people who don't have the capacity to be in physical contact with us. And to still have the same, or an adapted exchange of the things we could have if we were physically touching, but it at least gives them the possibility to come to know us in person, so to speak.

And that's what we live with the collective, trying to reach people through social media who possibly don't go exactly to the same places that we go in the same city where we live, to let them know that this is happening in their city, that they have the possibility to go see it, which is possibly something they're interested in and have never experienced and would like to, and that's always in the back of their minds like, "Ah, I'd really like to do this, but nothing like this exists in my city," so the idea just stays hanging there.

Like, the internet doesn't exist for that, but well, it lets us reach those people and doesn't replace in-person social interaction because, you know, those are gatherings, those are exchanges, and

personal exchanges end up being much more intimate, much more honest because we don't hide behind a screen, because it also lets us see the faces of the people we're talking to, to be able to read the emotions and feelings that the person sharing a moment with us is living in real time, and we end up adapting our interactions a bit also to that kind of reading of the space and the person themselves, in person.

And, well, art is something sentimental, art is something emotional, it comes from us, it's a form of expression, just like speaking, just like singing, just like writing, like everything, literally it's breathing, right? So it makes sense, through Zelu, for us to have this kind of interaction on in-person levels, but also we'll have digital ones, because it reaches people who can't reach us in person, but since we're creating a database in Portugal, in Lisbon, it makes sense for us to have personal, in-person meetings where we can all experience each other's art, but shared with others at the same time.

And this exchange, this interconnection of realities in real time, being able to identify with the artists and talk directly with them right away and create these personal bonds between us. Many of my friends nowadays came through Zelu and not only the members who are part of the collective but also the people who came to the events and were with us at the events, and we end up talking and going for a drink and becoming great friends, and it all happens through the events we create, but they are only possible because we have social media. If we didn't have social media, we couldn't reach the people who come to us because, you know, we'd have to be literally putting up posters all over the city, and that's a huge paper waste. Well, we post, share, and then people come interact with us in person, and things are more organic like that, or not, it's a matter of perspective. But yes, that's it... I don't know if I said what you wanted me to say, but...

Natália Gondim (interviewer): I wanted to ask you about your future projects, and areas you're interested in exploring...

Margarida Conceição (interviewee): I would like to do... I like, I'm very controlling in my life, I've always been that person who has the 5-year plan and who always fills it out, always manages to follow the plan as it's laid out, and until COVID I did that and then literally gave up on that idea because you never know what's going to happen. For me now at least, it no longer makes sense to have such a big studio and be responsible for so many people and managing such a big studio is tiring, and it's not allowing me to reach what I expected or what I would have liked to have already reached creatively for myself, personally.

Then obviously I had those... all the huge fears of how am I going to survive financially through this? I still had the studio closed, we were the last to re-open the studio, because, well, what do I know? So basically, I spent almost a year without having significant income, enough income to keep the studio open. The state obviously doesn't help us, and well, everyone is in the same situation as us, nobody has money, so the first thing to be cut in this kind of pandemic is funding for the arts. However, nobody is going to survive a pandemic without art. People kept consuming series, movies, everything, and then there's no way to pay the people who create those things, so it's a bit frustrating too. And we ended up having to develop this between me and quite a few other artists I was talking to daily during the pandemic—we had to create other ways to get funding, some money to pay the bills, because, like, we're the first to be abandoned in these kinds of pandemics, because according to society, we're still those who live off the state, who lean on it, who have no life prospects, bla bla bla...

So yeah, it was frustrating, but at the same time, I didn't have the same experience as most people because I live in the countryside, and I could do everything I wanted, and I never felt

trapped, and I never felt—I felt isolated because I live in the middle of nowhere and I don't have any friends nearby, and here in Lisbon all my friends are walking distance from each other, and I'm like 30 minutes away by car from my friends, so it's a bit isolating, but at the same time it allowed me to focus on myself and my art and on what I wanted to do and find enough strength within myself to achieve it. So, it's kind of a double-edged sword, it was good, and it was bad... it was what it was.

(End of interview)

Annex 2. Micro-phenomenological interview with Admila Cardoso (conducted online), February 2025.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): I want to thank you, Mila, for this interview, for your trust. I'll ask you to take your time, you can close your eyes if you feel comfortable, take as much time as you need to try to remember that moment from the performance in Lisbon. And once you feel that you remember, I'll ask you to recall a specific moment that was special, or that feels like it was the most striking to you, that brings you a stronger sensation, in a good way, right? From that day. When you feel like you've got that moment — "I've got it, this is the one" — once you choose that moment, we'll begin to describe it slowly, we'll start to explore it based on your description. And we'll continue the interview like that, it should last about twenty to thirty minutes. So, I'll ask you to do this exercise of going back to that moment, and then come back to me when you're ready, no need to worry about time.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): I think immediately, what I can really remember from that day of the performance is the atmosphere of blue. It's something that stayed very, very present for me throughout, kind of the whole time there. Later it brings this feeling of something nostalgic but comforting — not nostalgic in a sad way necessarily, it's more something like tenderness, this caress and a space, like a kind of exchange, of sharing, but in this tone — blue. It's not a very dark blue, and it's not exactly sky blue either, but it's a blue like... blue is a cold color, but this was a warmer tone — like a blue that's somewhere between sky blue and a darker blue.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): I'll repeat — generally, I'll repeat the things you tell me so you can confirm if I understood correctly, and then we'll move forward. You told me that the first thing that comes to mind is this sense of atmosphere, that gives you this feeling of nostalgia — but not something leaning toward sadness — more like something tender, of care, right? A kind of caress...

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): U-hum. (the interviewee nods)

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): And, I wanted to ask you, when you remember that, if you can describe what comes to you — is it a visual memory, is it sound, is it in your body? When you remember this image that you just brought to me, in what way do you remember it? Like, what are... I don't know... if you can describe a little more?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes. It's visual, because I was very much in front, and I have this strong image of the screen, super blue, in that bubble shape, the fisheye, that you had added, and I see this blue, like the center of it, and in that space there were always some other images and people, right? That were talking about something, but it's like this — there's this circle and inside it there's someone, and then there's the blue around them, and it also starts fading into a lighter tone of blue and then even turns white, more toward the edges. It's... well, it's a very visual image.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Would you be able to try to explain to me better, what that feeling of tenderness, caress, comfort is, the one you told me about — nostalgia, comfort — do you think you could explore it a bit more, explain how you feel it when you remember the performance?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): It was a space that had this idea of being welcoming, and I felt super comfortable there, and I was just sitting in that atmosphere with music. There's this

melodic thing, too, of just being there and feeling like it was a calm space. I think the question of nostalgia, or even this feeling of tenderness, also has to do, obviously, I think, with the video, in the sense of the people who were there — people I care about, right? And I think blue is that — it's a color full of nostalgia, and in terms of sensation, it's what hits me the most immediately. It's that feeling, that feeling of being in a space where you're at ease, a space where you feel welcomed. And I felt like that in that space.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): You told me about the blue color bringing that feeling of nostalgia and the circle, but you also mentioned the sound. Do you want to tell me a bit about that too?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Uhum. Yes, about the instrumental that was playing — and the sound the video was emitting, right? All the different voices and elements that were present there, and then the Mbalango that was also playing. I think all of that together, especially with the darker space, and only seeing that light coming from the video, and then hearing all these sounds — it really brought you into the moment, in the sense that you were fully immersed in that environment. I think it was an environment that wrapped around you and didn't quite let you leave because you were so... not restricted, but sort of enclosed within the boundaries of that space, right? Because you couldn't really see much beyond the video and those faces, those people, and you were hearing all that atmosphere. So, it was really something immersive. I felt that. Then, this idea of immersion brings back that other image — of blue, like the sky, like the sea, being submerged in a space so vast that you become part of it.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): I'll describe a few things you said. You told me that it's the melodic aspect of the music, the Mbalango with the instrumental, combined with the video, that gave you this feeling of immersion, and that this connects with the blue of the sea and all that. It made you think of the sky and the sea as a kind of embracing space that goes beyond...

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): U-hum.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): And that you are there, part of it...

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Of being present, right? You mentioned the word presence, of feeling involved in the whole, right?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): U-hum. Yes, it was really that, yeah. Because of this thing of everything around you being dark — this image, well, you're here in this space, and everything else around you, I think that brought that feeling. There's this largeness, like, the vastness of the video, the way it was being presented, and then this immersion that was coming from the live aspect — and those exchanges you were making, showing what was happening and showing what was happening at the same time.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): And you made a gesture while speaking about the space? (I repeat the gesture the interviewee made with her hands while describing the performance experience.)

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, it's that image — I see myself as a little dot, like, myself in one place, and then this blue, this video, like, this sound, all around me.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): It's interesting that you made this shape, like a dot in the middle of a circle, right?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yeah.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): I was going to ask you — can you say just a little bit more about that? If you have anything else to add, because that part is really interesting.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): I don't know if there's more... I think it's just to convey what that visual image was, because that's how I feel — like, when I remember that day, in that space, it's like that. I feel like a little dot, everything's dark around me, and in front of me there's that blue. And to my right — because Mbalango was to my right — there's this experimental aspect coming from him, and this instrumental sound, from the video, coming differently. And then... it's really this image you mentioned, of the circle — being surrounded, immersed in all of that happening around you. So, in terms of visual mental image, that's it. I really feel that way. I think it's also supported by the fact that it wasn't a necessarily open space, right? But also, this feeling of everything being dark adds this sense of vastness — like, you don't really see where the space ends, because you're just in this darkness. And in some part of that space, there's that light that's emitted by the video. And that makes you, like, forget that you're there — but you also don't know if you're... the outside world doesn't... it's not that it doesn't exist, but you're inside that moment now. And it only ends, I think, when the light comes back, when the video ends and the light returns, and you become aware of the space you're in. And I think with the video and the sound and everything else, you create another space — like, inside the same physical space, with its four walls, you create an environment there.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): So, you told me that this thing of, let's say, the outside world being kind of turned off... that the environment created this silencing, even if just visual, of the outside, and inside there was this different atmosphere, right? Of the performance. But also... what I wanted to say... I wanted to ask you about what was happening inside — if you remember — about the other people?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): U-hum...

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): What do you remember? About the entire environment, in terms of the people who were participating — what comes to mind?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): From the space, from people being there, I think during the performance, yes... When there was this projection of the space, it made me, like, see the chairs, see the various faces and realise, like, okay... because I think that transmission was also what brought light. Like, from that side, in the sense of being able to see — since I was sitting very much at the front, I was only seeing the projection of the video and hearing the sound, and like, everything else was behind me, right?

So, when you brought that image, I could see what was behind — in that sense, when you projected on the screen in front of me the video of the space that was happening, then yes, I could have that — a visual, obviously, right? I had that feeling and knew I was in a space with people, but I think the immersion of being so focused on the video also made me let go of that constant awareness of like, okay, there are more people here. But when you brought the transmission, it was like — yeah — then I could see myself on the screen and see what was behind me. That... how do you say it? The inside of the inside of the inside of things.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): So, you're telling me — and you can correct me if I'm saying something that doesn't make sense — that you had this more frontal view, right? Of the screen, and you were more immersed in the video narrative, from what I understood, right? You were watching the screen, with the stronger sound from Mbalango, since he was on your right side.

And when the camera shifted to show the environment, that's when your attention kind of stepped out of the film a little, and you became aware of the entire space — of who was behind you and who was present with you watching. Your attention moved beyond just the film and more toward the space, to what was happening.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Totally... because I think now, I can't even remember who was literally sitting next to me watching. I can't even recall who I was next to. But I can remember seeing an image on the screen showing the space.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Another thing I wanted to ask you was if you could just tell me a bit more about that moment you mentioned — about the people in the film also being the people who were there — and about seeing yourself in the film, but also seeing the others who were part of the collective, right? In the same project but acting in different ways... If you could describe a bit how it was when you saw yourself on the screen — in the live camera part, I'm not sure if the camera filmed you at some point, I don't remember either — but about that part of seeing yourself as part of the whole, in the project, on the screen, both live and in the recording, and the others as well.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): I think for me, some time had already passed, I think I didn't even remember the things I had said. I remembered the place we had been, and that we had talked, and that space and so on. So, seeing myself was like remembering that day — those hours of conversation, and the place, and all of that. And about the others, it was very much this thing of seeing friends again — like, oh okay, they're there saying these things and being a part of it, right? And since I hadn't watched any of their interviews either, it was very much this presentation of like — how did they look at it, right? At the questions you asked and how did they respond, too? I think it was really a space of getting to know them in that way, right? In that sense and in that snippet of what they had to say. And because they're people I know — in the sense that we've lived some things together and been part of certain moments together — it was that. The memory. Like, it was remembering, and it was also getting to know them in a different way — like seeing my friends on screen. Which had never happened in that way — seeing those specific friends and watching them in a presentation. And about seeing myself in the space, when you were doing the live transmission — that was it. I think again it goes back to that other thing... it's this double meaning, these two things coexisting in the same space — like, seeing myself and watching, at the same time.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): So, I'm just going to ask one last thing. You told me that... seeing the people from the collective, people you already knew in a certain way, but seeing them in another way, right? Responding to the same questions, and how they responded to the same questions you were asked — it was a way of getting to know them that maybe you hadn't exchanged before, hadn't accessed in that way. And that this thing of seeing yourself on the screen gave you that feeling of a double... you spoke of a double sense of coexisting in the same space.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): U-hum.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): And then I wanted you to just describe a little more this double sense, of how it felt to be coexisting in the same space.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yeah. That's something I really feel — seeing myself doing things, or, seeing myself being in a space. And when there's a camera, it's there in the moment — like, it's different to record a video and watch it later. I really have this thing of later watching like, okay, that happened. And when it's live, that's it — there's no gap between the moment

of recording and then watching what was done. It's like everything is being captured right in the moment it's happening. There's no distance between the action and the observation. It's not like watching a video of the interview, where I'd be taken back to a past moment and feel like I'm reliving it. In that case, I'd be transported somewhere else. But seeing the live projection brought a different sensation. I started recalling the bodily, auditory, and visual feelings from the day of the interview. When the image of the current moment is projected—seeing myself right there—it brings a different kind of sensation. I don't even know if I can fully explain it with the right words. It's really more of a feeling. That double sense—it's like when you see yourself and it's as if there's something outside of you watching you directly. It's like there are two 'Admilas': one is watching and the other is being. And in that moment, while one Admila is being, she's also watching the other Admila who is being.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): You mentioned that this sensation of a double perspective—of coexisting in the same space—is something you also feel in other practices you do, like recording yourself. But with live projection, it's more immediate, right? Because it's not a recording that you will watch later, it's you seeing yourself in real time. The recording belongs to another time—like you said, sometimes you don't even remember exactly what happened, and watching it again feels like revisiting something. Whereas with the live camera, it's a real-time observation of yourself. It's like being both the person who is acting and the person who is observing, right?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, exactly. A recording feels like memory. Live is presence. Those are the two words I would associate with each. For me, that's the difference.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): And when you talk about that sensation of presence, could you describe what that felt like for you in that moment?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): From that moment? For me, it always comes back to the sound. Even if I don't remember the exact chords or the melody that was playing, there was just this feeling of being there. I was in that space, having that experience. The sense of presence came from that environment—like the music, the atmosphere, and being inside something that felt warm and welcoming. It's like being immersed in a space where you could just stay and see what would unfold.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): You mentioned that the live element is more connected to presence, and the recording to memory. And in terms of presence, what you remember are the chords, the melody, and being there in that space. That makes you go back to that first image you mentioned—something bigger, like the blue, the ocean, being immersed in something vast. You also said that sense of presence made you think, "I'm here now, let's see what happens," which I understood as something spontaneous, something new.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, exactly. That's really what it is—being in a state of presence, of just being there, in that moment, not knowing what would come next. And I wasn't worried about that either. I knew I was going to see a performance, but I had no idea what the whole video would be like. Then you brought in the live music, and that added to it—it brought this feeling of "Okay, what's going to happen next?" But not in an anxious or questioning way—just in a bodily sensation of being there, not knowing what's next. It wasn't a recorded song; it wasn't something I knew. It was something being created right there, constantly, in the moment. Like you said, even if I don't remember the exact chords or melodies, when I think of that image or moment, what comes back isn't a detailed memory of the notes or instruments. It's more that I remember the atmosphere. That tone, that ambient feeling—it was there, and it gave this strong sense of comfort and presence in the air. It's like something I do when I lie

down or sit and play a sound. And my only task is just to be there, to be present in the unfolding of that sound. That's what brings me into the here and now. The same thing happens when I choose to watch something—a video, a film, something I want to experience. There's this preparation, this decision: "Okay, I'm going to watch this, I'm going to listen to this," and you enter that state of being engaged with it. Maybe that's a more active version, because I'm the one choosing what to watch. But it's the same sensation—even if I've never seen or heard it before, I don't know what's going to happen. It's like, during that time, I'm just here, having this experience of sound, video, image, space. It's like a meditation—just setting the intention to be there and see what emerges.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): You told me that being active, in that moment, was also influenced by the fact that the music was being created live. You knew it was something new, something that hadn't existed before, right? It wasn't just something being reproduced—it was being created in the moment. And that gave you this feeling that something was about to happen. But not in a way that brought worry or anticipation, not in an anxious sense, but rather a sense of simply being...Using your own words a little later, it was like resting the mind from those worries, just to be present and witness what was happening. And the way I understood it—and correct me if I'm wrong—is that it felt like a moment where, like you said, you lie down, your mind relaxes, and your focus shifts...

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): So, in a way, it's an active kind of resting. You're not distracted by thoughts, but instead focused entirely on the presence of being there and on what might unfold.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Exactly. Wow, Natália, you listen so well. (laughs)

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Would you like to add anything else?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, while listening to you, the word that comes to me is 'invitation'. I think that was it—it was an invitation. Your invitation, in a way, when we entered that space. All that preparation created this atmosphere of, "Okay, we're going to be here in this dark space." And I think the darkness itself already sharpens your senses—it puts you in a state where your vision, your hearing, everything becomes more sensitive. It wakes up your perception and curiosity. Like, "Okay, what's going to happen now in this space?" So that word comes to me—invitation—to be there.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): You mentioned how the way the space was set up, the environment itself, already brought you into that restful state. And I was just about to ask you that. You actually brought it up just now—that this way of preparing the space before the performance already helped to bring you into that state of rest. But at the same time, you just introduced a new idea: that it's a kind of rest, but not an inactive one. It's a rest that's also an awakening, as if...

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): ...as if it's there to capture your attention in that moment.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, yes. It's a kind of rest where I feel like I have no other task but to be there, you know? There's nothing I need to worry about doing, nothing to act on. It's a state of presence—just being there, just being, without needing to do anything. So, there's rest, but also a kind of awakening. Awakening of sensations, of simply being present and

receiving from that space.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): I'm not sure if you actually said this, or if I was just writing it down and didn't catch it clearly, but could you describe what you remember about what came just before the performance, what you referred to as the invitation?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, I see the preparation of the space as an invitation. That's why when I arrived, it was still being prepared, and I could see the process of setting up the environment for what was going to happen next. So, I think the invitation is, in that sense, like gathering all those little moments that we want to create. It's an active choice of "Okay, I'm going to put this in this space," or you could have chosen not to turn off the light, or to have a different ambient light, or a different place for the projection—any of those choices would be another invitation, but to a different experience, not this one. It could have been in an open space, and it would still be an invitation but for a different activity, depending on what it was meant to be. And for me, the invitation is about seeing that preparation and literally being invited to enter that space and that atmosphere. For example, "Sit here, and this will happen here," that kind of explanation. Not necessarily explaining exactly what's going to happen—I don't think that was the case—but presenting it as an invitation to experience.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): So, you told me that this idea of invitation is connected to watching the space being prepared, right? It wasn't a place you entered already set up, and that gave you the sense that what was happening there was unique. The organisation of that space was done specifically for that event. It makes me think of a film—you don't go to the cinema and see an unedited movie; the environment and the film are already prepared. But here, you experienced knowing that a unique, specific experience was being made for that place.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): That idea came through for you?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, it adds another layer. That experience that happened there will not happen exactly the same way again. It won't be in the same room or space. To have that experience again, I'd have to watch the recording of it. Because of the live aspect, what happened there happens now and won't happen the same again. The recording is left to show what happened in that moment, that hour, on that day.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Just one more thing—your participation, because you also spoke about the discussion afterward.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Could you explain a bit about what you felt after you realised the performance had ended and what you remember about the discussion? What did that add to the experience?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes. I think that was really cool because of the exchange with the audience. That sharing added another layer of invitation—like, okay, now let's talk about the experience we just had. That was interesting. I remember the lights went off, and then we were in a space that's more familiar to everyone. Not that the previous space wasn't familiar, but when it's dark, I feel more of this individual experience, like me in my own space, with darkness all around, having that experience with the sound and the image. And when the lights come back on, it's like, oh, all these people are here beside me too. Then we exchanged, I changed where I was looking. Before, I was facing the video, then I turned my back to it, which

gave me a new perspective of the space at that moment. And then, obviously, listening to the audience and hearing what they thought, and us talking about it—the memory I had of the images from the video and the day of the interview—that added yet another layer of experience. It wasn't just double, it was like triple, because it started adding new layers of perspective, shifting place, and so on.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): So, you told me that the exchange with the audience added another layer to this invitation. The invitation you mention—correct me if I'm wrong—is the invitation to be present, is that right?

Admilia Cardoso (Interviewee): Uh-huh, yes.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): To experience that moment, right? To be adding layers of experiencing presence.

Admilia Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, because I kind of felt... since neither I, nor they, really knew what the whole video was about, I knew the premise of the video and that I had been part of it, right? Of the video that was being presented. So, I had that place of knowing the initial premise, that's it. They probably didn't know that I was there, that I would appear in the video, and that later I would also be in the space, right? Experiencing it with them for the first time, watching and having the full experience of it. So, hearing them in that sense was really cool, and for me to do that too, you know? That moment of "Ah, okay, yeah, I just appeared on this screen and I was sitting here, and now we're going to talk about me appearing on this screen," and things like that...

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): So, it's like this triple meaning adds on because you change your position, right? You change place, your view of the room—not only through the screen, but you, yourself, right? Your body turns inside the space, 180 degrees, and you see the room differently... you see the audience, there's this exchange with the audience's perspective, and that also adds to your experience because in a way the first layer in the film was something, like, since you had participated in the interviews, you already had a part of the surprise taken away—it wasn't something so new because you did the interview. So, it's like one part, one of those layers, was more new for others than for you, and then that last layer added something more unique, right? Each one adding a little bit more of something present rather than just the recording itself, right? That's how I understood it...

Admilia Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, yes, I think exactly all of that because the only thing I didn't know was the moment in my interview when I would appear there. I knew I was part of the video. So, one thing I was certain of was that, well, at some point I would appear there, right? And I knew I was there, watching a piece of work, a presentation of something I had also participated in. And beyond that, I didn't know anything else, right? What had been chosen to be included there, what was going to appear, at what moment it would appear, so having that experience, like the audience did, added this layer of me being there watching, right? A project I took part in, and the others in audience had no idea about, right? And I also had this other layer of being with them watching it and then being able to exchange, like, putting together all those other little layers that were there.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): So, you told me that being part of the film, through the interview, was in a way a certainty in your memory, and I understand this place of the "unprecedented" of being present, as an uncertainty, right? And having the audience there at that moment adds layers of experience of being, of feeling present there, as you described?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Exactly.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): I want to thank you for the interview, and we can keep going, live and present.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Uh-hum, thank you!

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Thank you!

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Thank you, and I'm going to stop, reflect, and kind of go back to that space again, because the whole time we've been talking about this, it's bringing back those memories of what happened that day, so it's also nice to remember and to get that feeling of comfort from that day and... wow, wow, it was so cool, like, that experience. And I'm recalling it because, like I said, even when we don't talk about it, it stays in the body, right? But it's not necessarily something I'm actively remembering here; this is another kind of invitation, like inviting myself to actively remember what happened.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Was there anything you said that surprised you, like, "Oh wow, I hadn't thought about it like that..."?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): I don't think so visually, I think I mostly had this image of the space, but being with your questions and trying to remember what happened, it puts me again in that presence space, of just letting it come and remembering the feeling from that place. Like, I didn't know what to say because I don't remember anything. What am I going to say? I have no idea. So that surprise of not knowing, of almost not knowing where your questions would go necessarily. So, I'm surprised in that whole space, and like, I also arrived here with no idea what was going to happen, and well, I just kept talking and meanwhile, that's it.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): It's like this method is an invitation to presence too, right? To remember, to think, to activate — much of that is the same word you used in the interview, "activate" something there, focusing, right? Without knowing what, without trying to worry or be anything, just seeing what's going to unfold, right?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): [She nods] So, I was surprised in that whole space, and like, I also arrived here not having any idea on what was going to happen and, well, I just started talking and, yeah, that's it. (...) Uh-hum, yes, because I think when you said 'interview' I was very much in the mindset of, okay, questions about that day, and at the time, before even [this interview], I was trying to revive the memory of that day and so on, but like, not being able to locate it in a specific space, because I didn't know what the questions would be. So, "what could I allow myself to remember that made sense to add, to bring in?" Since I didn't know what you were going to ask, it's like I had forgotten it. Then so much time passed and now today in this moment it's like, okay, let's activate that place again. And in that activation, it's like I can vividly see that blue and be in the space again and see the images, and I can have another experience of remembering, watching on my phone screen the recordings I made that day, so various little images from that moment come up.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Yeah, and this interview, this exercise, is really about that — it's not exactly about what happened, it's about your accessing to your memory, your lived experience, something concrete, specific, to reveal the things you felt, right? Like it was asleep there, but that you'll access what you kept from that. It's like re-activating that memory, also because sometimes you're not aware of the process that led you to feeling that warmth, that belonging, right? The idea is kind of to reactivate that memory to reveal that, in a way... like, how did I end up feeling like that, afterwards?

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yes, and making those connections, that's it — trying to describe this space and this feeling in our conversation made me relate it to another activity I do, which, ah okay, brings this same kind of feeling, kind of similar, right? What we were talking about, about me putting on sound to be there in that moment, trying to revive this memory also brings me another memory from a different situation that has nothing to do with what was lived that day, but that brings the same, like the same texture, sensory field, and so on, but through different activities.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): Yes. I learned this method when I was still in Lisbon, I did an online course, with a scholar from France who created it, but also trained some people to teach it, and one of them is in Brazil, in Bahia. I did it online, she teaches the course in English. It's like a week and it's intense, you do it, you're in those small Skype groups, one person works with you, you work with the other, then you go back to the trainer and explain how it went, so it was a week of training to learn what to do and what not to do, how to conduct it according to their protocol. But I felt like, when I went to Jazzy and then it really felt like it already altered my sense of presence during this process, just for being in the interviewing training.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Uh-huh.

Natália Gondim (Interviewer): It's really cool, I thought it was really cool to apply, you know? If a person does it to you — because some people did it to me — and then you're like, "My God, I didn't remember that, I hadn't thought of that." And then I don't know, I ended up more present for the rest of the day, like going to Jazzy, and I felt the difference, going to dance afterwards, I was like taking two steps back, you know, after that interviewing experience.

Admila Cardoso (Interviewee): Yeah, yes, yes, even before you asked, I wasn't aware that we had that conversation and all the exchange, so it was when you brought it up and I was like, "Ah, we did that", "And the others, "Oh right, okay." I wasn't conscious of it here either, I also think you kind of led it from an initial moment — like going back there, and then kind of walking through it until, let's say, the process was complete. That's very interesting, it's really very difficult. *(End of interview)*

Annex 3. English translation of three poems originally performed in Portuguese by Lucas Lins during Contact Zone live cinema performance in Fortaleza, December 2024.

Poem 1

In that same room I heard
the rocks of Panamby echo

On the vessel, the cliff
our dreams

I took your verb:
“(...) a disappearance
sometimes you have to vanish
let go to make room for nothing to be
it’s like a kind of reincarnation

(...)

where we don’t know or don’t want to see
there are traumas and collapses
there are un-loves and torn-away things
leaving fractured roots
there’s an absurd lack
(...)

I believe in the strike back”

and I wanted to echo that
ricochet
at sea
a twitch
to play in the puddle like one who
builds underwater castles

I longed for the water puddle
to make blood-worlds

a red water
muddy – silted
to drain the dammed-up
of always having it on the tip of the tongue

to split the boats
open a gap
make of the sail the wind
time sat down to watch

time
time
time time
time time
time
a whirlpool
swallowing the *Mara Hope*
finally,

left to become SEA

Poem by Lucas Lins, with excerpts (in quotes) from the book “Cavalo Bípede e o Futuro Soprando Atrás da Nuca”, by Panamby (Borboleta Azul, 2024)

Poem 2

residence time
is the stretch of time
between entry and exit
of a substance in the sea.

human blood is salty;
it holds sodium.
sodium is an element
whose residence time
is 260 million years.

what does that mean?

it means that when we ask permission
and step into the sea,
our bodies meet the sodium particles
from the blood of those
who were thrown (by violence)
or who threw themselves (in escape)
from the ships of Atlantic enslavement.

we meet those people.

presence is something
the eye cannot see.
presence is a trace.

Excerpt from Lucas Lins's unpublished doctoral dissertation, *How to Breathe Underwater? Gestures of Refusal*, which references Christina Sharpe's *No vestígio – Negritude e existência* (UBU, 2023).

Poem 3

something whispers
in the wind to my ear:
you hold something beyond the wide

at the edge sighs
the weeping of the abyss:
you hold something beyond the wide

I think of the hands
I could not hold [n e v e r]
even before I could dream

I hear:
sea breeze
tearful brine

to those who jumped into the Atlantic
constellation of Aquarius
together holding

- I. the hands of pain
- II. in the hands, pain
- III. hands, the pain
- IV. within the pain, hands

to blow—to become fish
[sigh]

to blow—to leap into
[silence]