

CONTRA|O|TEMPO RESIDENCIES

# AS CANÇÕES QUE CANTAMOS CONTRA OS MUROS QUE LIMPAMOS

THE SONGS WE SING  
AGAINST THE WALLS  
WE CLEAN

*Catarina Vieira*  
*Aixa Figini*  
*Josefa Pereira*

21<sup>ST</sup> OF JUNE –  
18<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY 2021  
Sala Brincante,  
Bonifrates,  
College of Arts,  
Coimbra

LINHA  
de FUGA



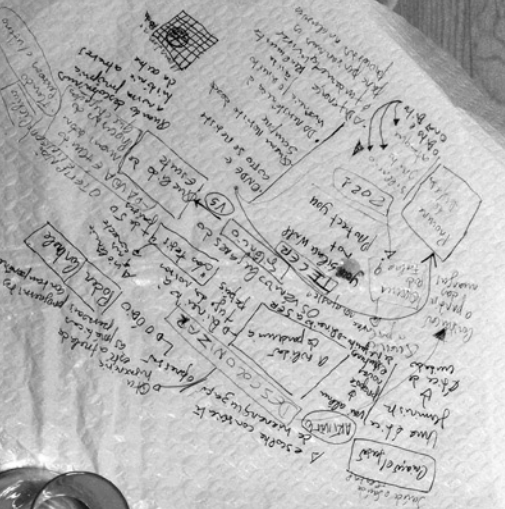
**O que é Polígrafo?**  
 É um instrumento que mede a atividade elétrica da pele (resposta galvânica) em resposta a perguntas.

**Que é o teste de verdade?**  
 É o teste de verdade, onde o sujeito responde a perguntas e a resposta é avaliada.

**Arte**  
 Arte é a expressão da criatividade humana.

**Arte e Polígrafo**  
 Arte e Polígrafo são dois campos que se relacionam.

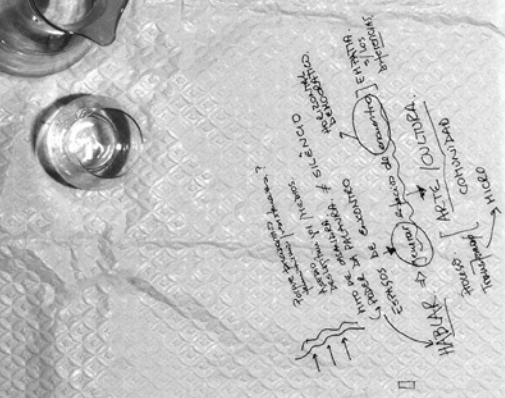
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# LET US SING WHAT WE HAVE NOT SUNG

How the voice and the collective can express a force

*Catarina Saraiva and Marta Rodrigues, from texts by the artist and interviews with the artistic team*

This is a creation for a public space, around the figure of a women's choir. The creation process by Catarina Vieira, in collaboration with Aixa Figini and Josefa Pereira, took place between 21st June and 18th July in several spaces in Coimbra (Sala Brincante d'A Cena Lusófona, Bonifrates and Colégio das Artes). It included a voice and movement workshop in which 8 local women participated with the intention of experimenting the practices developed in a public space. The creators were interested in exploring the aesthetic and political potential around the figure of the choir — a collective of voices that negotiate their anonymity and singularity in an effort to sustain an ephemeral harmony together. They were also interested in the relationship

between voice, body and fragility, deconstructing the belief that the achievement of visibility, of occupation, of contamination must be associated with an idea of strength, of power, of clarity. What is a vulnerable voice? Can vulnerability contaminate? Could there be other ways of being present, of claiming a place? The scenic and choreographic research focused on this relationship between intimate and public space, seeking to activate the landscape as a resonance box, where voices, bodies and movements map and amplify the vulnerability that is already in us, between us and in the world. Spreading from body to body, from the body to the architecture, from the wall to the voice, from the memory to the gesture, from the gesture to the desire for the future.



In the workshop they surveyed, through movement, singing and writing practices, the silenced words. If, as Audre Lorde said, “your silence will not protect you”, then maybe it is better to sing. To challenge the imposition of this silence together, with songs coming from an urgent need to name what bothers us, is what moves us.

This is a feminist artistic gesture with a great activist component, which aims to create a collective space for listening and tuning in to the voices, the emotions, the biographies of each woman who participated. It interested them to work exclusively with women, because these voices have centuries of silencing. What repertoire of songs could each of them bring? Songs of outrage, of complaint, of anger, of transformation. What would be the collective repertoire that our meeting could generate? What words can we create together? What chorus? What melodies are inscribed in the different parts of our bodies? How can we move

them so that they finally begin to speak and sing? The melodies that catch our ear and that will weave the invisible networks that we need to build.

## What was it like in Coimbra?

It was fundamental, at this point in the very early process, to work on questions and map out exercises that each of the artists brought with them. By working transversally, something that comes from the form and trajectory of each one of them, they often answered or practiced according to their own training (sound for Aixa, movement for Josefa and words for Catarina) which, naturally, made the process very intertwined. One of the tools they brought, and worked on in Coimbra, came from Audre Lorde’s book “Sister Outsider”<sup>1</sup> and her text on the power of

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1 LORDE, Audre; *Uses of the Erotic: the erotic as a power*, in “Sister Outsider” ed. Crossing Press, 1984

the erotic: "When I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an affirmation of the vital force of women; of that empowered creative energy, whose knowledge and whose application we now claim in our language, our history, our dance, our loves, our work, our lives." They sought to activate, in the group of women, this idea of a vital force that is activated by each one within herself, like a dynamo.

In the first two weeks the artists exercised this question and learned a lot from this encounter and dialogue. This project, being on the fertile border between activism and artistic work, presented the team with several questions, namely the need for formal choices of the materials created with the participants, in order to construct an artistic object. Furthermore, the research also sought to broaden the spectrum of the developed practices, problematizing the boundaries of concepts such as ritual / therapy / activism. This questioning allowed the team to realize that the project positions itself in dialogue with these borders, but it mostly activates artistic practices and tools.

One of the main objectives of this residency was also to generate a place for meetings and divergencies, because according to Catarina, there is always divergency in a meeting and it would be important to create a context in which the meeting between the participating women could be very open. According to her, it was quite interesting to work with people who have different experiences, in terms of response, of body and voice practice, of ethical issues even; to

realize how much one can ask of *savoir faire*, of execution, and how important the place of this meeting involves the ethical issue. It was her intention, by bringing artistic practices that have a goal, or that have a doing, that have different logics from the everyday, to invite people to leave a known place, to chart unknown territories, considering that this is often what creates changes. She is very interested in that dialogue, that tension.

For Catarina, there was a pivotal moment in the workshop that provoked a change in the implication and presence of all the women. It was when the word transformation was brought up and each one was invited to take the workshop space as a real space of transformation for the changes each one needed: "I need this, I am doing this today". It was an attempt to generate autonomy in the participants, since when each one takes responsibility for the way she wants and is able to be present in the group, this inevitably generates transformation in the collective space.

The purpose of this residence was a final presentation. Due to sanitary restrictions, this presentation changed from an invitation open to the general public to a rehearsal with guests, held in the Cloisters of the Colégio das Artes. For Aixa, the first fifteen days of work with her colleagues was the space to imagine artistic practices with the Other that they did not know, in order, in the following fifteen days, to meet with the Other, with its limitations and potentialities, with the intention of finding something strong, thinking of

the spectator, of the ones out of this picture, but representing her work and be significant for women participating, who can appropriate the same work.

Thus, the preparation of the presentation consisted in selecting places, practices that had been repeated many times, with the intention of giving a place of security to those who are going to perform, and, in parallel, to use practices that had to do with dramaturgical axes present from the beginning. The idea of amplification, the idea of support and a question: "How to tell the story, how to create discourse? They consider that they are going to include this dramaturgy in the work phase they are in, still very much open: sometimes doing a montage from the point of view of artistic making, thinking spatially where each practice makes more sense. Sometimes understanding if sonically they are coming from a voice that goes directly from breathing to the word; a dramaturgy of making rather than a very solid conceptual narrative line which they will continue to work on, after this residency. Josefa even considers that this is the moment to move on to the next step, that is, the deepening of all the material from which more intense frictions may come, given that up until now they have been very sensitive to listening to each other's space and each proposal made. Catarina agrees with this vision and considers that it is important to think about how each person's personal sensitivity can become a collective action in which everyone is involved, each with their own difference.

Much of their effort and challenge in this residency was to understand how they could activate a transformative work of words, stories or silenced questions and if they could transform it into poetic, imaginary material that allows the creation of collective discourses.

They leave this residency with several practices that they have to organise, think about their connections and the work of transformation that has been achieved, of how to propose a new layer from the idea of fractal.

Looking at the work done, from a curatorial point of view, it seems to me that these artists have been investigating practices, experimenting practices to arrive at a practice of the collective that is directly linked to the construction of a space of comfort to advance towards a possible disruption, without ever forgetting the Other, but maintaining their individuality. In that sense, this practice has a lot to do with a political awareness of the need to care for the other person, without losing one's own identity, a space of democracy.

*We give space to the artistic team in residence to express what they want to leave as their mark, their digital impression of what happened during their time in Coimbra.*

*Catarina Vieira left us this text, we put faces to it.*

# Democracy is a square



Photo: Francisca Laureano

Democracy is a square.

It's crossing the square and reaching the end whole.

How long does it take for a person to recover from an attack? Attack on integrity. Attack on the house. Attack on the land. Attack on ecosystems. Attack on the body. Attack on the possibility of breathing, of existing.

How much does it cost to maintain physical, sexual, economic, social, psychological, emotional integrity?

How much does it cost to rebuild it, from scratch, picking up the pieces scattered through the middle of the landscape?

Democracy is having rightful support during the reconstruction of everything that the attack, the coup destroyed. Homes, jobs, bonds, places, memories.

Democracy is a square.

A group circulates freely. Stops in front of a makeshift microphone. The group settles down and makes this square a place of life. The dimensions of this life are organized: eating, thinking, speaking, resisting, cleaning, caring, barricading, defending, building.

Sometimes there is a corner. There is almost always a corner.

"If I had a hammer..."

Democracy is a room. It's a bed. It's a house too small for so many people. To negotiate boundaries, properties, desires, in whispers, shouting.

Is there room for my voice in this house?

Can my voice walk freely? In the street, in the alley, in the subway, in the forest, in the door of the building, in the hallway, in the closet.

Can my voice plant foot in the middle of the square and insist on staying, on opening a place? For itself and for the other voices that accompany it.

Sustain the effort of the appearance of our voices in the soundscape we share. Sustaining breath, sustaining pitch, sustaining the memory of each word, sustaining the intensity of our intention.

We are not alone.

We are accompanied by the memory of everyone who sang before us and everyone who died so that we could sing.

The voice of everyone who sang to feel less alone, to join their voice to other voices, not necessarily by identity, but by urgent resonance.





Photos: Francisca Laureano

We are accompanied by the voices of everyone who will need to sing in the street, over and over again, to protest, complain, lament, denounce, affirm the non-negotiable dimensions of their lives.

We are accompanied by anonymous, silent, silenced, muted voices, behind walls, closets, caves, boxes, labels, decrees, laws, regulations, psychiatric hospitals, ghettos, camps, huts, forests, coral reefs, wetlands, steppes and other ecosystems where life — all life — insists on proliferating in richness, uniqueness and diversity.

# PRACTICE AS A PERFORMANCE

*Catarina Saraiva, from an interview with Aixa Figini, Catarina Vieira and Josefa Pereira*

Artistic practices are ways of thinking and putting into practice the conceptual development of an idea, by supporting the creation process. They are not exactly a creation methodology, but tools that define an orientation in the development of artistic creation until its completion.

In the specific case of “The songs we sing against the walls we clean”, the project itself is a set of artistic practices transposed into a relationship between three points: the artistic team and its desire, the participants and their wills and the audience, receiver of a project designed from a dramaturgy made by the set of practices experienced, developed and rejected throughout this entire time-period.

It was in a conversation with Catarina, Aixa and Josefa that we talked about their practices and what these mean to their work.

For the 3 artists, the difference between practices and exercises may not be so evident. The practice is discovered in its doing and becomes

effective when it is done. While exercise may be more connected to the idea of study, practice is more connected to the existential. An exercise may be a means to an end, to learn, a preparation, while the practice may be contained in itself, something that has a certain intrinsic value, by exercising the practice, you also exercise the value of the practice itself. Josefa even said that many of the practices designed remained in the sphere of exercise due to the characteristics of the group of women with whom they worked. Thus, the practices appear through the awareness of what it may be, the form of implication in this doing and only after its consistency is found, thus making the passage from an exercise to a practice dependent on the context and people who constitute a work group. In a previous residency they had already gathered several practices and in this residency, they leave with a compilation of 20 to 30 practices to be executed in other contexts.

Below are a few.

Photo: Francisca Laureano



**Questions.** Instead of working on materials, Catarina prefers to work from questions as a way of reviewing materials and organising them. When trying to answer a question, in dialogue, in research, each person's tools and practices emerge. Asking questions is a dramaturgical practice.

**My personal story.** Ask for stories of silenced words, ask for themes that participants think the project should work on in order to be able to work on the practice of compost.

**Compost.** Based on the material which appears, think of exercises which will allow this material to be transformed. For example: collectively write a song related to the theme, return the song so that each person can write their own version of it and then remove important phrases from the personal version to write the song again together. This practice takes into consideration the overlapping of layers, nothing disappears, each material

feeds, transforms and mixes, parts will disintegrate, others mix and transform, others stay on top.

**Extraordinary practices.** Starting from a list of individual and personal wishes and desires, think together as a group about how to translate these personal desires into something that can be practiced by everyone, from a poetic, symbolic and playful point of view.

**Spaces of encounter.** Starting from the ethical or methodological principle of working without effort, without breaking anyone's limits. We start from the premise that the other has to be comfortable, to do what she wants, where she wants, adapting the suggestion, without fear of pauses and of doing less than the others, so that she feels in a space of freedom. From that place we move into the unknown with the awareness of that freedom, allowing us to confront certain practices always in dialogue and with the capacity and space to digest.

**Repetition.** Doing again, insisting on doing in order to activate and enable the practice of doing in not so comfortable spaces. The repetition will allow the unfolding of the consciousness of something very simple, and an example is the work of loops developed by Aixa.

**The dialogue.** Starting from the idea of constant questioning of how to make the place of decision as horizontal as possible, even if you are working on an artistic object that needs choices to move forward, most especially when working with people who are not artists. For this there are several strategies:

- a) Create a device that welcomes elements and ideas from the group, being that the decision-making process on what to use going through the whole group.
- b) Develop various practices which can become presentation practices and see them as this possibility to understand if it is worth moving forward.
- c) Group dynamics exercises, for decision making.

## PRACTICE FOR SHARING

### THE LOOPS WHEEL

In a closed circle, make a sound, hold that sound and pass it to the person on the right, using the hand to pass, the person on the right takes that sound with their hands in a shell, incorporates it and passes it in the same way to the person on their right. Each person takes the sound they heard, integrates it and passes the same sound to their partner until they make a complete turn, continuing to repeat it until a new sound arrives, until they decide to stop.

This practice is very complex and very simple at the same time. It allows all people to participate, it is very democratic and very singular at the same time. Each person proposes an individual loop but always in dialogue, with the intention of filling the empty spaces or the silence of the other. It implies listening to the sound that is given to you, paying attention in the recollection and passage of sound. It is not an intermittent listening, it is a listening in the present time, and sustaining breath, I place my air — and according to what Bifo Berardi<sup>2</sup> says regarding the etymology of the word 'conspire', which is to breathe together — and in a breath, your air enters me, and then it leaves me and enters you, sustaining that organic place of breathing together, of conspiring together and of building together, according to the idea that from this individuality of each voice a greater thing is built, and is sustained by all.

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2 BERARDI, Franco. Breathing: chaos and poetry. South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2018. "I can't breath' as schizo-analysis: chaosmosis, poetry and cinema" (interview). La Deleuziana, n. 9, pp. 219-230, mar. 2019.



# THE ARTICULATION ACADEMICS FEMINISTS ACTIVISTS: URGENT AND NECESSARY DIALOGUES

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The festival and laboratory Linha de Fuga happen in biennial cycles, so that it is possible, in the year after, to follow up some of the proposals of artists who participated in the laboratory.

The relationship with CES allowed, in an interesting way, to connect artistic and academic research. I come from a public university and I defend the right to education as a fundamental human right; I consider that the solidary articulation of the academy with society is a fair and enriching way of giving back what it contributes to the civic, humanistic, technical and professional training of those who manage to access it. As a public university, the university extension is precisely about this: approaching society in general, and those who do not

have access to university classrooms in particular, with levels of knowledge that humanize, dignify and honour life and human existence in a complete and broad philosophical sense. Access to other forms of knowing and knowledge makes education a comprehensive and profoundly citizen-oriented work.

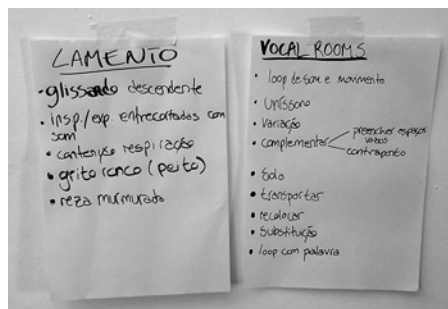
I define myself as an academic, activist and feminist for over 25 years. I work in Latin American territory, I have walked and built processes, I am part of networks and feminist movements both in Colombia and Latin America, so I did not hesitate for a second in accepting the invitation to accompany the artistic project that Linha de Fuga proposed to CES this year, and which consisted of following the artistic process of Catarina Vieira entitled



"The songs we sing against the walls we clean". Catarina was in artistic residence in Coimbra between 21st June and 18th July.

Catarina's work is about feminism and repression, through an artistic process supported by her team: Aixa Figini (Argentina) singer and music and improvisation vocal technique magician and Josefa Pereira (Brazil) choreographer and dancer, both living in Portugal for some time.

The project proposes collective work with a group of women with whom meaning, word, body, voice and movement are woven together for a presentation in public space; although it is inspired by choral groups, it goes further, since the collective work, carried out in a short but intense time, allowed to give voice to gender inequalities, to the deepest pains of being a woman of different age, race, condition or interests. Due to the participatory nature, the collective has gained strength from the daily meetings, the voice, the movement and the meaning of the word of women, among women, about women and for women. This last aspect is no less, because in the opportunities I had



to meet them from the first to the last session I could, from the outside, recognise their individual growth and their group strength.

### **Personal knowledge, common knowledge and communicative action with body, voice and movement**

The awareness that they were coauthors of the material developed and of the future presentation promoted appropriation and strength to the exercises performed, the greetings in each rehearsal were increasingly felt and celebrated. I greeted one of them in one of the last sessions, I said "Hi, how are you?" She said "Happy! I'm very well, I really like coming, I needed this space..." Here in action, the personal is enhanced, which is clearly political in the feminist approach, with the aesthetic-creative and with the public, which weaves, unites, articulates and gives meaning. Aspiring to full recognition among women: naming themselves, getting together, looking at each other and talking is power; it is being able to say things, meaning and voice, it is being able to join presence and message as in the explosions, marches, mobilizations

and collective expressions, a fact that was reflected in the staging they all performed.

It flowed very well, with Aixa, Catarina and Josefa the fabric of words that emerged in their daily lives, their walls full of expressions, messages, colours, images and shared narratives grew with them alike until the public presentation; where they offered us powerful images, full of content, like the one where they were ONE in a wall of bodies, voices and sounds walking or moving forward together in a crescendo that filled the place in a powerful way,

and especially the last one, where they planted their voice and their sweet word in the university campus of the Arts College of the University of Coimbra, in the space where the university hospital operated until the end of the 70s and which opened to welcome the meaning of the women of Coimbra who participated in this presentation and left their message, forceful and decisive:

*They light the fire.*

*I have bees in my mouth,*

*I want to let them fly!*

*The bodies created stars...*

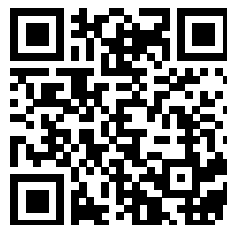
## DEFINITELY, FEMINISM IS STILL NEEDED

“Feminismos e Resistências/Feminisms and Resistances” was the theme of the first session of “Conversas com a Academia/Conversations with the Academy”, with the participation of Aixa Figini, Catarina Vieira and Josefa Pereira (artists in residence), Linda Cerdeira and Tatiana Moura (researchers from the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra).

At Radio Baixa, on the evening of 30th June, to launch the “Conversation”, we used a phrase by Audre Lorde, Caribbean-American writer, feminist and civil rights activist, which inspires Catarina Vieira’s work. “Your silence will not protect you” was

the motto to talk about oppression in a society still defined by patriarchal power. And we asked: why are we still debating this issue in the 21st century? Do we still need feminisms?

In a conversation about silenced voices, a woman asked to participate and launched the provocation of the need for telepathy... The many cases that can be talked about, and which are near and far, visible and hidden, show how much the variables introduced by different social and political contexts alter the condition of women. For those who didn’t watch, the answer: it is definitely still necessary to be a feminist in this world. The session was streamed and can be seen here:



“Conversations with Academia” is an initiative of Linha de Fuga that promotes a dialogue between academic and artistic research, in collaboration with the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra. At Radio Baixa.





## ALL ARTISTIC PRODUCTION OCCUPIES A POLITICAL PLACE ON "THE SONGS WE SING AGAINST THE WALLS WE CLEAN"

*Alexandre Valinho Gigas*

I'm sitting on the floor of a rehearsal room. In front of me, in an assembly of chairs and people, everyone introduces themselves by their words. I refer to the last collective that I observed and of which I saw an artistic "product". These were the women who were at the residency I refer to in the title, The songs we sing against the walls we clean. The curator says they are the Contra|o|Tempo residencies. This cold floor, which now supports my body and my writing time, is the stage for this perspective. I sow the time of my labor.

I've been busy in the backyard, preparing the land for winter crops. I do not write. I sing while I work, because this breathing and rhythm of production doesn't have a value, but a cadence. So it's also easier to find a place to stop, for a conversation, a date. Then, the meetings take the place of a phrase I heard, in the last show of Cláudia Dias I saw: "Each word is a treaty!"

Now it's time to write. The breathing is different. The women I heard fixed treaties with songs and gestures,

recovering a wonderful idea of being together. They sowed, in a placid late afternoon at Colégio das Artes, in Coimbra, the time of their struggle, their work, their leisure, their thoughts. All artistic production inhabits a political space. The creators and the participants inhabited a political space of total freedom of existence and of being with the other, and that resonates with me. When they caressed the earth, by sowing care, the bells of the Cathedral and the University distanced themselves from their official power and lost weight at the end of the day.

I make a timeful stop on this image, to re-examine this new collective rehearsing with Francisco Camacho; to go outside for a cigarette and to have a look at the clouds in the sky. The city's traffic can no longer be heard. When I go back inside, I still bring the song of the women who caressed the earth and spoke to me about care, which is political and brings alternative forms of assembly, where we can all sow the future.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **Catarina Vieira** | *Artistic Direction* (PT)

Creator and performer, her work articulates different artistic areas: Theatre, Dance, Performance and Video. She has a degree in Actors/Stage Design from the Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema. Attended École des Maîtres, directed by Ricci/Forte. Das Theatre Master, Amsterdam University of the Arts.

She is one of the founders of Vertigo — Cultural Association. Between 2007 and 2015, she created several pieces in collaboration with Solange Freitas, or with Tiago Cadete. As a performer, she has worked with Rimini Protokoll, Ricci/Forte, El Conde de Torrefiel, Jérôme Bel, Edit Kaldor, Lodovica Guarnieri and Marina Nabais. She created her first show in 2018. She runs “Matéria”, an open studio for sharing movement-based practices, with monthly meetings in Lisbon.

### **Aixa Figini** | *Musical Direction* (ARG)

Argentine singer, musicologist and producer. She has a degree in Musical Arts from Universidad de Buenos Aires. She also studied at the School of Contemporary Music of Buenos Aires. Later, interested in managing the performing arts, she took a Master's in Arts Administration & Cultural Policy at Goldsmiths University of London in the United Kingdom. In Argentina she learned from masters of voice and interpretation such as Susana Rossi and Juan Carlos Cuacci, and studied percussion and African chants.

### **Josefa Pereira** | *Co-creation and Performer* (BR)

Performer and choreographer. Based in Lisbon, she lives between bridges and partnerships with her city, São Paulo, where she graduated in Communication of the Body Arts (PUC-SP, BR) and in Amsterdam, where she is currently attending her Master's Degree at the DAS Choreography programme. Her career is marked by several collaborations and participations in projects of the São Paulo scene, where interests around collectivity, presence and gestuality as a field of aesthetic and political tension emerged. Since 2008, she works as an art-educator and since 2019 as a dance teacher at Forum Dança.

### **Artur Pispalhas** | *Sound Documentation and Editing* (PT)

Post-graduate in Sound Art (Faculdade de Belas-Artes da Universidade de Lisboa), graduated in Sound (Escola Superior de Artes e Design — Caldas da Rainha) and technician in Music Management and Production (Escola de Tecnologias Inovação e Criação).

He works as a musician in independent creations and as sound/light designer and technical director in collaborations with other artists and collectives such as Loreto Martínez Troncoso, Teatro do Silêncio, Sara Anjo, Maja Escher, Nina Botkay, Catarina Vieira, David Marques, Teresa Silva, Apneia Colectiva. Integrates the PENHA SCO Art Cooperative and the Ensaios e Diálogos Association.

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Judith Butler, ed. Duke University Press



Photo: Francisca Sousa

# AS CANÇÕES QUE CANTAMOS CONTRA OS MUROS QUE LIMPAMOS

Artistic direction: Catarina Vieira

Musical direction: Aixa Figini

Interpretation and co-creation: Josefa Pereira  
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Mariana Brum, Mariana Keating,  
Marta Nogueira

Documentation and editing of the project's  
sound file: Artur Pispalhas

Support: Linha de Fuga

Artistic residencies: Alcantara; Centro Cultural  
da Malaposta; Linha de Fuga; Musibéria;  
Espaço da Penha | O Rumo do Fumo

This Contra|o|Tempo Residence was supported by:



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