

SAMIRA MACHADO POFFO

**AVESSO (IN)VISÍVEL: EXPERIMENTAL
EXPANDED ANIMATION AND CRAFT
AESTHETICS.**

Orientadora: Professora Doutora Natalie Woolf

Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias

Departamento de Cinema e Arte dos Media

Lisboa

2021

SAMIRA MACHADO POFFO

**AVESSO (IN)VISÍVEL: EXPERIMENTAL
EXPANDED ANIMATION AND CRAFT
AESTHETICS.**

Dissertação defendida em provas públicas na Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias no dia 18/10/ 2021 para obtenção do grau de mestre em Artes da Animação perante o júri nomeado pelo Despacho de Nomeação n.º: 267/2021, de 27 de Setembro, com a seguinte composição:

Presidente: Prof. Doutor Paulo Renato da Silva Gil Viveiros;

Arguente: Prof^ª. Doutora Lea Vidakovic;

Orientadora: Prof^ª. Doutora Natalie Woolf.

Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias

Departamento de Cinema e Arte dos Media

Lisboa

2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the professors of the Master's Degree in Animation Arts at Universidade Lusófona and my amazing colleagues for all the inspiring work, exciting discussions and shared learning

I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Natalie Woolf, for introducing me to the world of expanded animation and for her generous presence and constant support along the way.

Thank you to Guilherme for always having words of support and comforting hugs when I needed it most.

I thank all my friends that followed this journey and encouraged me to continue.

A special thank you to my parents and brother for always encouraging me to seek new paths and for all the support during the master's process, always being present even if an ocean away.

ABSTRACT:

This work presents the theoretical and practical research in the animation installation *Avesso (In)Visível*, which seeks to reflect the social inequalities present in contemporary society through embroidery and textile materiality. The work contextualizes the use of craft aesthetics in experimental animation and expanded animation, tracing relationships between animation cinema and visual arts. By displaying the installation's conceptualization, production and exhibition process, the work discusses the particularities of the creation of expanded animation, highlighting relationships drawn between installation and viewer and the principal discoveries made during the production of the work.

Keywords: expanded animation, embroidery animation, craft aesthetics, installation.

RESUMO:

Este trabalho apresenta a pesquisa teórica e prática na animação *Avesso (In) Visível*, que busca refletir as desigualdades sociais presentes na sociedade contemporânea por meio do bordado e da materialidade têxtil. O trabalho contextualiza o uso da estética artesanal na animação experimental e na animação expandida, traçando relações entre o cinema de animação e as artes visuais. Ao expor o processo de conceituação, produção e exibição da instalação, o trabalho discute as particularidades da criação da animação expandida, destacando as relações traçadas entre a instalação e o espectador e as principais descobertas feitas durante a produção da obra.

Palavras-chave: animação expandida, animação em bordado, estéticas artesanais, instalação.

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	7
PART I – THE ANCHORING POINT	9
CHAPTER 1 – EXPERIMENTAL AND EXPANDED ANIMATION.....	10
1.1 - <i>Experimental animation: tracking definitions together.</i>	11
1.2 – <i>Expanded Animation: unrolling the thread.</i>	15
CHAPTER 2 – THE CRAFT IN ANIMATION	21
2.1 – <i>Embroidery: symbolism and subversion through art history.</i>	22
2.2 - <i>The craft aesthetic on animation.</i>	29
2.3 - <i>Embroidery animations: craft aesthetic on animation practice.</i>	32
PART II – AVESSO (IN)VISÍVEL: TURNING THE INSIDE OUT.	38
CHAPTER 3 – AVESSO (IN)VISÍVEL: FROM WHERE IT COMES.....	39
3.1- <i>Previously practitioner investigations in embroidery animation.</i>	40
3.2 – <i>Averso (In)Visível Installation: context, motivation and intentions.</i>	43
CHAPTER 4 – AVESSO (IN)VISÍVEL: THE PROCESS.....	46
4.1 – <i>Conceptual development.</i>	47
4.2 – <i>Visual development</i>	48
4.3- <i>Practical development</i>	59
CHAPTER 5 - ASSEMBLE, RECEPTION AND PROMOTION.....	65
5.1 – <i>The first exhibition; Mostra Colheitas – Montemor-o-Novo.</i>	66
5.2 – <i>The second exhibition: Over&Out 2021.</i>	70
5.3 - <i>Promotion and distribution of the work.</i>	76
CONCLUSION	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	81
APPENDIX I – EXHIBITION FOLDER.....	I

Image 1 - More Sweetly Play the Dance (2015), Wiliam Kentridge. Installation view at Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, 2016.	17
Image 2- Illumination #1, Rose Bond, 2002. Site-specific animation installation. Seamen’s Bethel	19
Image 3 - The Dinner Party (1974-79), Judy Chicago. Permanent installation exhibition at Brooklyn Museum.....	24
Image 4- Miriam Schapiro. Anonymous was a Woman, 1976. Acrylic and collage on paper. .	25
Image 5- Rosana Paulino. Bastidores (series), 1997. Xerography and thread on fabric mounted in embroidery hoops. 31,3 x 310 cm, São Paulo Museum of Modern Art – MAM.....	26
Image 6- Assentamento, Rosana Paulino (2013) Multimedia installation (digital print, drawing, linoleum, sew, embroidery, wood, paper clay e video).....	26
Image 7- Assentamento , Rosana Paulino (2013) Multimedia installation [detail].....	27
Image 8- - Assentamento, Rosana Paulino (2013) Multimedia installation [detail].	27
Image 9- Runaway, Aubrey Longley-Cook (2010), .gif animation, [front and back view]......	33
Image 10- Embroidered Zoetrope, Elliot Schultz, (2013), animation installation [detail].....	34
Image 11- ..., (2017) Aubrey Longley-Cook, embroidery animation, front and back	35
Image 12- Eu já não caibo em mim. Samira Poffo, 2019. (Stills).....	41
Image 13- Orphan Clothes Installation, Samia Poffo, 2019.....	42
Image 14 - Invisible Homeless (2015) Luke Jerram. Glass Sculpture.	49
Image 15-Photographic research on vulnerability Photo by Davidson Luna on Unsplash	50
Image 16- Photographic research on vulnerability Photo by John Moeses Bauan on Unsplas	50
Image 17- Sketch of the installation initial idea.....	51
Image 18- Photographic visual research on vulnerability – authors photograph.	52
Image 19- Photographic visual research on vulnerability – authors photograph.	53
Image 20- Photographic visual research on vulnerability – authors photograph.	53
Image 21- visual studies 1.....	54
Image 22- Visual Studies 2.	54
Image 23 - visual studies 3.....	55
Image 24- - visual studies 4.....	55
Image 25- visual studies 5.....	56
Image 26- visual studies 7.....	57
Image 27- visual studies 6.....	57
Image 28- visual studies 8.....	58
Image 29- embroidery animation process.	60
Image 31- Avesso (In) Visível stop-motion animation (still)	61
Image 32- space investigation.	63
Image 33- space investigation 2.	63
Image 34- Register of the installation at Mostra Colheitas (1)	67
Image 35- - Register of the installation at Mostra Colheitas (2)	67
Image 36- Register of the installation at Mostra Colheitas (3)	68
Image 37- Over & Out installation space.....	70
Image 38- Register of the installation at Over&Out (2)	71
Image 39- Register of the installation at Over&Out (2).....	72
Image 40- Register of the installation at Over&Out (3).....	72
Image 42- Register of the installation at the thesis defence (3).	75
Image 41- - Register of the installation at the thesis defence (2)	75
Image 43- Register of the installation at the thesis defence.	75

INTRODUCTION

The Avesso (In)Visible project arises from the concerns caused by contemporary social inequality in a world where economic growth seems to favour only those who are already at the top and are increasingly apathetic to the consequences of this power system. Although inequality can be translated into numbers, society has become accustomed to social differences, and social inequality becomes invisible, removed from our perception of truth.

The backside of the embroidery, in Portuguese, is called *avesso*, but the word has multiple meanings – *avesso* also means the reverse, twisted, contrary, the bad or wrong. The *avesso*, in embroidery, is the side that remains invisible while producing an imperfect reflection of the image. The *avesso* of economic and social power also generates a reflection on society that remains hidden among tangles of information, invisible. The Project Avesso (In)Visível seeks to reflect on social and economic inequalities in a society saturated with numerical facts, alarming news, and sensationalist images by using the artistic language of expanded animation in an installation format, displacing the viewer from a passive place to create new relationships and perspectives

This dissertation aims to expose the research carried out during its development of the Avesso (In)Visible project, both at a theoretical and practical level. The first part of the work seeks to contextualize experimental animation and expanded animation concerning contemporary artistic practices, focusing on practices that use craft aesthetics through the bibliographic review and state of the art. The second part of the work exposes the artistic research process carried out in the installation and describes the processes from motivation and conceptualization to production and exhibition of the work, listing the challenges encountered and outlining the strategies followed to solve them. This division into two parts was carried out for the best organization of the text. However, it should be taken into account that the theoretical and artistic research were developed in parallel, in which theoretical investigation indicates new possibilities for solving technical procedures, expanding the relationships between the work and the context in which it is produced, based on the methodology for research in visual arts proposed by Sandra Rey (2002).

Thus, the work is divided between *Part I - The anchoring point*, having the first chapter dedicated to discussing experimental animation and expanded animation. The second chapter focuses on discussing the references of crafting techniques and aesthetics in animation, with the main emphasis on the use of the embroidery. *The Part II – Avesso (In)Visível: turning the inside out*, focuses on the production process of animation installation Avesso (In)Visível and is divided into chapters: chapter three contextualizes and presents the motivations of the project's intentions, chapter four, presents the process of research and production of the animation installation, and chapter five reports the exhibition experiences of the work and presents the process of dissemination and promotion of the project.

Part I – THE ANCHORING POINT

CHAPTER 1 – Experimental and Expanded Animation.

This chapter is dedicated to understanding how experimental and expanded animation manifests in contemporaneity and the relationship between them and the visual arts. It is divided into two sections; the first section presents experimental animation history, reflecting on the not-so-precise boundaries that delimit it and its material characteristics. The second topic analyses how animations in expanded formats influence both production and appreciation of animation, raising observations on two expanded animation artists: William Kenbridge and Rose Bond.

1.1 - Experimental animation: tacking definitions together.

Experimental animation manifests in contemporaneity in different contexts, intersecting visual arts, cinema and animation, challenging the definitions of the category. As discussed by Harris, Husbands & Taberham, in the introduction of their book *Experimental animation: from the analogue to digital (2019)*, even the term “experimental” was one adopted by one of the first texts dedicated to the theme¹, chosen to take into account the breadth of category. This topic will discuss experimental animation, analyzing the field’s history, the parameters and definitions commonly used to approach the theme. It will also discuss how materiality is considered in the making, interpretation and definitions of experimental animations. This analysis aims to trace some delimitations for the study, criticism and production of experimental animations.

In the text, *IT IS ALIVE IF YOU ARE Defining experimental animation (2019)*, Paul Taberham talks about the history of experimental animation, its definitions over the years, and its most common characteristics. For the author, experimental animation should not be seen as a genre but as an approach. He explains that the principle of experimental animation refers to the artistic avant-garde movement of the early twentieth century and that, as in avant-garde art, experimental animation becomes complete in the encounter with the spectator and in the relationship that is drawn between them. Taberham begins his analysis by dividing the history of experimental animation into four waves. The first wave is made of European abstract painters who start to work with animation relate sound and image in movement, as the ones saw in the Hans Richter film *Rhythmus 21 (1921)*, an abstract film that articulates geometric forms into movement on film. Other films representing this first wave are Viking Eggeling’s *Diagonal Symphony*

¹ The term was coined by Robert Russet and Cecile Starr in the 1976’s book *Experimental Animation: Origins of a New Art.* (Harris, Husbands & Taberham, 2019, p. 2)

(1924) and Walter Ruttmann's *Lichtspiel Opus II* (1922). Although they continue the theme of abstraction related to sound, the second wave is made of animations that differ in having films accompanied - and often synchronized - with music. Representatives of this second wave are the film *An Optical Poem* (1938), by Oskar Fischinger, in that geometric forms moves according, and Len Lye's *A Colour Box* (1935) painted on film animation. The author points out the third wave as the moment when experimental animation begins to move away from direct analogies with music; this period is marked by a return to the principle of experimental cinema and innovations, with a broad exploration of techniques and themes. The main representative of this period is Norman McLaren that experimented with different techniques resulting in different animations, such as *Blinkity Blank* (1955), *Hen Hop* (1942), and *La Mere* (1959), another representative of this period are Robert Breer's *A Men And His Dog Out For Air* (1957). The fourth and last wave is characterized by the move away from abstraction, the use of referential images and the occasional use of spoken words. Taberham lists as representatives of this wave the artists Jan Švankmajer, the Quay Brothers and Lawrence Jordan, in films such as *Dimensions of Dialogue* (Švankmajer, 1983) and *Street of Crocodiles* (Quay Brothers, 1986). Taberham also points out that the most recent works from the 1990s onwards are not included in this historical division because they are more difficult to categorize. Partly because of the temporal proximity in which the text was written and because of the greater diffusion and distribution caused by the internet, which increased the number of artists in the field (Taberham, 2019, p.19-20). The four waves defined by the author allow us to realize how vast and varied experimental animation can be and also how volatile and mutant its characteristics are. There is no limitation for the investigation of techniques and artistic inventiveness, which, over the years, has expanded more and more due to greater access to equipment, materials and the sharing of information between artists and animators.

Considering the history of experimental animation and its particular characteristics, Taberham then establishes some parameters (tendencies that are common but not mandatory or indispensable characteristics) to delineate experimental animation. The first common parameter on experimental animation, according to this author, is in the *process of production*. Experimental animations are usually made by a single person or by a small group of people, financed by the artists themselves or through an artistic grant. Relating to the *process of distribution*, experimental animations are distributed

independently, online, in art galleries, universities or film societies. Regarding *aesthetics*, experimental animation is more evocative, and the animation materials are used to draw attention to the medium. There are no psychologically defined characters with clear goals and motivations, and details usually play a more significant role in the film experience than the content. Finally, it is also important to take the *artist's role* into account; in experimental animation, the artist's personal style can be easily discernible, and unlike a commercial film, pre-planning of the film is not necessarily common; instead, the entire creative process is made of investigations and experimentations that the artist creates, in which *"The artist may try to express that which cannot be articulated by spoken word, such as abstract feelings or atmospheres. In a sense, they try to express the inexpressible by calling upon their non-rational intuitions."* (Taberham, 2019, p.24)

Another essential characteristic of experimental animation is the physical materiality of the materials of its production. In the text *MATERIALITY, EXPERIMENTAL PROCESS AND ANIMATED IDENTITY (2019)*, Dan and Lienors Torre make an in-depth analysis of the impact of physical materiality on the production and interpretation of experimental animations. The authors point out how historically, many materials were used in experimental animations (sand, clay, oil paint, paper cuts, found objects). Moreover, the use of such materials contributed to differentiating experimental animation from mainstream conventional animation. Although these techniques can also be used in a commercial animation process, it is more commonly used by experimental animators/artists. Compared to traditional cel-animation, these materials allowed a more immediate effect and were most cost-efficient for the animator/artist, allowing a greater artistic exploration.

Furthermore, when using such materials, a new world of interpretations and meanings are provoked in the viewer - meanings carried by materials themselves or by how the materials take shape in the animation. More malleable materials, for example, tend to generate more metamorphic motion in animation. In contrast, an animation using a found object makes the spectator draw an interpretation filled with meanings and complexities, partly because of the original meanings of the object but also, in part, adding meaning by movement and the context in which objects are seen. (Torre, D & Torre, L.; 2019, p. 85-90). Another critical difference in experimental animation raised by the authors is the celebration of the animation's materials and characteristics. While

traditional cel-animation is historically produced to disguise its materiality, experimental animation exposes its processes and materials, highlighting how they are made and what they are made of. The techniques and materials are used result in entirely different aesthetics and generate unique interpretations due to their materials. Its “marks” and accidents are important features to be highlighted and not something that remains hidden; it is such a fundamental characteristic of experimental animation that it is also common to simulate it digitally in digital animations seeking artisanal aesthetic – turning to a new process of material investigation (in this case digital) and usually a much more complex process than that of animation carried out using physical materials. (Torre, D & Torre, L.; 2019, p.90-95)

Based on the contributions of these authors, the historical analysis raised by them and the reflections on the parameters of experimental animation, it is then possible to trace some not-definitive guidelines of experimental animation as:

- an animation commonly performed by independent artists or animators;
- performed through individual and innovative techniques, often reflecting the artist’s personal characteristics;
- the physical materiality of the objects/materials of making influences both the production and interpretation of the animation;
- can be developed both through traditional animation methods, in physical materiality, and through digital methods.
- it usually lacks linear narrative or complex characters;
- is distributed in alternative ways;

Knowing the history of experimental animation is essential to understand how it has been defined over the years. These definitions, boundaries and parameters are not definitive; quite the contrary, they only contribute to the demarcation, study and critic of experimental animations, but without permanent boundaries. These demarcations should be added to and revised as more studies focus on the thematic and more inventive artistic approaches being incorporated into animation practice. Lastly, it is crucial to reinforce the richness that experimental animation expresses is in part because of its multifaceted characteristic and malleability. The flow into and from different study areas should be considered when analysing the experimental animation field.

1.2 – Expanded Animation: unrolling the thread.

As discussed in the previous topic, the distribution of experimental animation continues to be mainly performed alternatively, avoiding common distribution patterns. One of the features of alternative distribution methods is the new display formats that can be achieved. Although it is common to exhibit experimental animation in the traditional cinema format, it is also becoming more common to display experimental animation in alternative ways. In these cases, the display format takes part in the conceptualization, aesthetic expression, and relationship between the spectator and the film. Therefore, it is essential to understand how experimental animation has been exhibited beyond the traditional screen format, as Expanded Animation. The following pages are dedicated to understanding the Expanded Animation and the diverse formats that it can be exhibited. It also analyses how the expanded format can influence the production and appreciation of animation and how it affects the public reception and interpretation of the work.

According to Vicky Smith and Nicky Hamlyn (2018), the concept of expanded animation is related to formats such as installation, multi-screen exhibitions, live ‘making’ animation and performance. Furthermore, these works are often exhibited (or performed) in artistic spaces, theatres, empty buildings, among others; that is, the animation is directly related to the exhibition format and the exhibition location. These places usually have important significance for the work. More than that, the authors affirm that “(...) animation is understood to be expanded when traditional or commercial practices are exposed to new critical methodologies and reworkings—ones that are with increasing frequency referring to broader questions around performance, the social, political-documentary and so on.” (Smith & Hamlyn; 2018, p.2).

This definition is directly related to the history of expanded cinema. The term became popular from the book *Expanded Cinema*, written by Gene Youngblood in 1970. As stated by Andrew V. Uroskie (2014), Youngblood’s book had as a catalyst all the counterculture vision that developed in the 1960s United States. However, the author points out that the book fails to recognize these antecedents, focusing much more on a philosophical vision of consciousness expansion. The term was often related to a technological expansion since there was much attention directed to the recent discoveries in video, television and the beginning of computerization. Uroskie alerts us to the need to

go beyond Youngblood's book to carry out a historical analysis of expanded cinema, needing to understand the context in which the term originated and developed. As the author Uroskie explains, the initial idea of expanded cinema, which started in New York between 1964 and 1966, had very little to do with expanding socio-political awareness or expansion of the mind – and even less with the 'technological expansion'. The ideas developed by artists and critics of this time were more a reaction to the conditions of institutionalized art and understanding of the need for a re-invention of these institutions to create a new cinematographic practice and remodel the films presentation mode. In other words, the artists realized that if, on the one hand, a change was being created in film production, with experimental cinema, on the other one, it was much more challenging to change the way films were exhibited and viewed. These artists had to fight against an already established cinema exhibition model, where expanded cinema aims for a total change, not just in how films were produced but also in the whole context of displaying and viewing the moving image. (Uroskie; 2014, p.10 – 12). Expanded cinema can be understood as a change in the use of technologies to make and display films, a subversion of themes, opening up to a broader format of media and art. Most essentially, expanded cinema creates a switch in the relationship between film and spectator. The viewer can no longer interpret the films in the previously established format and seeks a new form of participation and relation with the moving image presented.

Therefore, many experimental animation artists, who are already looking within their work for a new way of producing and interpreting the animated image, find in the intermediate and fluid character of expanded cinema a way to expand relations with the spectator. The following section presents an analysis of two artists that are well known for their expanded animation practice, Willian Kentridge and Rose Bond. The choice for analysis of these two artists came not only because of their influence and historical relevance to the field but also because of their different approaches to the expanded animated practice while discussing social issues. Kentridge's work was developed from visual arts. His animated practice came from his drawing and illustration work and spread to expanded animation through installation being displayed inside institutionalized art spaces, such as galleries and museums. In comparison, Bond's site-specific installations developed from her animation practice in experimental animation and are displayed mostly in public spaces. Both artists' artwork reflects their social context, raising discussions about how historic memory reflects on contemporary society; and are a good

example of how expanded animation can raise discussions on collective and political causes by using various techniques and being displayed in different spaces and formats.

Willian Kentridge is a South African visual artist with works in drawing, video, sculpture, tapestry, performance and animation². Its animation process uses charcoal drawing that is erased and re-draw to create a continuously animated move-image, using stop-motion animation. In an interview published in the book *Experimental animation: from the analogue to digital* (Harris, Husbands & Taberham Eds., 2019), the artist explains that his animation process is made as he moves, not having a storyboard or any pre-planning, he says: “It was not a technique I developed for animation, the animation simply became an extension of the recording of the process of making a drawing.” (Harris, Husbands & Taberham Eds., 2019, p. 78).

Being born in Soth Africa during the Apartheid regime, the artist works reflect on the regime's social injustices and consequences that extend to today. For example, in the *More Sweetly Play The Dance* (2015), an installation exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide, it is composed of eight screens - floor to ceiling – mixing live-action film and Animation.



Image 1 - *More Sweetly Play the Dance* (2015), William Kentridge. Installation view at Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, 2016.

²Besides Fine Arts, the artist also studied mime and theatre.

The installation presents a procession of people that cross the screens in a procession. Refugees, garbage collectors, workers, Ebola patients, politicians, and many others appear crossing the screen at the sound of a marching band. The sound echoes through speakers as the procession follows their march to the frame's border, disappearing with the human-scale screens helping to immerse the viewer into the space of procession. The act of procession was a form of protest during the apartheid, dissented from the law that did not allow more than ten people meetings and are a symbol of freedom and democracy (Hampton, 2019), instigating collective memories.

Another artist well-known for her animation installations is Rose Bond, a Canadian artist, educator and researcher. She started her career producing direct drawn-on-film animations and is currently dedicated to site-specific installations. Site-specific installations are the ones that are designed to be displayed in a specific place/space—directly influencing the conceptualization, execution, and understanding of the work. Among Bond's site-specific installations, it was selected to analyse the piece *Illumination #1* (2002), an animation projected on the second-story windows of a historic building in the Old Town area of Portland, Oregon, that celebrates the historical memory of the neighbourhood. In an interview published in the book *Experimental animation: from the analogue to digital* (Harris, Husbands & Taberham Eds., 2019), the artist explains that the non-profit Old Town History project contacted her to commission an installation. The representative of the project manifested a concern with the historical erasure that the neighbourhood could suffer from political/economic powers and was looking for a way to celebrate the multicultural past of the neighbourhood workers. Bond embarked on a research process that sought to understand a little more about the neighbourhood's history and its essence. In the end, the inspiration for *Illumination #1* came from seeing a friend's t-shirt on The Aids Quilt Memorial and was struck by the authenticity and relationship to the wearer's life and the history, memory, and presence that the quilt carries. The artist explains how neighbourhood memory was a perception that she wanted to raise

For the *Illumination No 1* project, I was provided with a foundational piece of research, a student paper citing the city's recorded history of the building and its tenants. With a listing of the names of various businesses and census info, I folded in stories from oral history walks with elders, signatures of the original founders and silhouettes animated from archived newspaper photos – layering, naming and

bringing to light the unremembered. (Harris, Husbands & Taberham, Eds, 2019, p.75)



Image 2- Illumination #1, Rose Bond, 2002. Site-specific animation installation. Seamen's Bethel Building, Portland, Oregon

The history of the installation site and the architecture of the building in which it was designed are factors that influence the final format of the installation. The building's windows delineate the frames, with real scale animation projected from the inside out. Suzanne Buchan (2018), when analysing the personal and political character of the artist, ponders that "Bond's approach and methods are deeply collaborative in nature, and the participatory element of her work often lies in her research process, which includes engagement with people living in and affected by her choice of installation sites. (Buchan, 2018, p.216). In *Illumination #1*, engagement with the site occurs in both the research and content of the work and is strengthened with the installation point of view: the street, which creates a connection between the site and the outside world. Birgitta Hosea defines this relationship in the text *Siting Animation: The Affect of Place (2018)* as a *Communal Site*: the animation is directly related to those invited to the exhibition, but more than that, it also draws relationships between current residents of the neighbourhood and occasional passers-by.

Hosea (2018) exposes the different aspects of animation installations, from making to the exhibition aspect and public view and interpretation. The different ways of occupying the spaces are fundamental in understanding the space as part of the animation

installation and not acting only as a support, as in a screen projection (even when the projection takes place inside gallery walls). The author proposes a division of animation installations in different "sites of exhibition" types, categorized according to the place/situation that the animations are inserted. In addition to *Communal Sites*, they are: *Sites of Expanded Consciousness*, which refers to installations that reflect on space as a sensory device to access new spaces of consciousness, allowing new associations to expand the consciousness. *Sites for Peeping*, installations "created for spaces that encourage a purely private experience of furtive looking and force the viewer to physically position her body and her gaze into a very specific place in order to get a clear view of the work" (Hosea, 2018p.266). *Sites for Moving Around* are installations requiring moving from the static viewpoint to requiring the viewer to walk through the whole installation space to experience the work entirely. And *Sites of Social Relations* - with installations that demonstrate that our relationship with spaces exceeds geographical relations and is also present in our knowledge and social experiences of that space. "*Space can reflect community or division; be inclusive or exclusive; be accepted or disputed.*" (Hosea, 2018, p.273).

Through the analysis of the work of Rose Bond and Willian Kentridge is possible to see how both site-specific and non-site-specific installations develop, occupy the space, and relate to the public. The use of real-scale screening in both works acts as a connection with the visitor, imposing the presence of the people represented in the animations. In different ways, both artists engage the public in the social and political causes discussed in their installations, using animation in thought-provoking ways, expanding the screen space of action, and expanding the form that the spectator relates to the animation, challenge their orientation in space. By unravelling the thread of Experimental Animation through the use of exhibition spaces in expanded animation and installation, it is possible to perceive how its material characteristics occupy new spaces and formats through installations. Animation gains strength when expanding the screen format into space as it confronts the viewer, moving them from their place of passive appreciation and inviting them to new ways of relating to space, materials, and the animated image. The breaking of perspectives, sometimes literal, weaves new interpretations, crossing borders between the artist, the installation space, animation materiality, content and spectator.

CHAPTER 2 – The Craft in Animation

This chapter will discuss how craft, techniques, and aesthetics are presented in contemporary visual arts and animation, with an in-depth focus on the embroidery technique. The survey was carried out with particular attention to works that discuss social and political issues and those that create new significance or restructure the embroidery technique within the traditional circuit of art or the circuit of animation film. The analysis is divided into three parts; the first topic discusses embroidery and its history and how it has manifested in contemporary art in a subversive way. I will reflect on the work of the Brazilian visual artist Rosana Paulino to illustrate this point. The second topic reviews the craft theory in animation, discussing the terminology of craft applied to animation and its characteristics. The third topic focuses on embroidery animations, analysing manifestations of embroidery techniques in the animation practices of Aubrey Longley-Cook, Elliot Shultz, and Nina Sabinani.

2.1 – Embroidery: symbolism and subversion through art history.

The history of embroidery begins with the history of humanity; as Leslie (2007) points out, there is evidence of techniques using needles and threads, similar to today's embroidery leading back to prehistoric times; the author also shows records of embroidery in ancient civilizations in Egypt, China and Peru. The technique has developed over the centuries as a form of art, which is possible to see in one of the most emblematic embroideries in history, *The Bayeux Tapestry*. Despite the name, The Bayeux Tapestry is a seventy-meter embroidery piece that narrates the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Its variety of stitch styles allows us to understand how much embroidery technique had already evolved by the Middle Ages and its cultural appreciation at the time.

However, according to Simioni ((2010; 2007), embroidery started to lose its cultural value by the Renaissance, when the separation occurred between the arts derived from drawing (painting, sculpture, and architecture), considered "pure art" and the other forms of art, that became considered as inferior. The author also points out that academicism intensified the devaluation of applied arts. The devaluation occurred because art academies monopolized the life drawing classes essential for the genres at the top of the academic hierarchy. Also, due to moral constraints expressed as modesty, academies prevented women from attending these classes. Consequently, they prevented

women from learning and practising those considered superior arts, which led them to dedicate themselves to other artistic genres, such as tapestry and embroidery. The fact that artist women were a majority in the applied arts created a notion that those were a female/feminine type of art, with gender discrimination helping to support the idea of textile arts being an inferior type of art. Nevertheless, the feminine label of embroidery was not exclusive to art; as Parker (1996) explains, by the 18th-century, in European-centred culture, embroidery started to represent an aristocratic lifestyle; to be a good embroiderer was a symbol of a wealthy life, a good mother and a devoted wife. This led to a natural connection between embroidery and femininity by the 19th-century.

Changes to embroidery hierarchies started with the Industrial Revolution in England. In the beginning, industrialization of textile manufacturing processes encouraged hand embroidery, with the uprising of the luxury market, in which handmade embroidery was seen as a symbol of social status. The more privileged classes taught embroidery to the working class as a form of philanthropic work, and during the first half of the 19th-century, working-class girls devoted themselves to learning embroidery to become professional embroiderers. However, by the 1880s, embroidery machines took the place of hand embroidery in the industry, depreciating its value again. In this context, the Arts & Craft movement emerged as a critique of capitalist society and alienated labour, with William Morris proposing the resumption of traditional and artisanal methods. In them, workers participated in all production stages, which led to the return of textile productions in art proposes. But the reach of the Arts and Crafts movement was limited, and some divisions were kept in the art sphere, with embroidery still being seen as a feminine, domestic type of art. (Simioni, 2010)

The history of all the changes in value and hierarchies of embroidery is essential to understand the subversive shift that embroidery and other crafts techniques went through in the second half of the 20th century. The growth of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s served as an impulse to transform art hierarchies. Modalities that were once neglected because of their "feminine essence" become a way of criticizing the discourses of power, highlighting how even the artistic sphere is subject to gender discrimination. (Simioni, 2010). Representatives of this period are artworks such as *The Dinner Party* (Judy Chicago, 1974-1979) and *Anonymous Was a Woman* (Miriam Schapiro, 1976). In *The Dinner Party*, Chicago presents an installation in which the central part is composed of a triangular table, prepared for a celebration banquet with place settings for 39 significant historical women. Through all the installation, the artist

uses techniques often associated with the "feminine art": tapestry, in the "*Entry Banners*", embroidery, on the inscribed symbols and names of the placemats, and porcelain painting, on the painting figures resembling a vulva in each one of the plates and on the inscription of the 999 names of remarkable women on the "*Heritage Floor*".



Image 3 - The Dinner Party (1974-79), Judy Chicago. Permanent installation exhibition at Brooklyn Museum.

On the other hand, Miriam Schapiro raises a question about the names who have not resisted the historical erasure. In *Anonymous Was a Woman*, the artist used objects such as tablecloths, napkins, and small embroidered fabrics to draw attention to all these anonymous and feminine artworks forgotten in art history.



Image 4- Miriam Schapiro. Anonymous was a Woman, 1976. Acrylic and collage on paper.

Brooklyn Museum

The change in how embroidery and other craft techniques came to be used in art since the 1970s reflects on the contemporaneity in which artisanal techniques are reframed to contribute to artistic discourses. As is the case with Rosana Paulino, a Brazilian artist with significant influence on the contemporary art scene, which mixes autobiography and social memory through prints, embroidery, sculptures, and installations to outline reflections on the role of black women in society. Among the most striking features of her work is the reframed use of embroidery and sewing. In *Bastidores* (Paulino, 1997), the artist presents a series of portraits of black women printed on fabrics and arranged in embroidery hoops. An uneven row of stitches in black thread covers the eyes, mouth, or throat of the faces portrayed. How the artist uses embroidery in this work differs from the common symbolism, it is rough and irregular, distancing itself from the delicacy commonly associated with embroidery. Also, the choice of parts to be covered

implies a silencing act. The violent way the threads disturb the black bodies evokes the uncomfortable and unsolved memory of past slavery in Brazil (A. P. C. Simioni, 2007)



Image 5- Rosana Paulino. Bastidores (series), 1997. Xerography and thread on fabric mounted in embroidery hoops. 31,3 x 310 cm, São Paulo Museum of Modern Art – MAM

The artist deconstructs the aesthetic values of embroidery and proposes the involvement of art with structural issues of Brazilian society, allowing conflicts such as racism, patriarchy, and white male power to come to the fore (Jaremtchuk, 2007).

A set of symbolic reinterpretations is also made by the artist in the installation *Assentamento* (2013), also reflecting on the enslavement history of black people in Brazil. The installation consists of three parts: a video of the sea exposed on small tablets, a sculptural portion made of a stack of wood and plaster arms and photographs of the front, back and side of a black woman body printed on fabric, in real size, cut out, patched, and embroidered



Image 6- Assentamento, Rosana Paulino (2013) Multimedia installation (digital print, drawing, linoleum, sew, embroidery, wood, paper clay e video)



Image 7- Assentamento , Rosana Paulino (2013) Multimedia installation [detail].

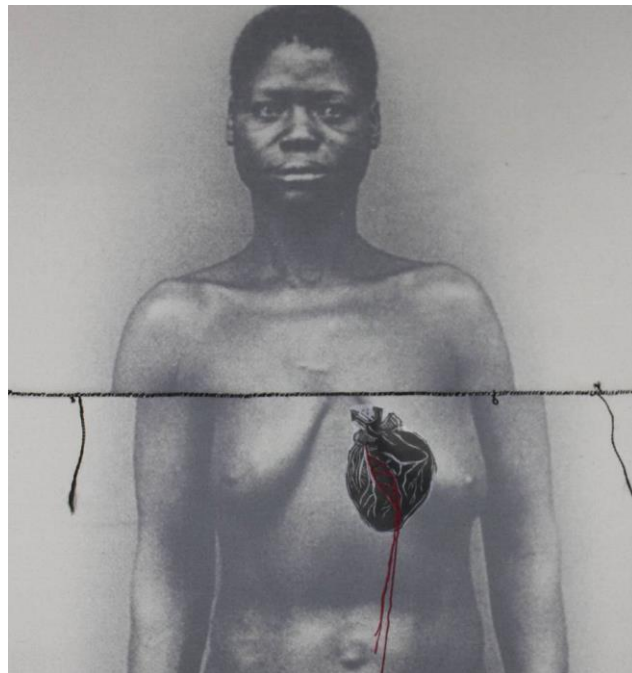


Image 8- - Assentamento, Rosana Paulino (2013) Multimedia installation [detail].

Each of the installation's elements has symbolism that relates to the slavery process in Brazil, explains the artist in the text of educational material accompanying the exhibition held in Americana in 2013. The images of the sea symbolize the path travelled between continents, the sculptural arms stacked like firewood are the representation of

the devaluation of human lives that arrived in Brazil through the slave trade, seen as "wood to burn", parts of equipment and, when broken, were promptly replaced by new ones (Paulino, 2013). The installation's focal point is a black woman's photographs, printed in a ripped fabric and rejoined, in an uneven mending. The photograph itself is a record of the photographer Auguste Stahl (1828-1877) in research commissioned by the scientist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), whose objective was to prove a racist thesis about the superiority of the white race³. The artist reframes the initial symbolism of one of the women portrayed in Auguste Stahl photographs interfering with the image to represent the contributions of the enslaved peoples rooted in Brazilian culture. According to the artist, the cut-outs and mended seams demonstrate the effort of the enslaved people to remake themselves in strange lands, and this "remaking" is never complete; hence the mismatched seams, showing that a complete remaking is an almost impossible task. (Paulino, 2013)

The heritage of Rosana Paulino's work has influenced the new generations of Brazilian visual artists, who embroidery as a new creative tool. Aline Brant is one of this new generation of artists that use embroidery in visual arts. She uses the thread as a means of intervention on the photograph. Pedro Luiz uses embroidery, cutting, and collage, creating fictional biographies for photographs found in antique fairs, drawing comments on contemporary society. Another artist who uses the mix of embroidery and photography is the Mexican Victoria Villasana, a textile artist whose interests are in the post-digital era's culture, history, and relationships. Her work is diverse in technique but has stood out in urban art in which small photographs embroidered in vibrant colours are used, drawing attention to social themes.

The use of embroidery as an artistic, subversive, and collaborative tool in contemporary art reflects the history of embroidery as marginalized art and an instrument of expression, especially among women. It is also important to note that the period of growth of embroidery in the visual arts coincides with the popularization of expanded cinema, with both aesthetics arising from a need to subvert certain artistic norms. Another noticeable correlation is how embroidery has also been used to discuss social and gender issues, just like in the animation in the expanded field.

³ More about that in Paulino, R.(2013) *Assentamento* [exhibition educational material]. Americana: Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Americana. Available at: <http://www.rosanapaulino.com.br/blog/tag/assentamento/>

Embroidery has been used for artistic creation in numerous ways and different contexts and has manifested itself in artists practices worldwide, resulting in exciting combinations, including those between animation and embroidery. However, before analysing these practices of embroidery in animation, another discussion is necessary: the space and definitions of craft and craft aesthetics in animation.

2.2 - The craft aesthetic on animation.

In order to understand how craft and its aesthetics have been manifested and theorized in animation, it is first necessary to contextualize the term craft itself. As pointed out by Glenn Adamson (2018), "... is only when artisanal labour is placed in explicit contrast with other means of production (chiefly mechanization, fine art and technological mediation) that craft itself becomes a locus for discourse." The term *craft* has been defined much more in relation to other media than the term characteristics itself. Depending on the context that is inserted, its definition varies. Originally from the English language, the word 'craft' itself does not have a single definition when translated. In Portuguese, for example, it can be translated as *artesanato*, *habilidade* or *ofício*.⁴ Which classifies well the broader definition, and the one often the most understood, of craft as something handmade, made using a specific skill, and produced on a small scale.

Understanding that the term craft can have different connotations depending on the context is essential when discussing the term within specific areas, such as animation. In the introduction of the book of which they are organizers, *The Crafty Animator: Handmade, Craft-based Animation and Cultural Value* (2019), Caroline Ruddell and Paul Ward discuss the fluid characteristic of craft, point out, for example, the crafty connotation as something 'astute' something intended to deceive or mislead, and how this connotation occupies a paradoxical place in animation as animation can at the same time hide and reveal its own construction, in something known as *the artist's hand*, where knowing how the illusion has been made is also part of the fascination. "This does not mean that every animation mechanically talks us through "how it was made", but rather that the "hand of the artist", whether explicitly and literally shown or merely implied, is often fundamental to the form" (Ruddell & Ward, 2019, p.2)

⁴ What could be translated respectively as: artisanal ; a skill; and a labor of a specific skill.

In *Craft's Critique: Artisanal Animation in the Digital Age* (2016), Lilly Husbands notes that the term craft can be used as both a noun and a verb, and therefore refers to both the process of making and the final product, which emphasizes the connection between the artist and the product, leading to the idea of crafting as authentic and authorial. The concept of the artist's hand, this connection between author and artefact, is very present when discussing the concept of craft in animation once that the mark left by the animator's body is understood as a connection to the physical world, which ends up generating an idea of the handmade as something authentic. The connection between authenticity and physicality is, for example, often related to stop-motion animation; according to Carla MacKinnon (2019), for some commentators, there is an idea that the stop-motion technique increases the effect of authenticity in an animated image because

“(...) it seems to offer a truer link to its physical origins or “essence” than a digitally produced image. While stop-motion puppets and sets are a clear construction, they nevertheless bear evidence of something that has at one time existed in three-dimensional space.” (MacKinnon, 2019, p. 105)

However, the notion of handmade as something that is especially honest or authentic can be a problematic one; raising the author's presence in handmade practice ignores their presence in the digital one. There is a misinterpretation of CG or digital animation as something completely computerized, invalidating the animator. It is also essential to note that the animation processes are hardly exclusively manual or solely digital. It is common to have hand drawings on the process of a 3d animation, for example, and it is even more common to use digital processes to render craft animations, transforming the physical animation into a digital film. (MacKinnon, 2019, p.106-107).

Husbands (2016) also points out the subversive aspect of craft animations. Through experimental animation, a more political concept of craft arises, that is, the idea of handcrafting as a subversive aesthetic to the industrialization of the animation process. These animations do not usually comply with normative technical and aesthetic standards and are often performed by artists outside the mainstream circuit. This relationship between animation and subversive aesthetics started at the beginning of the 20th century with avant-garde films utilizing handmade techniques and are still maintained in the contemporary productions of experimental animation. (Husbands, 2016). This preference for the use of artisanal aesthetics, also observed by Birgitta Hosea, in *Made by Hand* (2019), draws attention to the independent animation sector, especially in the way that

experimental animation uses a lot of handmade aesthetics. She observed a growing desire to produce an animation that generates a more tactile and physical experience among her students than the aesthetics of a generic digital animation associated with mass production. (Hosea, 2019, p.17-18). Although the return of craft can be seen to some commentators as a reaction to excessive virtualization of the digital age, this subversive character of contemporary animation looks much more like a parallel to the Arts & Crafts movement during the period of the Industrial Revolution. In which "Both the Arts and Crafts movement and the contemporary craft revival can be seen as predicated on the ideal of craftspeople completely fulfilled through their work as opposed to industrial workers who are, in Marxist terms, alienated from their labor." (Hosea, 2019, p.25).

Both the character of authenticity - characterized by the author's physical presence and the use of 'real' materials - and the subversive character, opposed to predominantly digital mass media, meet in the physical materiality of the craft. It is the physical characteristics of the materials that allow artists to leave their 'marks'. This material characteristic attracts many independent and experimental animators to craft aesthetics as part of their creative research investigation. Husband (2019) points out that this can be a reflex of the artist's other art practices and that the use of different materials "is often closely linked to an artist's personal vision and creative process of search and discovery, and the resulting work often doubles as a document of their labour" (2019, p.51). It is important to say that as well as the idea of authenticity; the investigation material should not be interpreted as exclusive of handmade aesthetics. It is still more commonly seen as a traditional characteristic of craft techniques but has increased experimental animation in 3D techniques since the tools have been more accessible to individual animators (Husbands, 2019, p.56).

Hosea (2019) also raises attention to other characteristics of materiality: memory and nostalgia. Memory because, part of what seduces us in craft techniques, involves the tactile quality of the materials used, materials that both author and audience have physical and tactile memories of. We recognize when viewing the materials, what they make us feel. This memory can also be loaded with subjective ideas and used to appeal to a nostalgic feeling, as Hosea (2019, p.34) presents by analysing contemporary Chinese Animation, where animators have been trying to recreate the visual materiality of the ink animations of Shanghai Film Studios. Hosea affirmed that this return to the traditional could be interpreted as a nostalgic desire for heritage culture.

As pointed by the bibliographic review in this section, the craft techniques and aesthetics have always been part of experimental animation because of their variety and exploration facilities as they commonly use readily available materials. However, an increase of contemporary craft aesthetics animations is presented by the theoretical analyses published in recent years and the crescent production of animation based on craft techniques. This growth can be related to the meanings that craft aesthetic carries: nostalgic feelings, the idea of the hand made as authentic or closer to the artist, and subversion to the standard industry animation. However, this crescent interest is not exclusive to animation, which is also noticeable in visual arts, as present in the previous topic. When applied to animation, the characteristics of the craft can be used to convey different ideas, depending on the form and context they are applied; some examples of craft aesthetics in animation are the knitted film *Blanket Statement #2: It's All or Nothing* (2013)⁵, by Jodie Mack, the felting stop-motion animations made by Andrea Love⁶ and the textile stop-motion *Nina* (2017)⁷, by Isabel Macias. This work will focus on the analysis of how embroidery has been manifested in Animation, an analysis that will be carried in the next section.

2.3 - Embroidery animations: craft aesthetic on animation practice.

Having understood the influences of embroidery on contemporary art and the manifestations of craft aesthetics in animation, it is now possible to analyse the manifestations of embroidery in contemporary animation.

Aubrey Longley Cook is an American artist that uses hand-stitched embroidery to document the queer community and digital culture. In an interview with Leanne Prain in *Hoopla: The Art of Unexpected Embroidery* (2011), the artist stated that he started embroidery as a form of creativity outside his curricular activities and therefore free of classroom critique when he was an animation student. His embroidery interest and animation training led to Runaway's production (Longley-Cook, 2010), a .gif animation that represents the run cycle of Gus, his housemate's dog. Cycle movements like the ones studied by Muybridge at the beginning of cinema are still a common practice in the study

⁵ Available at: <https://vimeo.com/85903920>

⁶ The work can be seen at the artist instagram page [@andreamimates](#).

⁷ Available at: <https://youtu.be/f68xeLACpC4>

of animated images as a form to understand the principles of the movement. The artists explain that creating a cycle animation was a choice for simplifying the animation, therefore the easiest way to test the animation and embroidery combination. *Runaway* highlights one of the aesthetics of the embroidered image: the texture. Longley-Cook used different stitches and tangled threads to form images on the fabric in a way very particular to embroidery, working with colour and texturized stitches to embroidery the dog's fur. Another peculiar characteristic of the embroidered image is the reverse side; even though the backside of embroidery is traditionally unseen or even hidden away, Longley-Cook realized that the reverse of the fabric pieces carried expressive possibilities of movement, as himself explains:

"If you turn it around, the animation still works. You get all the crazy texture and the knotting and connections. The motion is more telling on that side. It is not a realistic or literal portrait of Gus, but that is something very emotional about all of the knotting which hints at the chaos in Gus head [as he is] trying to make connections, but it's impossible; it's like trying to undo a knot. (PRAIN, 2011, p.503)



Image 9- *Runaway*, Aubrey Longley-Cook (2010), .gif animation, [front and back view].

In 2013, the artist produced another animated embroidery, a portrait of the drag queen Lavonia Elberton. Similar to the *Runaway* process, the frames were hand embroidered and digitized later. Queer and digital culture permeates other embroideries by the artist, most produced in cross-stitched and some of them transformed into "stitched animated pixels" such as *Tea* (Longley-Cook, 2019) and ... (Longley-Cook, 2017), reinforcing the artist's relationship with the digital language. The work of Longley-Cook reflects the importance of exploration in the research process when working with a new

media combination and how new methodologies can develop in favour of innovative artistic expressions. It is possible to trace a similarity between the Longley-Cook investigation process and the one of Alexandre Alexeïeff and Claire Park when creating the pinscreen mechanism in the early 20th century. Alexeïeff developed the pinscreen from the desire to explore a more artistic part of animation, using the aesthetic characteristics of the engraving technique (Weldon, 2015), in the same way that the aesthetic of embroidery was a motivation behind Longley-Cook embroidery animations.

The work of Parker and Alexeïeff inspired another animator, the Australian Elliot Schultz, to create the interactive installation *Embroidered Zoetrope* (Schultz, 2013). The apparatus consists of discs of embroidered sequential images animated from a turntable movement and strobe lights. The concepts used by Schultz in the animation's creations refer to the first animation devices, the Phenakistoscope and the Zoetrope. These devices emerged from research on the human visual system, developed in the 19th century, especially the theory of retinal persistence formulated by Joseph Plateau. The phenakistoscope consists of a disk, on which we have the image sequence on one side and slots on the other. As we rotate the disk in front of a mirror, peering through the grooves, we perceive the illusion of movement. The zoetrope works similarly, but instead of a disk uses a rotating drum, in which the grooves are on the outside, and paper strips with sequential drawings are on the inside. (Magalhães, 2015)



Image 10- *Embroidered Zoetrope*, Elliot Schultz, (2013), animation installation [detail].

In Schultz installation setup, the whole animation is seen simultaneously; this happens because the strobe light blinks in sequence with the animation, lighting up the whole circle in its entirety. (Jobson, 2015) The particularities of the installation drove the way that Shultz conceived the animation, in adjustment with this new media. One of the artist's adjustments was to extend the animation running time, modifying how the looping worked. Instead of a perfect loop, in the *Embroidered Zoetrope*, one object image starts in the exact place that the other ends (Shultz, 2016).

In this regard, the Embroidered Zoetrope presents machine embroideries, which allows the images to be repeated more consistently, with an almost perfect finish. Also, mechanization speeds up the time needed to embroider each image, allowing the artist to present a wide variety of animated sequences. Mechanization retrieves some of the imperfect mark's characteristics of hand embroidery while keeping some texture and tactile aesthetics. The tactility characteristic is significant in this artwork because of the interactive installation format, where a more tactile animation is an invitation to the viewer involvement.

The subversive characteristics of craft aesthetics can be seen in both Elliot Schultz and Longley-Cook work. *Embroidered Zoetrope* (Schultz, 2013) opposes the traditional animation industry standards using an outdated technology device, the zoetrope, in a new context as an installation. Longley-Cook changes the standards of embroidery and animation by contrasting handmade aesthetics with the digital language culture, reinterpreting pixels through cross-stitches in works such as *Tea* (Longley-Cook, 2019) and ... (Longley-Cook, 2017).

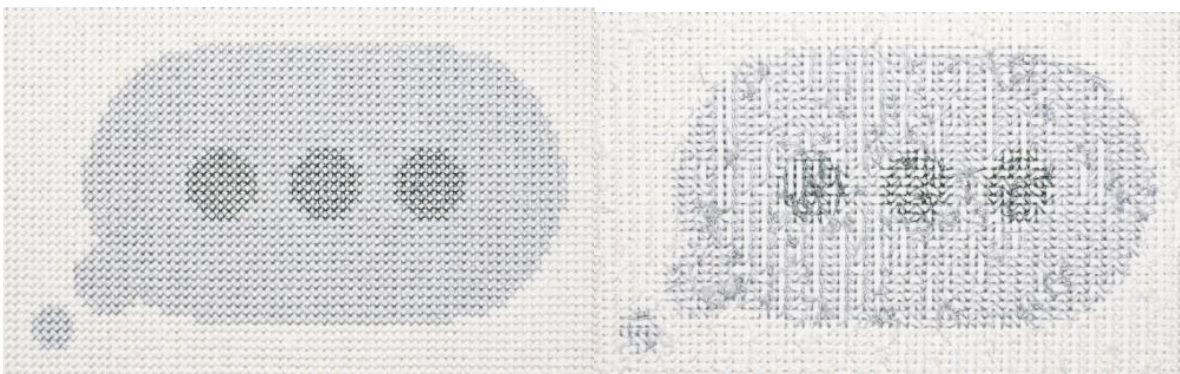


Image 11- ..., (2017) Aubrey Longley-Cook, embroidery animation, front and back

The idea of authenticity, left by the artist's hand, can also be related to Longley-Cook's work. When commenting on one of his embroidery series, the artist expresses how the act of embroidery is physically connected with his body “The work is hand-done, and when I stitch a piece, my fingers touch every single bit of the fabric. Every single stitch was done with my fingers, and the stitch-work could not look the same if done by someone else” (Prain, 2011, p.184).

A different approach to the use of embroidery in animation can be seen in the documentary film made by Nina Sabnani, "The Stitch Speaks" (TANKO BOLE CHHE) from 2009. The film portrays the trajectory of the Kutch artisans associated with Kala Raksha, using the art of fabric applique and embroidery made by the artisans. The animation, in this case, is carried out through the digital manipulation of handmade works. Although the embroidery here is not animated "frame-by-frame", the aesthetics and the film's thematic complement each other. The artisanal aesthetics provide the documentary with tactile veracity. Those who narrate their stories are reflected in the manual act of the stitches, as the stories portrayed by their own art, drawn with threads.

Other manifestations of embroidery in animation can also be seen in *Tharsis Sleep* (2014), a video clip made in machine embroidery by Nicos Livesey and Tom Bunker. However, in this case, the animation was carried out in digital drawing and then “printed” in embroidery through mechanization. Another animation with a similar process is *Chad Gadya* (2015), developed by the independent director Nina Paley and Theodore Gray. With almost three minutes, the animation is a sequence that mixes frame-by-frame animation (in which all images used were machine-embroidered) and some small stop-motion shots. The material characteristic regarding physical and subjective memory is more evident in these productions than the characteristics of authenticity and subversion. More recently, Australian animator Alexis Sugden has gained recognition for her hand embroidery animations. Sugden shares on her online social networks⁸ the animated cycles that portray anthropomorphic animals along with the process of producing the animations –a common feature of craft animations and experimental animations and part of its appeal.

To conclude, the analysis carried in the embroidery animation practice is an excellent example of how craft aesthetics have been manifested through experimental and

⁸ Alexis Sugden shares her work on the Instagram page [@alexisdraws](https://www.instagram.com/alexisdraws).

author animation in contemporary animation practice. It allows the recognition of several possibilities for development based on embroidery in animation, whether through manual or automated embroidery. The visual characteristics particular to embroideries, such as the threads texture and the reverse side, are a potent tool in the visual experimentation, especially as tactile materiality exploration that can be carried to the expanded format animation. In addition, the meanings that the technique carries and how it has been re-contextualized in contemporaneity contribute to the use of embroidery animation in contexts of aesthetic and social subversion.

PART II – AVESSO (IN)VISÍVEL: TURNING THE INSIDE OUT.

CHAPTER 3 – Aveso (In)visível: from where it comes.

This chapter intends to contextualise the origins of the *Avesso (In)Visible* project and is divided into two sections. The first presents the previous artistic investigations realised during the first year of the master's course, creating embroidery and animation that led to the project. The second topic contextualises the project in the social, historical and cultural space, pointing out the primary problems, motivations and intentions of the project's development.

3.1- Previously practitioner investigations in embroidery animation.

The installation process *Avesso (In)Visível* is the result of a long before it, artistic investigation process. When discussing the methodology for research in visual arts, Sandra Rey (2002) states that every work of art is a unique response to a stimulus, and this response is manifested through language. This language feeds on subjectivity and the artist's experience while reaffirming or discussing issues arising from art and culture itself. The stimulus, in the case of my embroidery animation practice investigations, arises from the art itself. As contextualised in the first part of this work, there is in contemporary art - and in this case, in Brazilian contemporary art in particular - a new aspect of the use of embroidery in an aesthetically corruptive manner, subverting the signs often related to technique and shifting meanings. After I saw and experienced such works, I raised a desire to understand how embroidery could amplify my artistic explorations. Having visual and conceptual references such as *Bastidores (1997)* by Rosana Paulino, I started researching techniques and aesthetics from embroidery to use in my production. Alongside this, there was also a strong desire to dive into the world of moving images through animation. From meeting these two desires/stimuli, my first investigations with embroidery and animation emerged, resulting in my first animation film: *I don't fit in myself anymore (2019)*⁹, a stop-motion animation about subjectivity and self-consciousness portrayed through embroidery aesthetics.

⁹ *Eu já não caibo em mim* is the original title in Portuguese – available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YElqWUurSQ&ab_channel=SamiraPoffo

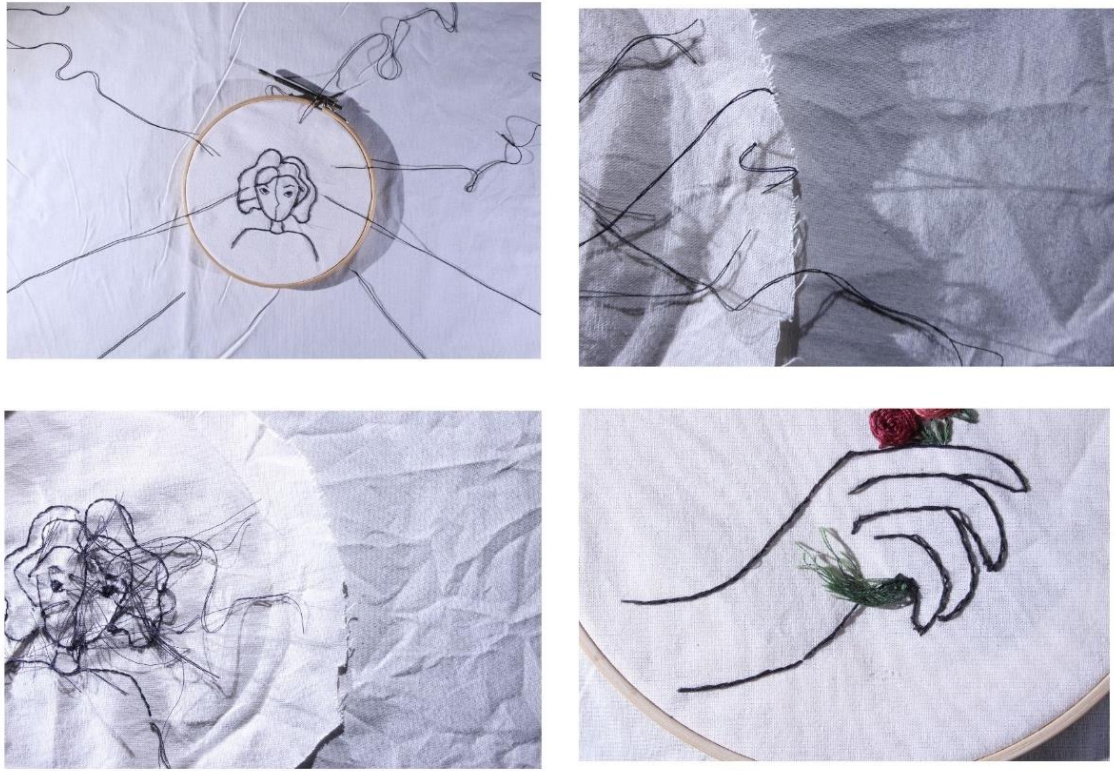


Image 12- *Eu já não caibo em mim*. Samira Poffo, 2019. (Stills)

This film was developed in the Author Animation course in the first semester of the master's degree in Animation Arts at Universidade Lusófona and had the theme of *Identity* as a starting point to developing a short film. It was at this time that, alongside other experimental animators, I was introduced to the work of Jan Švankmajer and the Quay Brothers; this influence of a more material-based, sensorial animation was fundamental to the film's development. The experience in making this film is undoubtedly reflected in the *Avesso (In)Visível* project, including exploring the avesso (the backside of embroidery) as an aesthetic and a conceptual characteristic, as will be better discussed in Chapter 4.

The second experience in embroidery and animation was made in the *Orphan Clothes (2019)*¹⁰ animation installation, developed in the Hybrid Spaces course, in the following semester. The course discipline Hybrid Spaces brief is to develop an expanded animation format that explores the conjunction between means and media of display, specificity within the site context, and spatial dimensions that can be developed to encourage different audience engagements. The provocation this time was the space, as it was defined that the animations would be exhibited in the Convento São Pedro de

¹⁰ *Roupa dos Órfãos* is the original title in Portuguese – the installation register can be seen at: <https://youtu.be/VoRhHFLEZms>

Alcântara in Lisbon, As part of the 31st Society for Animation Studies (SAS) - Animation is a Place parallel events. The principal stimulus came from one of the objects displayed in the convent: a wooden chest with the words *Roupa dos Órfãos* (Orphans Clothes in Portuguese) carved on the top. The research process into the convent's history allowed the discovery of the intrinsic relationship between the chest and the orphans who lived there. Once more, the embroidery characteristics were central to the conceptual and visual characteristics of the work. This time connecting with the ideas of ties, knots, shreds and ruptures, they traced a relation between the broken ties in the orphans family history, the sentiment of isolation and abandonment and the material characteristics of clothes, fabric and threads that once were stored in that chest. The installation is made of translucent fabric embroidered with a figure of a child sitting curled up. The animation of loose abstract threads is projected into the figure, interacting with the child's image; the threads movements suggest an attempt to embrace and shelter the child without success. The whole installation takes place inside the chest, where the projector light traces a shadow of the animation in conjunction with the shadowing image of the backside of the child figure embroidery. Shadows - especially the shadows reflecting the *avesso* of the image-were a critical discovery in this project, as part of the expanded format that animation could take in the space, even though this was a limited space inside a chest.



Image 13- Orphan Clothes Installation, Samia Poffo, 2019.

Another important take of this project understood the expanded animation in relation to the site's history and the importance of the viewer's engagement as part of the work. Often the visitors passed without realising it - which could be interpreted as a project defect - at the same time, adding a new conceptual layer to the social invisibility and abandonment of the subject portrayed, extrapolating the intentions of the artwork – unintentionally. This experience also stands out how the expanded format shifted the viewer in relation to the work. The exhibition format needed the body to be oriented differently in space, moving to a lower point of view, walking around the chest to see the installation complete from all sides, animation - and embroidery, front and back, through the *avesso*.

Remembering that what constitutes a work goes beyond the surface (the work itself, form and material). Underneath, there is a large part that remains submerged, invisible (thought, ideas and concepts conveyed by the work) (Rey, 2002, p. 128). It is essential to say that, throughout this investigation of artistic practice – in both projects - theoretical research was developed in parallel, a large share of it already presented here in the first part of this work. Although it does not appear directly in the final result of the work, this theoretical research contributed to the investigations and discoveries carried out during the creative development of the artistic practice.

Recognising the role of these two previous experiences with animation and embroidery. The practical and theoretical investigations they led to are essential to understand the context in which the Avesso (In)Visível project emerged. The experience in the Hybrid Space course, understanding the installation was decisive when starting the project on the Final Project Animation course in the second year of the masters. Contributing to the decision works with the installation format having the professor Natalie Woolf, that had guided the Hybrid Spaces practical project, to be supervisor professor of the project.

3.2 – Avesso (In)Visível Installation: context, motivation and intentions.

According to the methodology for research in visual arts proposed by Rey (2002, p.126), the work of art is composed of three dimensions: the first dimension is the idea - a more abstract dimension that is processed at the level of thought, which can manifest itself whether in sketches or more elaborate projects, the second is the practice -

procedures, technical or operational manipulations, reactions of materials or substances; and on a third level - the work in process is connected with everything that concerns knowledge. In this way, concepts are articulated through it, and links are established between the manifestations of culture. These three dimensions: idea, practice and articulation of concepts, go together throughout the research process, although for periods, one dimension stands out from the other during the process. In the *Avesso (In)Visível* project, the articulations between concepts, visual practices, and the work's context that permeate the entire process began with a fundamental primary idea: **duality**.

In this case, the concept of duality emerged from the embroidery, more specifically, from the word *avesso*. The backside of the embroidery, in Portuguese, is called *avesso*, but the word has multiple meanings – *avesso* also is the reverse, antagonistic, opposite, contrary, the bad or wrong. Besides that, the *avesso*, in embroidery, is also the side that remains invisible, hiding mistakes, sutures, and interlacing, while at the same time it produces an imperfect reflection of the image on the other side. The word is dual (or multiple, could one say), and the embroidery itself is also always intrinsically dual.

Even though the idea of duality arose from the embroidery technique and the word *avesso*, the concept of **duality permeates a whole context** - in this specific case, although not exclusively – the context of socio-cultural and economic inequality in Brazil. According to the United Nations report released at the end of 2019, Brazil is the second country with the biggest income concentration globally. The wealthiest 1% of the population holds 28.3% of the country's income, almost a third of the total.¹¹ The Brazilian history of slavery and the colonial past widened the gap between regions, classes, races and genders. According to the report published by OXFAM BRASIL, not only does the Brazilian economy benefit few, but also the State and our social organisation contribute to perpetuating inequalities.¹² However, the inequality in Brazilian society is not a novelty. Indeed, it is as old as its history, ended up generating in its population an apathy towards the scenes of inequality, which goes almost unnoticed, invisible. Thus, the main motivating question of the project emerged: How to lead to a reflection on social inequalities in a society saturated with numerical facts, inundated with

¹¹ SASSE, Cintia (2021), available at <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/infomaterias/2021/03/recordista-em-desigualdade-pais-estuda-alternativas-para-ajudar-os-mais-pobres>

¹² OXFAM BRASIL (2017), p.43.

alarming news and increasingly indifferent to the flood of sensationalist images seen every day? **How to make the invisible visible again?**

To answer this question, it is necessary to provoke different interpretations and invite the viewer to engage with the topic, dislocating the spectator from the place of a passive observer; in other words, it is necessary to turn the situation inside out. Exposing *avessos* to an apathetic society in which social inequality became an invisible problem. Therefore, animation in an expanded format felt suitable for the challenge;

“As animation expands, it also proves to be a medium through which to engage with certain challenges of our times. Always a medium of invention, today animated fabrications are of a piece with the farcical and unthinkable absurdities of our age.” (Smith & Hamlyn, 2018, p.16)

Therefore this installation space aims to create a site for confrontations between the viewer and the social dualities, instigating an analysis of the roles of power within an unequal society and encouraging the viewer's reflection on their role as part of this society threaded web.

CHAPTER 4 – Averso (In)visível: the process.

With the context and primary motivations of the work having now been exposed, this next chapter is dedicated to examining the Avesso (In)Visível installation's research and development process. The process presented is divided into three sections: the first section presents the conceptual development; the second section presents the visual research and experimentations. The third section is dedicated to exposing the practical development that led to the final installation format. It is important to remember that although they are presented separately, these processes must be understood as intrinsic, with one directly influencing the other as a process that led to one final result.

4.1 – Conceptual development.

Embracing an expanded animation format and taking into account the social context, the duality of *avesso*, the textile materiality of embroidery, and more importantly, the project intentions to highlight such dualities and inequalities. The conceptual development started by electing elements to research: tracing the relationship between them and exposing dualisms, exploring the visual through animation and expanded space. The elected elements were: **power, vulnerability and society**. This section will explain the concepts behind each element and the motivations for each selection.

The first element, *the power*, carries the symbolism of something big, strong and omnipresent, which readily found visual representation in the classic business suit, specifically in the jacket and tie. About the symbology of the suit, Cintra Wilson observes

“Today’s power suit exudes either the presence of money or the ability to steal it. Its primary driving force and ethos is utilitarianism. It remains the primary staple of a political wardrobe because of its psychological invisibility. (...) is an instrument of the political economy that surrounds it in time. It tells us that while technology and social climates have changed, power has remained exactly the same.” (Wilson, 2018)

Therefore, the suit is a costume historically used in western society by men who carry the power of political decisions and economic influence, a symbol of this power structure replicated for decades. This symbolism, physically represented by the structure and material of the suit, is one of the main elements of the installation and had its own investigation to understand the way to best use it. It was investigated both in three-dimensional space and in animation, a research process that will be further detailed in the

following topics. The second conceptual element, *vulnerability*, is the opposite side of power, the reverse *avesso*; it is fragile, hidden away, almost invisible. Even though *vulnerability* has always been one of the conceptual elements of the work, precisely because it is opposite to the power, its visual representation required a great deal of investigation. However, one visual element was always known to be important- the human figure in a fragile position, unprotected, highly exposed, and at the same time, paradoxically invisible. The third conceptual element, *society*, is the relationship between the exterior and the interior, the apathetic society, which ignores the *avessos* of power reflected in vulnerability. It is also the viewer's response to the work, a space for mirroring recognition. The three elements are in constant relation as part of a network, in that each one has its space and role to play. The visual investigation - through expanded animation- aims to rupture this social fabric, subverting and shifting relations and roles to highlight social problems, encourage new interpretations, and instigate discussions.

4.2 – Visual development

The visual research started with the intention of using expanded animation to highlight the relationships between the three elements outlined above: power, vulnerability, and society. It is important to note that inequality and social invisibility are widely discussed in contemporary art, using different symbologies and techniques. Among the outstanding artists working on the subject is Santiago Sierra, a Spanish artist that has a production that criticizes the capitalist system and exposes the social invisibilities caused by it. In the performance *100 Personas Escondidas* (2003), the artist paid 100 unemployed people to hide for four hours on the street in the city of Madrid, in order to draw attention to what lies between the unseen and the hidden, people who go unnoticed for not being part of the capitalist production system. More recently, in *El Ninot* (2019), the artist teamed up with Eugenio Merino to create a hyperrealistic, oversized sculpture of the king of Spain, Felipe VI, dressed in a suit and tie, the opponent. The sculpture was produced to be burned, leaving only ashes and a fire-resistant skull; the burning performance happened in October 2020, carrying in its symbology the destruction of the monarchic power in Spain.¹³ Another way to discuss social invisibility

¹³ The performance video can be watch at https://www.santiago-sierra.com/202003_1024.php

can be seen in Luke Jerram's work *Invisible Homeless* (2015). The artist created a luminous glass sculpture representing a person covered by a blanket, lying in a position of vulnerability.



Image 14 - *Invisible Homeless* (2015) Luke Jerram. Glass Sculpture.

Nevertheless, the catalyst to the visual research on Avesso (In)visível were the references of artistic works that interfered with embroidery in photographs such as Rosana Paulino's *Batidores*(1997) and the embroidery animation developed since my work on *Orphan Clothes*. I decided to interfere with embroidery animation on photographs that exposed situations of vulnerability and social inequality. Therefore, it was necessary to carry out a photographic visual investigation; the photographic research started in free image banks as a start point to understand how social vulnerability had been represented visually, researching what kind of images had been used as an icon of poverty and homelessness. Among the photographs found in the research, two were the ones that drew the most attention for their urban elements, in which the homeless person is surrounded, vulnerable, sleeping, unprotected and unnoticed.



Image 15-Photographic visual research on vulnerability Photo by Davidson Luna on Unsplash



Image 16- Photographic visual research on vulnerability Photo by John Moeses Bauan on Unsplash

While photographic research contributed to the visual development of the vulnerability element, the use of suit jackets as a symbol of power was defined from the beginning; represented by the materials of the suit physically present in the exhibition space. In addition, the intention was to relate the suit/power with photography/vulnerability through a physical connection, the threads of the suit fabric, unravelling and gaining a new shape through the animated lines of the embroidery animation. A power that dissolves in order to expose the previously invisible side, highlighting their social *avesso*.

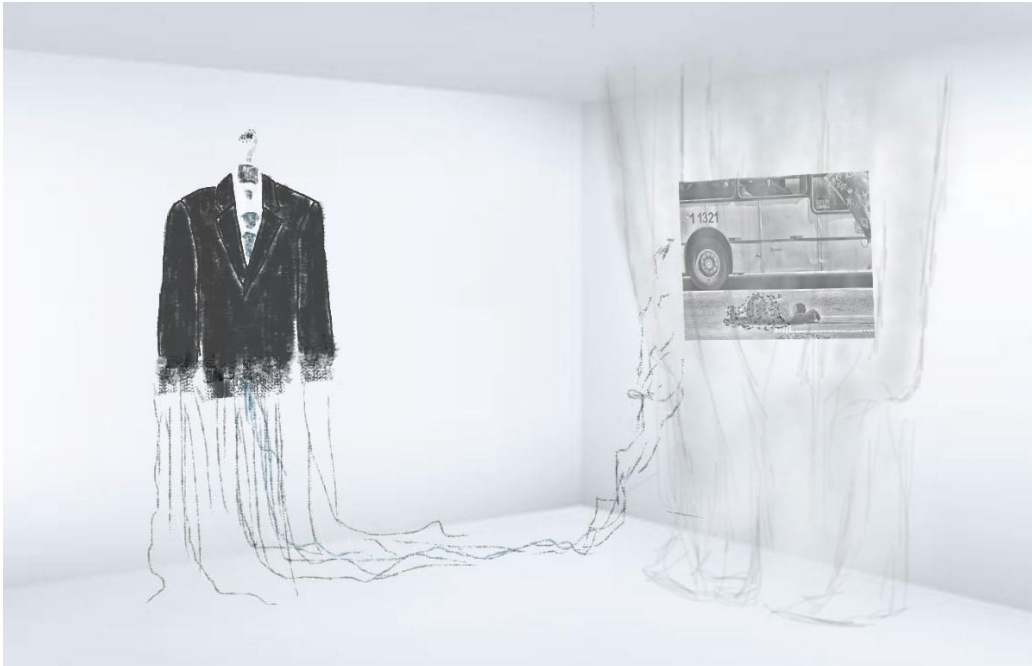


Image 17- Sketch of the installation initial idea

From this primary stage of visual development, after the initial presentation of concepts and visual research at the first pitch of the Final Animation Project course, very relevant subjects were raised to continue the work. The first suggestion was to increase the visual repertoire of images, seeking a way of visual representation that escaped established standards to reach viewers already saturated with sensationalist images. To this end, photographic research on the field in the city of Lisbon was initiated. This visual research in photography was necessary not only for visual development but also for an approximation to the theme and context of the work; it was necessary to look - slowly, with attention and care - at the often overlooked situations. Moreover, this looking called for precaution be careful not to treat the subject sensationalistically. Thus began a search for portraying vulnerability sensitively and responsibly, a search for an engaging but uncomfortable portrait of social inequalities, once again a dual intrinsic relationship.

Regarding the element of power, the main issues raised were concerning the scale of objects - power could be visually represented through an enlargement of the suit, for example. Nevertheless, the scale was also necessary to think about the quantity and distribution of material elements present in the three-dimensional space; since it was an installation, there were still many possibilities to expand the work, and each needed to be studied. There were also suggestions for using suits as a projection surface and

incorporating other objects that could be associated with power. At this time, it was also not clear how the animation would manifest itself, whether more abstractly and expressively or narrative and linear, which also required an investigative dive into the process of visual development. With this in mind, the visual research continued carrying out experiments and looking for solutions, following guidelines, suggestions and interpreting the feedback that emerged after presentations. We will not follow a precisely linear presentation of the entire visual investigative process here¹⁴, as it is considered more significant to focus on the most important experiments and discoveries for the visual development of the work.

Deepening the visual research of the *vulnerability* element, photographs take in Lisbon revealed some perceptions. First, the human presence, so important for the conceptual meaning, was more potent when people were absent from the photographs, and it was strengthened when human presence was indicated by other elements, such as personal objects, clothes and beds.



Image 18- Photographic visual research on vulnerability – authors photograph.

¹⁴ A more complete visual diary of the Project can be seen at https://www.canva.com/design/DAEofjd3P50/-CO8FTDBwEmluF_qGbEFUw/view



Image 19- Photographic visual research on vulnerability – authors photograph.



Image 20- Photographic visual research on vulnerability – authors photograph.

Realising how much the emptiness strengthened the concept of social invisibility, the visual development was direct towards creating silhouettes in photographs, which were filled by animation through the accumulation of frames. A specific animation was conceived to give shape/fill the silhouette, a walk cycle of different people, walking without ever stopping or interacting with the silhouette, representing the apathetic society.



Image 21- visual studies 1.

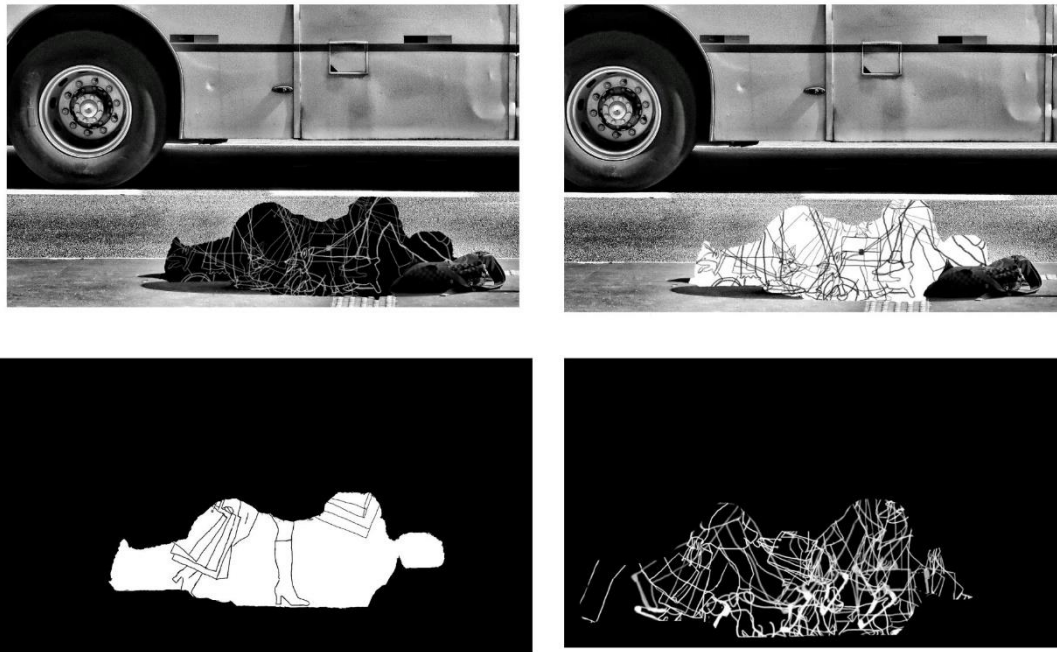


Image 22- Visual Studies 2.

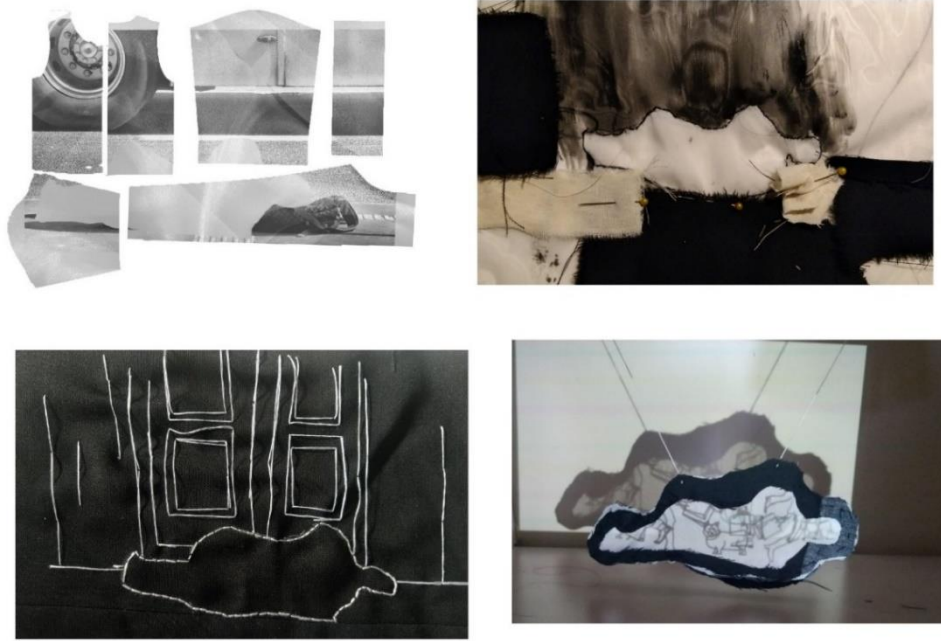


Image 23 - visual studies 3.

The idea of representing the silhouette evolved in a way that all the other elements present in the photographs were abandoned, transforming the element of vulnerability into an empty silhouette, which is only seen when the animation takes place.

Concerning the suit, the visual research was dedicated to exploring ways to deconstruct, dismantle, destroy the material, exploring the idea of partial and sequential deconstruction, with the suits - exposed in the three-dimensional space - unravelling little by little, until reaching their social opposite - the figure of invisibility.



Image 24- - visual studies 4.

This investigation of deconstruction was carried with photographic register, which allowed to perceive a very striking visual materiality, arousing interest in using this materiality in stop-motion animation produced at a more advanced stage of the project.



Image 25- visual studies 5.

Three-dimensional studies on the distribution of the elements in three-dimensional space were also made in this phase. The experiments used reduced-scale models to understand the behaviour of light and shadow, understand the occupation of space with objects, and study possibilities of projections, experimenting with panels in translucent fabrics and embroidered and painted fabrics. It proved quite challenging to understand the behaviour of animation in expanded space on the reduced scale of the mock-up. Still, it was of fundamental importance to guide the subsequent process in a real space.

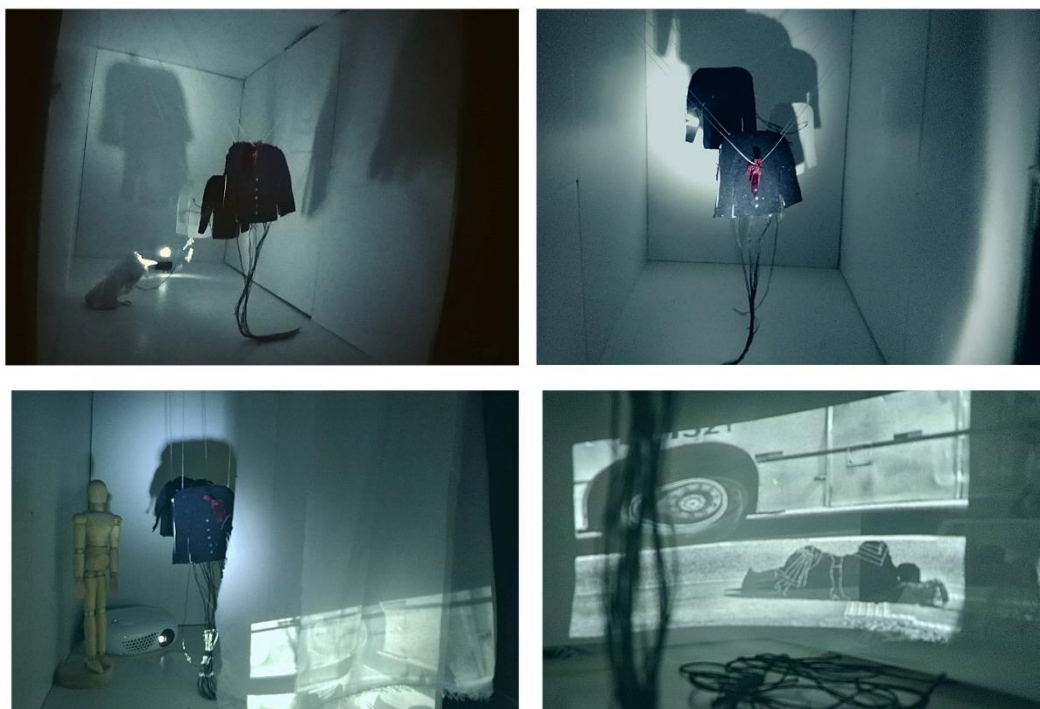


Image 27- visual studies 6.

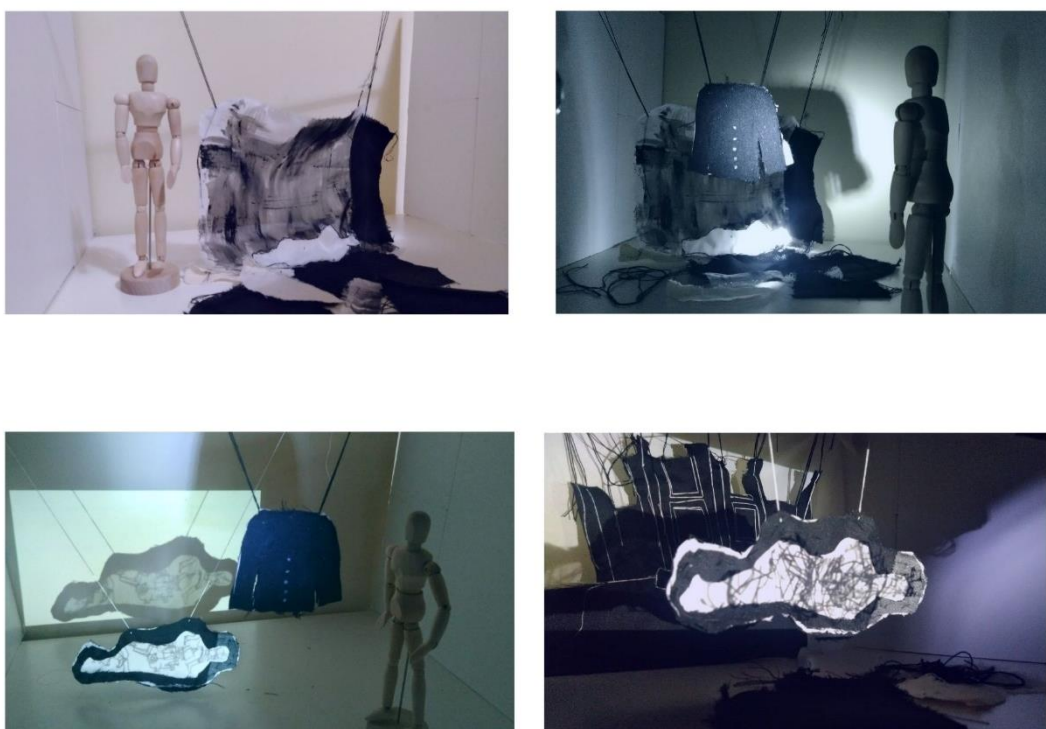


Image 26- visual studies 7

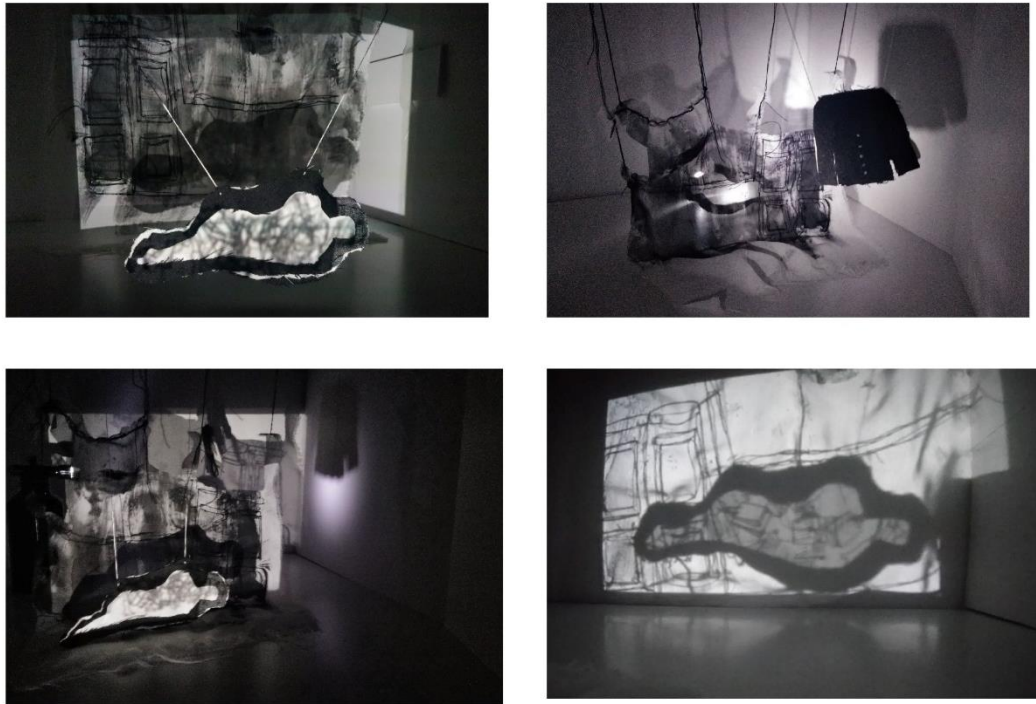


Image 28- visual studies 8.

Thus, the experiments and tests facilitated the selection and discarded some ideas that did not work, following others that emerged as results. At the end of the pre-production process, some routes for the next phase were defined:

- It was defined that the element of society would be symbolised through the walking cycle animation, in embroidery animation technique, connecting the three-dimensional materiality of textile materials with the viewer;
- It was defined that the walking cycle animation would be projected onto a person's silhouette and that this silhouette needed further visual development;
- this development should improve the silhouette to be understood better, could it be simplified, detaching itself from the photographs;
- The use of several suit jackets was defined, which should be presented falling apart little by little in a sequence;

- it was also possible to perceive the impact of light to amplify the feeling of oppression since the shadow had a grander scale and multiplied the number of suits in space – this should be considered and developed;
- It was decided to experiment with an embroidered panel that suggests a life-size building facade into which the silhouette fits and merge – and the use of lighting to amplify the shadow;
- It was defined the placement of the silhouette - and consequently the walking cycle animation - to be at the spectators' feet level, thus mixing the animation with the shadows of the visitors' feet;
- The use of a second video projection - with a stop-motion animation portraying the deconstruction of the suits - was also defined, needing to be further developed.

The visual development process was a long and essential part of the project. The experimentations in this phase were essential to developing the visuals of the work. They helped to connect the concepts with the expanded format, utilising animation as part of this process.

4.3- Practical development

Learning from the investigation process presented in the previous section, it was possible to start a more practical development on the real scale to understand the behaviour of the animation in an expanded format, looking for a final arrangement for the installation. Therefore, a new phase of experimentation, now more practice directed, started. Exploring the animation and the three-dimensional objects to understand how the results achieved in the mock-up would behave on a life-size scale, it was also time to start producing the animations that were an integral part of the work. This section will describe the process, dividing them between the animations process and the expansion into space (expanded animation).

4.3.1 - Animation's production process:

At the end of the experimentation process and the tests carried out on the model, it was decided to develop two different animations to occupy the space, a walk-cycle, of

walking, in frame-by-frame embroidery and one stop-motion animation - of the material deconstruction of the suits. The development processes of these two animations took place in quite different ways. Although using a non-traditional technique - embroidery- the walking cycle animation- followed a much more traditional production methodology, following steps common to cel-animation or 2d animation. In other words, it was elaborated using the sequence: storyboard > animatic > key-frames > intercalation. The differential in the process was in the final part. The steps of tracing and painting were replaced by embroidery, with frames embroidered one by one and then photographed sequentially, both on the right and reverse side, using the stop-motion animation software Dragon Frame. In addition, the cycle ends with the embroidery unravelling, having been necessary to animate in stop-motion the undoing of the stitches of the last frame of each sequence.¹⁵

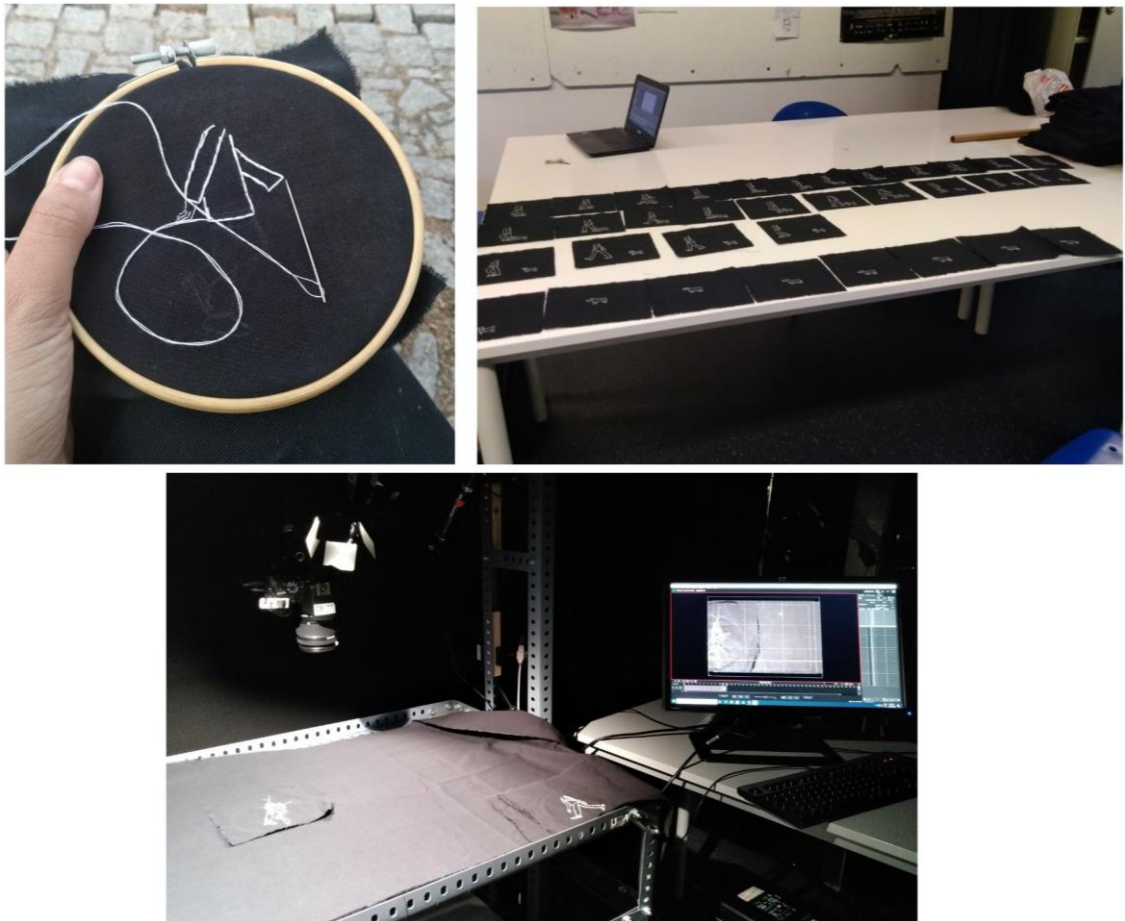


Image 29- embroidery animation process.

¹⁵ Full Animation available at: <https://youtu.be/z7NikAdaLU8>

In the post-production, editing allowed the animation to be framed by the silhouette in black; as the animation takes place and the walking feet pass, frames accumulate in the image, revealing the figure. Finally, the unravelling embroidery sequences were superimposed to end the cycle at the exact point where it restarts, creating an infinite cycle.

However, in the stop-motion animation¹⁶ - portraying the suit deconstruction – was a process that happened through a more experimental approach, through unexpected discoveries, exploring elements and allowing the discovery of exciting features as they were found in the materiality. For example, discovering a label inside one of the jackets with the words: “100% comfortable” triggered an entire sequence of actions to *disturb the comfortable*.



Image 30- Avesso (In) Visível stop-motion animation (still)

The animation explores the tactile materiality of fabrics, inner structures, padding and threads through a macro investigation of the materials, seeking to involve the spectator, entangling them in this world of textures and lines. The camera angles, the tension and strong movements, seek to reinforce the idea that the deconstruction of power

¹⁶ Full animation available at: <https://youtu.be/x4qjoPrBxYc>

is necessary to uncover the *avesso*; the materials are ripped and destroyed as a metaphor. According to Taberham (2019), in experimental animation, “Instead of pre-planning a film and then executing that plan in the same manner as a commercial film, the entire act of creation may be a process of discovery” (Taberham, 2019, p.24). Without a pre-defined plan, this free experiment happened in this animation process, in which the final format was built through the animation process. Even the post-production editing followed a more experimental approach, seeking to reinforce the idea/feeling of the animation.

Another essential element developed during the post-production part of the two animations was the soundtrack that accompanies each of them. In the walking cycle, the sound was developed to create an ambience. The internal exhibition space connects with the external space of the city represented in the installation by a soundscape, which works as a background. In the stop-motion animation, the sound was elaborated to accompany and intensify the movements. The sound is necessary to reinforce the idea of destruction and violation of materials, and it is mainly composed of foleys. This difference between the soundtracks also allows a better fusion between the sounds in the expanded space.

4.3.2 - Expanded into space process:

Analysing the experiments realised in the mock-up and discussing strategies for experimentation with my supervisor allowed us to choose some ideas to test in the full size, human-scale space; thus, a phase of tests in a room in the university began. First, it was necessary to understand how the distribution of suits would occupy the space and its relationship to light and shadow. Also reproduced in full scale were the embroidered panel of the city's façade and the silhouette made of translucent fabric tested in the mock-up.

However, when exposing them in the expanded space, together with the animations, both the panel and the silhouette seemed dislocated and not very functional. This made us return to the visual research carried out with the photographs on the previous phases, analysing the photographs, a constant presence was noticed: the objects carried by the homeless people, a sign, and a hint that someone lives in that doorway or sidewalk, even if we cannot see them.



Image 31- space investigation.

It was then decided to try to recreate such material evidence, transporting it into the exhibition space. Moreover, removing these objects from their commonplace causes a discontinuity, intending to provoke some strangeness to the spectator in seen the objects arranged in such a familiar form but in an unexpected place.

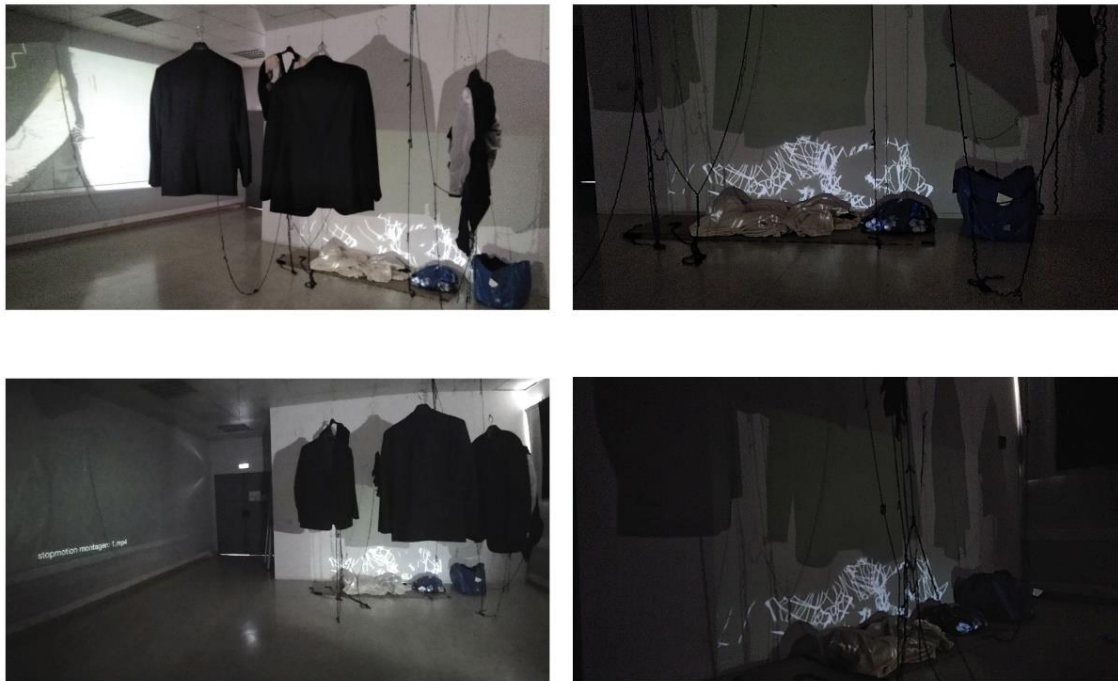


Image 32- space investigation 2.

The configuration of the installation format that was decided upon in this second phase of tests and experimentations within the installation context:

- two animation projections – one walking cycle in embroidery animation and one stop-motion animation of suits being deconstruct;
- suits hanging from the ceiling in different phases of deconstruction; with loose threads and fabrics hanging from the suits into the space;
- a cardboard box covered with textile materials and a bag arranged in a way that looked like an improvised bed on a sidewalk;

Thus, the embroidery animation, projected onto the exposed objects, highlights the almost invisible vulnerability represented by them. On the opposite side, the stop-motion animation acts to deconstruct, destroy, and disturb the power represented by the suit. Ultimately, between the two animations are the suits occupying the middle space, presented in several stages of deconstruction connecting the animations to the three-dimensional space. This installation format guided the projects to its first public exhibition that aimed to understand how the installation would behave in an actual exhibition space and how it would interact with the viewers, a process that will be further detailed and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 - Assemble, Reception and Promotion.

This chapter is dedicated to discussing the public exhibitions of the Avesso (In)Visible project, pointing out the challenges, solutions, and modifications that were carried out through the exhibitions and how the project was received. In addition, the last section of the chapter discusses the particularities of expanded animation in the process of promoting and distributing the work analysing the distribution and promotion experience of the Avesso (In)Visível project.

5.1 – The first exhibition; Mostra Colheitas – Montemor-o-Novo.

The first public exhibition of the Avesso (In)Visível project took place in October of 2020 at the Mostra Colheitas. An event of animated film exhibition dedicated to presenting works developed within the scope of the academic training project at Cooperativa Estórias em Movimento, with the partnership of Montemor-o-Novo municipality, Lusófona University, Évora University and the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre. The one-day event took place at the Curvo Semedo Cineteatro. It featured a short film screening program, presentations of film projects in progress and the exhibition of the installation Avesso (In)Visível. The event is aimed at the city's general public and the academic community of the participating universities, having visitors from different backgrounds.

The space for the installation was a dance theatre/performance room, with a high black ceiling and floor, with blackout curtains covering all the windows and walls and a fixed projection screen. A common aspect of installations is that they need adjustments and changes according to the exhibition space. In the case of this space, the installation elements would not fill the entire environment, and as a choice, its layout was designed to manage the flow of people walking through the objects exposed in blocks. The entry was covered with a panel of different fabrics to narrow the room's entrance and direct the visitor to the path where the elements were displayed.

The suits are staged in a block, at the entrance of the path to the space. Behind the suits blocks are the projection of the silhouette and the textile materials that simulate an improvised bed, connecting to the suits through threads and fabrics; the third visual block,

in the background, is the stop-motion animation of the suit's deconstruction, projected on the big screen.¹⁷



Image 33- Register of the installation at Mostra Colheitas (1)



Image 34- - Register of the installation at Mostra Colheitas (2)

¹⁷ The video register of the installation can be seen at <https://youtu.be/MNglWs9Zt3E>



Image 35- Register of the installation at Mostra Colheitas (3)

Rey (2002, p. 134) states that in research in visual arts, work must always be completed by a text - written or spoken - since the comprehension of the work goes through the verbal understanding. Therefore, a text presenting the project was developed to go along with the installation exhibition. This text was introduced through an exhibition flyer (further details on the flyer, dissemination and promotion of the work will be discussed in topic 5.3). The flyer also contained a link to a form that collects feedback on the exhibition experience to understand the work's public reception. Besides the online form, feedback was also received during the exhibition through conversations and later discussions with professors in the Final Animation course presentations.

The feedback received reflected the impact of specific characteristics of space on the interpretation of the work. Most of the feedback highlighted the stop-motion animation's impact. At the same time, the silhouette's embroidery animation was less impacting, with the comprehension of the silhouette figure being hard to interpret. Before reading the presentation text and proposal of the work, interpretations varied; some considered it to be a criticism of the fashion industry or the textile industry. In contrast, others interpreted it as criticizing social uniformity and our masks, even though we are all different behind these facades (avesso).

According to Taberham (2019), when experiencing an experimental animation, "The goal isn't to unravel the hidden meaning set up by the artist, but rather responds to the experience imaginatively, as if the work was a mirror reflecting back what the spectator brings to the experience." (Taberham, 2019, p.25), that is, it is natural, and it is expected that different interpretations and emerge when the work is exposed to the public, however, despite knowing the plurality of possible interpretations and how this is natural to art and experimental animation - and therefore, natural in the animations presented in the installation format - it was noticed with this first exhibition experience that even after reading about the project, it was still difficult for the spectator to draw relationships with the original concept of the work.

By not being able to express the true intentions of the work, some concepts ended up losing strength, especially the idea of making the invisible visible, since the element of vulnerability - represented by the silhouette and the projection of the animation in embroidery - sometimes went unnoticed, or when noticed it was difficult to interpret. The way the elements were organized in space made it difficult to perceive the relationship between power and its opposite. Although other conceptual layers can be added based on the different interpretations, realizing such flaws allowed revisions, formulating changes and redirecting the following exhibitions of the work. Among the changes considered necessary to increase the communication strength of the concepts were:

- exploring a greater integration between the elements - utilizing the textile materials themselves for this;
- balance the visual weight of the elements and their distribution in space, avoiding that one animation took so much attention over the other elements;
- looking for a smaller exhibition space, with easier access to the ceiling/walls, which would facilitate the logistical aspect of assembly and influence the feeling of proximity between the spectator and the work;
- Work with the three-dimensional materials to clarify the silhouette animation as a silhouette of a person.

Also, some minor changes regarding the animation cycles and the sound were needed to contribute to the animations' fluidity with three-dimensional elements. The feedback received, and the experience gained through the assembly in this first public

exhibition was fundamental to continue the artistic investigations of the project. It was possible to see how much impact the space and how the elements are displayed to convey the desired concepts. It also made it possible to perceive the new life that the work gains when meeting the public as a fundamental aspect of animation's artistic production in the installation format.

5.2 – The second exhibition: Over&Out 2021.

The second assembly and exhibition of the project took place between the 12th and 16th of July 2021, at the Over&Out event of Universidade Lusófona. The exhibition took place at Palácio Vimoso, in Lisbon, featuring works by students from various courses of the Department of Cinema and Media Arts, and was open for visitation by invitation. Thus, a large part of the visiting public was part of the academic community or family and friends of the students.

Regarding the space, for the exhibition of the Avesso (In)Visible project, it was possible to choose one of the rooms in the palace that best suited the needs understood from the previous experience: a smaller room with white walls and ceilings, with lower height, facilitating the assembly and distribution of the elements.



Image 36- Over & Out installation space.

Different tests were carried out in the allocation of objects and ways to project the animations. Specific characteristics of space helped to guide the distribution of the elements; a nook next to the window was chosen as a space for the element of vulnerability, with the cardboard and textile materials arranged in an organized manner, with the embroidery walking cycle animation projected over it. In the opposite corner, the stop-motion projection was intended to break the rectangular shape, projected between two walls and the ceiling. The projection lens was also masked to smooth the edges, better blending with the space. The suits hang from the ceiling, filling the entire space. As a form to contribute to the connection between the elements, threads were distributed connecting walls, ceiling, and objects. The threads also had a practical function: being used to hang the deconstructed suits.¹⁸

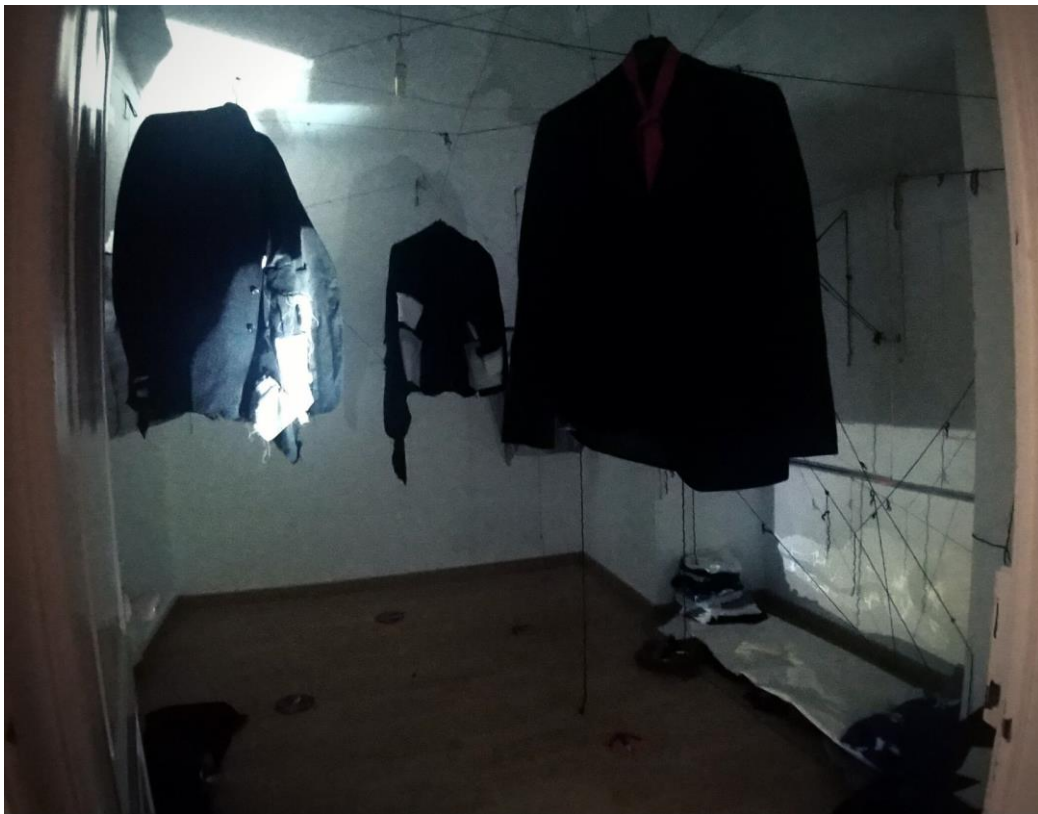


Image 37- Register of the installation at Over&Out (2)

¹⁸ The video register of the installation can be seen at <https://youtu.be/0OKx-Jlw6zA> and <https://youtu.be/wvFD-KTk5c>



Image 38- Register of the installation at Over&Out (2)



Image 39- Register of the installation at Over&Out (3)

The installation continued to be accompanied by the presentation text of the work and the form for feedback. From the feedback and observation of the visits, the main differences and characteristics noted in this second exhibition were:

- the stop-motion projection angle makes us feel more inside of the animation because it occupies three surfaces of the space

- The feeling of superiority and power of the stop-motion animation- having the projection shifted to the upper part of the room above the vulnerability represented by the silhouette on the ground.
- Shadows and threads are more present, interconnecting the elements and forming a uniform space.
- The tighter and more crowded space sometimes discourages people from walking through the elements, causing more claustrophobic sensations than those intended by the work, deviating from its original meaning.
- Due to the way the elements were distributed, the suit coats also receive light from the projection, forming a "screen", mixing the physical material with the material represented in the animation.
- Compared to the first exhibition, the space was more filled and uniform, with better balanced visual elements. Furthermore, the embroidery animation, despite being more discreet than stop-motion animation, was no longer unnoticed.

Although in this second experience, the difference between vulnerability and power was more noticeable, the presence of power as something big and strong, compared to other elements, did not materialize so well, with the environment of "avesso" being more perceived. This is the most important discovery, the inability of the installation to communicate the work's primary intention, the domination of the powerful over the vulnerable using the iconography of the suit requires a reassessment of elements and their layout in a future exhibition - either through the arrangement of suits or by creating new objects and animations that reinforce the concept of power within the installation. In addition, another essential element to be better worked on is the sound of animations. When in space, they are received very separately and not perceived as very involving, making it difficult to immerse the viewer in space, being ideal the use of surrounding sound or strategic placement of additional speakers. Some discoveries of this experience, as the projection on the suits, were a path for further investigations, recovery of past experiments, and reassessment of discard materials or ideas were also some of the possibilities to reinforce the concepts of the work in future exhibitions.

5.3 – Thesis defence Installation.

The third public exhibition of the project was required for the examination process "the defence" of this work in October 2021.¹⁹ This section is a subsequent addition to the presentation and delivery of the dissertation, included only in the final version.

Aiming at the best possible development for this project in the final assembly for the defence was taken as a starting point the previous exhibition experiences and the feedback received on both occasions. After the past experiences, the element of vulnerability and the *avesso* were considered well resolved, while the biggest challenge to solve was the need to make the element of Power more visible and clearer. For that some changes were made:

- A new space was chosen in order to enlarge the circulation space, but also to amplify the shadows reflected in the space. Creating unity as a whole and amplifying power through the shadows.
- A new animation was inserted – a data infographic animation developed in early stages of the project was re-visited and edited to be added to this new assembly. This was made to clarify the unequal economic society and how power influences and creates this.
- The idea of projection in the suit was resumed, as the inside of a suit was chosen as the projection screen for the new infographic animation.
- This new projection surface also reinforced the need to rearrange the suits in space so that they would form more sculptural groups, avoiding a dispersion that seemed careless or unplanned.
- The suits were moulded with wire to have a more structured presence.
- New lights were added to reinforce shadows, creating both a "conspiratorial circle of power" and a looming, imposing and enlarged presence in the shadows of the suits projected onto the ceiling.

¹⁹ The video register of the installation can be seen at <https://youtu.be/EMXQQZReNgQ>



Image 42- Register of the installation at the thesis defence.



Image 41- - Register of the installation at the thesis defence (2)



Image 40- Register of the installation at the thesis defence (3).

With these changes, the element of power became more present, clarifying the idea of duality between power and vulnerability intended with the installation. The circulation space also allowed a better observation of all the elements of the installation from different angles. The arrangement of the suits and the way the light was worked amplified the shadows creating a more immersive environment. However, the sound immersion in space were missing. This was also due to logistical and time issues that prevented further experimentation on sound, but which will be taken into account in future exhibitions. Another important point to be considered is the number of visitors at the installation at the same time, since it was suggested that a more intimate and individual space can amplify the feeling of confrontation proposed by the installation.

The way each space influences the format of the installations, and the different interpretations of public reception are essential to the research investigation in a work of this nature. Each time the work is assembled is a process of discovery and possibility to enrich the project and the concepts that it holds; and more than influence this project itself, it served as a learning process for my future artistic investigations on installation animations

5.4 - Promotion and distribution of the work.

According to the lessons learnt in two courses that are part of the Animation Arts Masters Course at Lusófona University, titled “Production” and “Promotion Strategies”, the first actions concerning the distribution and promotion of work were developed in the pre-production phase. A project dossier was developed to present the work, its motivations, and details the installation elements. This document format helps communicate the work's ideas for the possible exhibition events for which the work is applied; the dossier also informs the logistical needs of space, equipment, and staff necessary for the installation assembly and exhibition. In the production phase, a promotional strategy was developing a flyer to accompany the installation (Appendix 1). As part of the registration and subsequent dissemination, photos and videos of the exhibitions were taken; however, videos and registration photos do not fully reflect the

feeling of being present in the space. Therefore, on the project's page on Instagram²⁰, in addition to the visual record of the installations, other images and texts are used to instigate sensations closer to those desired by the concept. The form of online dissemination through a social network was chosen for its ease of access, and easy dissemination as the platform allows for quick sharing between users, which expands the possibilities of disseminating the work. However, using only a social network as a form of promotion of the work is limited. Thus, it intends to create a page dedicated to the project in an online portfolio site, using the promotional materials already developed and the installation registration in all its public exhibitions to register the work formally.

The distribution and promotion of animation in installation format differ significantly from the promotion and distribution of animated films. While nowadays films circulate quickly through a digital file, varying, only sometimes, in screen type/format of projection, an animation installation has a new version in each assembly and exhibition. Even when only minor changes in the arrangement or shape of the objects happen, each space carries information that influences the appreciation and interpretation of the work, being a fluid work in constant evolution.

Logistically, it is also more complex to distribute, requiring an effort to assemble, build and adjust each exhibition, dealing with the particular challenges of each space. Furthermore, it is logistically simpler for festivals and events to organize film screening sessions than installation screenings once it demands more space and equipment. These requirements also make it difficult for an animation installation to be displayed permanently - whereas a movie can be uploaded online and available for access easily, almost universally.

It is important to emphasize these differences and particularities of animation in an installation format. It influences its form of distribution and the promotion and dissemination of the work and should be considered in artistic production and research; some of the production, promotion and distribution tasks were planned to facilitate the work circulation, reinforcing the concepts in the Avesso (In)Visível project: to highlight the political and socio-economic challenges in society when we continue to ignore its manifestation in reality.

²⁰ [@avesso invisivel](#)

CONCLUSION

The research carried out in the production process of the installation Avesso (In)Visível allows us to perceive the multiple characteristics of animation and its relationship with the visual arts through expanded animation. As a result of the literature review was possible to see that experimental and expanded animation were, from the beginning, forms and languages chosen by animators seeking a more artistic expression outside the commercial animation circuit. This parameter shift also reflects contemporary artistic practices that use embroidery because of its subversive character. Experimental and expanded animations are also related to how embroidery has been used in contemporary artistic practice - removing it from its traditionally domestic and feminine context and reframing it as a technique of aesthetic rupture.

It was also possible to observe an increase in the production of animations using craft techniques due to the particular characteristics linked to this aesthetic: authenticity, materiality and memory. Concerning embroidery animations, it was possible to notice that animators and artists have used the technique in recent years in different parts of the world, with aesthetics and procedures that can be quite different, with experiments both with hand embroidery as well as machine embroidery and its equipment. This animation varies in production processes, some being more linked to traditional frame-by-frame animation and others more suited to stop-motion animation. Another characteristic of craft animation that seems to stand out is the production record and sharing this making-of, being part of its fascination. Among the characteristics of embroidery, some that usually stand out as reasons of choice for animators are the visual variety that can be achieved by the technique and the close relationship between artist and work; with the artist choosing a more hand-made technique to work in subjects that are more subjective or particular to them.

Regarding the production of the Avesso (In)Visível installation, the development process of a large-scale animation installation proved to be quite challenging, especially concerning production planning, having to take into account not only the production of animations but also the occupation of three-dimensional space. Still, the installation format adds to the project concept as relationships are built between work and viewer in the space. In addition, to explore the tactile materiality of textile materials in the animation process and in the three-dimensional space where all the elements are

connected. It was also possible to see how different spaces influence the assembly and the appreciation of the elements. The installation takes on a new form with each assembly, adding new layers from tutorial feedback and the audience's interpretations. The different findings discovered through this research, both in terms of theoretical knowledge and in experiences carried out at the level of animation and installation, contribute to the development of artistic practices interested in exploring the aesthetics of craft, textile materiality and animation. Discovering paths of investigation through the review and analysis of specific works that use craft techniques and textile materials in animations, especially in expanded animations. It is hoped by bringing together these contextual, theoretical, and creative threads that, as an artist and author, I have managed to communicate the advantages of expanded animation in the presentation of social and economic inequality and in some way, this will provide much-needed visibility, and discussion point, of contemporary society.

The *avesso*, as the most chaotic part of embroidery, has always fascinated me. So it was with the development process of this work, the animation, with a more experimental approach, is made of many discoveries, unpredictability's, mistakes that become successes. While expanded animation in an installation form carries a new challenge each time it is assembled, a new space adds to the work and forces it to adapt to its limitations, adding new stitches and knots to support it. That is also the nature of the learning process: not very linear, quite chaotic, made out of mistakes, sewn through layers, weaved and knotted entwining and transforming us. Learning is a process that twist us and yet make us see the beauty of the *avesso*. It is about tangling ourselves in new threads to become something else, something more.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Buchan, S. (2018). The Animated Female Body, Feminism(s) and ‘Mushi.’ In V. Smith & N. Hamlyn (Eds.), *Experimental and Expanded Animation: New Perspectives and Practices (Experimental Film and Artists’ Moving Image)* (1st ed. 2018 ed., pp. 203–229).
- Hampton, C. (2019, December 13th). WILLIAM KENTRIDGE: THE WORLD STAGE OF “MORE SWEETLY PLAY THE DANCE.” *National Gallery of Canada Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.gallery.ca>
- Harris, M., Husbands, L., & Taberham, P. (2019). *Experimental Animation: From analogue to digital*. Routledge.
- Hosea, B. (2018). Siting Animation: The Affect of Place. In V. Smith & N. Hamlyn (Eds.), *Experimental and Expanded Animation: New Perspectives and Practices (Experimental Film and Artists’ Moving Image)* (1st ed. 2018 ed pp. 257–278).
- Hosea B. (2019) Made by Hand. In: Ruddell C., Ward P. (eds) *The Crafty Animator*. Palgrave Animation. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13943-8_2
- Hunter, C. (2019). *Threads of Life: A History of The World Through the Eye of a Needle*. Abrams Press.
- Husbands, L. (2016). “Craft’s Critique: Artisanal Animation in the Digital Age.” Animate Projects. http://animateprojectsarchive.org/writing/essays/1_husbands_2.
- Husbands L. (2019) Craft as Critique in Experimental Animation. In: Ruddell C., Ward P. (eds) *The Crafty Animator*. Palgrave Animation. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13943-8_3
- Jobson, C. (14 of July 2015) Fantastic Embroidered Zoetrope Animations on Turntables by Elliot Schultz. *Colossal*. Available at: <https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2015/07/fantastic-embroidered-zoetrope-animations-on-turntables-by-elliott-schultz/>.

- Leslie, C. (2007). *Needlework through history*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- MacKinnon C. (2019) Autobiography and Authenticity in Stop-Motion Animation. In: Ruddell C., Ward P. (eds) *The Crafty Animator*. Palgrave Animation. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13943-8_5
- Magalhães M. (2015) *Cartilha Anima Escola : técnicas de animação para professores e alunos*. Rio de Janeiro. Ed: IDEIA - Instituto de Desenvolvimento, Estudo e Integração pela Animação.
- Parker, R. (1996). *The subversive stitch: embroidery and the making of the feminine* (2nd ed.). BPC Books Ltd.
- Paulino, Rosana.(2013) *Assentamento* [exhibition educational material]. Americana: Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Americana. Available at: <http://www.rosanapaulino.com.br/blog/tag/assentamento/>
- Prain, L. (2011) *Hoopla: The Art of Unexpected Embroidery*. Vancouver. Ed: Arsenal Pulppress.
- Schultz, E. (2016) *Making Animal Collective's Animated Slipmat: Insights into the design of stroboscopic discs*. Available at: <https://medium.com/@elliotschultz/making-of-animal-collective-s-animated-slipmat-ac3acb104863>.
- Simoni, A. P. C. (2007). Regina Gomide Graz: modernismo, arte têxtil e relações de gênero no Brasil. [Regina Gomide Graz: modernism, textile art and gender relations] *Revista Do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*. 0(45), 87–202. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-901x.v0i45p87-106>
- Simioni, A. P.C (2010). Bordado e transgressão : questões de gênero na arte de Rosana Paulino e Rosana Palazyan.[Embroidery and transgression: gender questions in the art of Rosana Paulino e Rosana Palazyan] *Revista Proa*, 01(2), 1–20.
- Smith, V., & Hamlyn, N. (2018). *Experimental & expanded animation* (V. Smith & N. Hamlyn (eds.)).

Uroskie, A. V. (2014). *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art* (Illustrated ed.).

Weldon, C. (2015) 3 keys for understanding and appreciating pinscreen animation.

From: <https://blog.nfb.ca/blog/2015/02/12/pinscreen-animation-3-keys/>. Access in 04/02/2019.

Taberham, P. (2019). IT IS ALIVE IF YOU ARE Defining experimental animation

[Epub]. In M. Harris, L. Husbands, & P. Taberham (Eds.), *Experimental Animation: From analogue to digital* (1st ed., pp. 17–36).

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315203430>

Torre, D & Torre, L (2019). MATERIALITY, EXPERIMENTAL PROCESS AND

ANIMATED IDENTITY [Epub]. In M. Harris, L. Husbands, & P. Taberham (Eds.), *Experimental Animation: From analogue to digital* (1st ed., pp. 17–36).

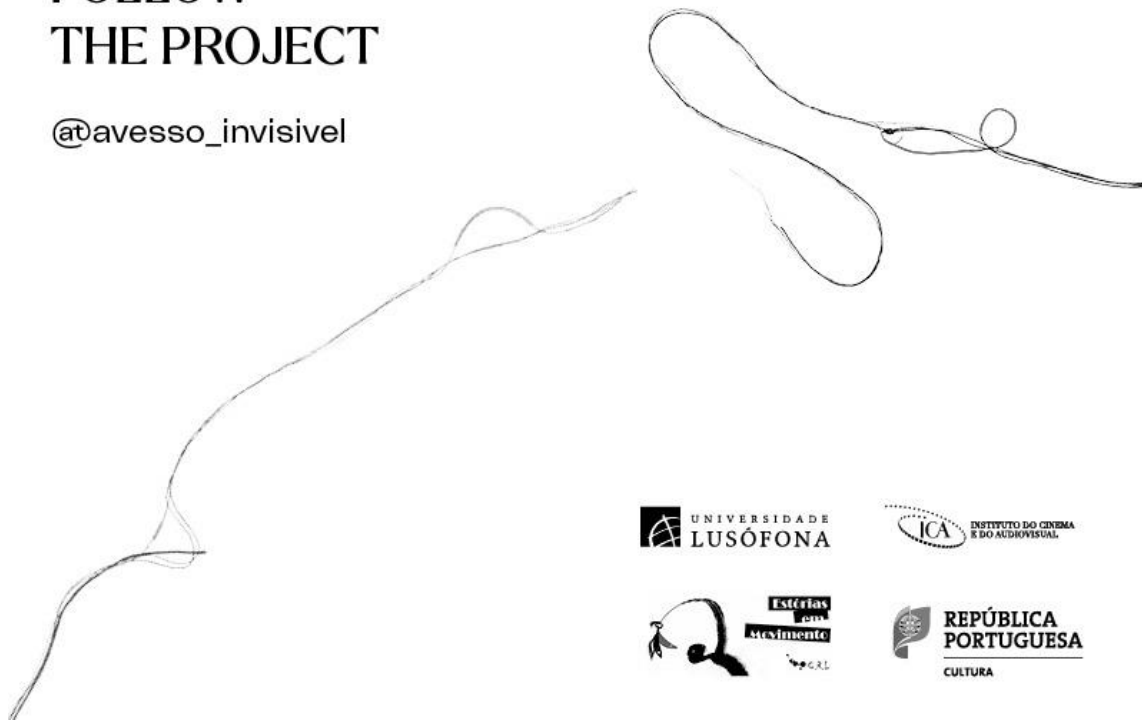
https://doi.org/10.4324/978131520343_0

APPENDIX I – Exhibition Folder.


AVES
SO
(IN)VISÍVEL

FOLLOW
THE PROJECT

@avesso_invisivel



ABOUT THE PROJECT:

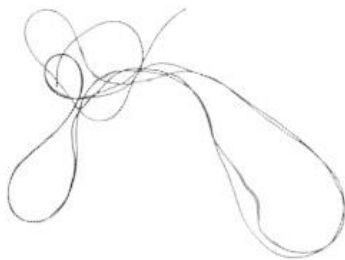


We witness dehumanization on a daily basis, but we do not truly see it. In a hurry we walk by, passing without noticing the people sleeping on the streets and sidewalks, distracted by our own lives, we don't even lift our eyes from our phones. Apathetic, we watch the growing numbers of social inequality become more and more abstract, as leaders perpetuate a network that benefits the permanence of power, social and economic, for those already at the top.

How to lead to a reflection on social inequalities in a society saturated with numerical facts, inundated with alarming news and increasingly indifferent to the flood of sensationalist images seen every day? How to make the invisible visible again?

The backside of the embroidery, in Portuguese, is called *avesso*, but the word has multiple meanings – *avesso* also means the reverse, twisted, contrary, the bad or wrong. The *avesso*, in embroidery, is the side that remains invisible, while producing an imperfect reflection of the image. The *avesso* of economic and social power also generates a reflection on society that remains hidden among tangles of information, invisible.

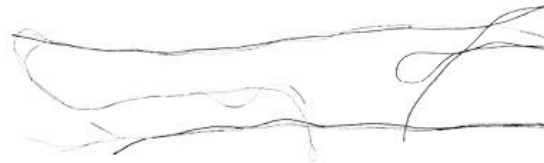
The installation *Avesso (In)visível* aims to show the inexorable relationship between power and its fragile and imperfect *avesso*, an environment of confrontation, which instigates a reflection on the roles of power within an unequal society.



This installation is part of the final Master's project in Animation Arts at Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias, with supervision of Professor Natalie Woolf – PhD(RCA)

FEEDBACK

We appreciate your visit to the installation. Help the *Avesso (In)Visível* evolve as a project submitting your impressions and feedbacks to the artist. Access the participation form through from the QR Code below:



AUTHORSHIP



Samira Poffo is a visual artist and art educator who graduated in Visual Arts at the Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina, Brazil. Currently Master's Student in Animation Arts at Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias, Lisbon, Portugal. Researching connections between art, animation and education.