

Art, gender, student movement: experiences with occupation and mural painting

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Abstract

This article consists in a report of experiences with two artistic works on women's diversity at the University for International Integration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB). Initially, experiences with paintings and drawings on the walls – known as mural painting – took place during the UNILAB's occupation, in 2016, occasion in which an artistic intervention was conducted in the teachers' room. Through encouragement and support from other students, the authors of this article produced their first panel – which means, according to our reading, the UNILAB's face in its proposal to interconnect cultures and diversities. Consequently, our second panel emerged in 2018, in the form of a course conclusion monograph (trabalho de conclusão de curso – TCC) to achieve a Licentiate Degree in Sociology. From the perspective of gender equality struggle, we emphasize the importance of politically appreciating and strengthening feminist artistic expressions in their struggles and resistance, with a view to achieving greater social justice and social equality – contrary to all forms of historical domination of men over women.

Key words art; mural painting; women; student occupation.

Conhecer: debate entre o público e o privado

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Arte, gênero, movimento estudantil: experiências com ocupação e pintura de murais

Resumo

Este artigo consiste em um relato de experiências com dois trabalhos artísticos sobre a diversidade das mulheres na Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB). Inicialmente, as experiências com pinturas e desenhos em paredes – conhecidos como *muralismo* – deram-se na ocupação da UNILAB, em 2016, ocasião na qual se realizou uma intervenção artística na sala dos professores. Por incentivo e ajuda de outros estudantes, os autores deste artigo elaboraram seu primeiro painel – que significa, em nossa leitura, o rosto da UNILAB em sua proposta de integração de culturas e diversidades. Por conseguinte, nosso segundo painel surgiu em 2018, em formato de trabalho de conclusão de curso (TCC) da Licenciatura em Sociologia. Sob a perspectiva da luta pela igualdade de gênero, enfatizamos a importância de valorizar e fortalecer politicamente as expressões artísticas feministas em suas lutas e resistências, com vistas a alcançar maior justiça e igualdade social – em sentido contrário a todas as formas de dominação histórica dos homens sobre as mulheres.

Palavras-chave arte; muralismo; mulheres; ocupação estudantil.

Arte, género, movimiento estudiantil: experiencias con ocupación y pintura de murales

Resumen

Este artículo consiste en un informe de experiencias con dos obras artísticas acerca de la diversidad de las mujeres en la Universidad de Integración Internacional de la Lusofonía Afro-Brasileña (UNILAB). Inicialmente, las experiencias con pinturas y dibujos en paredes – conocidos como *muralismo* – tuvieron lugar durante la ocupación de la UNILAB, en 2016, ocasión en que se llevó a cabo una intervención artística en la sala de profesores. Mediante incentivo y apoyo de otros estudiantes, los autores de este artículo elaboraron su primer panel – lo que significa, según nuestra lectura, el rostro de la UNILAB en su propuesta de integración de culturas y diversidades. En consecuencia, nuestro segundo panel surgió en 2018, en forma de una monografía de conclusión de curso (trabalho de conclusão de curso – TCC) para obtener una Licenciatura en Sociología. Bajo la perspectiva de la lucha por la igualdad de género, enfatizamos la importancia de valorar y fortalecer politicamente las expresiones artísticas feministas en sus luchas y resistencias, con miras a alcanzar mayor justicia e igualdad social – en sentido contrario a todas las formas de dominación histórica de los hombres sobre las mujeres.

Palabras clave arte; muralismo; mujeres; ocupación estudiantil.

Art, genre, mouvement étudiant: expériences d'occupation et de peinture murale

Résumé

Cet article consiste en un compte-rendu des expériences de deux œuvres artistiques sur la diversité des femmes à l'Université d'Intégration Internationale de la Lusophonie Afro-Brésilienne (UNILAB). Initialement, des expériences avec des peintures et des dessins sur les murs – connues sous le nom de *peinture murale* – ont eu lieu pendant l'occupation d'UNILAB, en 2016, à l'occasion d'une intervention artistique dans la salle des professeurs. Par l'encouragement et le soutien d'autres étudiants, les auteurs de cet article ont produit leur premier panel – ce qui signifie, selon nos lectures, le visage d'UNILAB dans sa proposition d'intégration des cultures et des diversités. En conséquence, notre deuxième panel a vu le jour en 2018, sous la forme d'un travail de fin d'études (trabalho de conclusão de curso – TCC) du Baccalauréat en Sociologie. Dans la perspective de la lutte pour l'égalité des genres, nous soulignons l'importance de valoriser et de renforcer politiquement les expressions artistiques féministes dans leurs luttes et leurs résistances, en vue de parvenir à une plus grande justice sociale et à une plus grande égalité sociale – contrairement à toutes les formes de domination historique des hommes sur les femmes.

Mots-clés art; peinture murale; femmes; occupation d'étudiant.

Introduction

The mural paintings produced by the authors of this article in the campus of Liberdade of the University for International Integration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira – UNILAB), in Redenção, Ceará, Brazil, in 2016 and 2018, correspond to artistic works that depict women's diversity in the UNILAB. Initially, experiences with paintings and drawings on walls were the result of students' occupation of the institution, in 2016. Academically, by means of our engagement and our experiences with the theme *gender and sexuality*, at the Center of Gender and Sexuality Policy (Núcleo de Políticas de Gênero e Sexualidades – NPGS) of the UNILAB, we also had the opportunity to produce many other graffiti and small-sized murals.

With regard to teaching, research, and university outreach activities related to these issues of gender and sexuality, the NPGS has always been guided by the ethical-political commitment to fight against all forms of violence, oppression, domination, exploitation, prejudice, and discrimination against women and other sexual minorities. In an interface with ethnic and class approaches, and in line with the various public and institutional affirmative action policy, the NPGS worked, from 2013 until the end of 2018, in order to promote debate, engagement, and partnerships to cope with all structural kinds of machismo in our society.

All this movement gave rise to the agency and systematic organization of many interventions, also in the form of art-activism – denouncing abuses, violence, injustice, and inequality, both inside and outside the university. Throughout its activities, the NPGS has

always aimed at promoting strategic and educational actions, centered on equanimous restructuring of relationships in which exclusions, discriminations, and/or prejudices of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, origin, socioeconomic status, linguistic difference, etc. To do this, many actions and artistic expressions – graffiti, poster workshops, ‘saraus,’ demonstrations – were put into practice during the 5 years of the NPGS activities.

However, due to institutional divergences, in the end of 2018, the NPGS was disconnected from the coordination of the Pro-Rectorate of Affirmative Actions (Pró-Reitoria de Ações Afirmativas – PROPAAE) of the UNILAB and is has been restructured as the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Gender (Centro de Pesquisas Interdisciplinares em Gênero – CIEG Dandara). Since its founding meeting, held in January 2019, its focus has been on the black and transvestite women’s memory of struggle and resistance, of all those who have suffered and have been subject to all kinds of violence and abuse, many of them murdered¹ by patriarchy as a result of the misogyny in force from our earliest history to the present time.

In synergy with our work and militancy concerning these gender issues, the artistic panel, finished in 2018, was precisely conceived as a course conclusion monograph (trabalho de conclusão de curso – TCC) of the Licentiate Degree in Sociology. The idea has always been/is to express ourselves or to intervene artistically in university spaces – in order to demonstrate women’s diversity in the UNILAB and the need to promote their empowerment in the face of all forms of violence and gender inequality that persist in the university space.

The idea of producing the second mural painting as a TCC proposal came after the first meeting of the UNILAB Unified Women’s Center (Núcleo Unificado de Mulheres – NUMU), created in March 2018. This new center – specific for women’s collectives – is still active and it is constituted by many segments of feminist movements, and even by women who participated in the NPGS, in their teaching, research, and university outreach activities. In fact, the NUMU was designed for direct action of feminist interventions within the university and also in its surroundings, precisely to cope with machismo and the several structural forms of gender oppression – suffered on a daily basis by women, both in the academy and in society.

We had already decided to go on with the idea of using painting as an expression of resistance to gender violence and also as a means of appreciating and making visible the women’s diversity in the UNILAB – since both panels depict women of different ethnicities, aesthetics, identities, sexualities, cultures, and traditions. So, for the second panel, we

¹ Reference to Dandara dos Palmares, a legendary black woman, a courageous quilombola woman from Serra da Barriga (current State of Alagoas), Zumbi’s wife, with whom he allegedly had three children. After being captured by the Imperial Army, in siege to Quilombo dos Palmares, she committed suicide – she threw herself from a quarry in February 1694, in order not to be enslaved again. In addition to her, we also refer to Dandara dos Santos (1975-2017), a transvestite from the outskirts of Fortaleza city, brutally and cowardly murdered on November 15, 2017, by particularly transphobic aggressors (Portal Vermelho, 2019).

chose the yard in the campus of Liberdade. The purpose of this work was carrying out a new artistic intervention for affirmation, visibility, and feminist protagonism.

In the chosen location there was already a wood panel – placed there by the institution for people to post warnings, pamphlets, and posters. So, we thought that it would be a great opportunity to occupy it and redesign it – in order to carry out an intervention with artistic impact there. Through mural painting, we could unite there, in a single composition, the most diverse experiences of women who work and study in the UNILAB. Faced with this art, they could identify and strengthen themselves somehow in the face of this institutional space of persistent gender inequality and violence².

Feminizing the student's movement and occupying the university walls

The UNILAB was born 9 years ago (Lei n. 12.289, 2010), having the principles of solidary international cooperation as a basis, from the perspective of decolonial epistemologies of the South³ and aligned with specific integration to the African continent, especially to the Portuguese Speaking African Countries (Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa – PALOPs), members of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa – CPLP). Also, its proposal involves expanding the Northeastern Public Higher Education towards the countryside, in strategic areas aimed at promoting economic and social development, with low human development indexes (HDIs) and low schooling levels – notably the Maciço de Baturité (Ceará) and the Recôncavo Baiano⁴.

2 In fact, numerous and recurrent incidents of aggression and violence against women have been reported in the UNILAB. Despite the short history of this institution (less than 9 years after its creation), unfortunately, there are plenty of cases of rape, attempted femicide, and several other types of attacks, some very serious, on university campuses. Many of these cases were monitored and denounced by the NPGS, including through the preparation of dossiers – sent to the UNILAB's PROPAE and the very UNILAB's Rectory until the year 2016. In its assistance to some of these victims of violence, as well as in its militancy, the NPGS never stopped asking the university that perpetrators were punished and that a flow of care and specific referral for reestablishing these victims within the institution was created. However, such a special attention to victims of gender violence has never been adequately provided by the UNILAB. On the other hand, none of the aggressors, boldly denounced by their victims – some of them accused and prosecuted –, suffered any form of rather serious reprimand from the institution, having followed their academic path as usually, as if they had done nothing. The culture of silencing victims and hiding violence and gender oppression seems to persist in the UNILAB, as well as – obviously – structural machismo, which routinely permeates the political, academic, institutional, and bureaucratic relationships in the university (O Portal de Notícias da Globo [G1], 2016, 2017).

3 *South epistemologies and decoloniality* are seen as the efforts of several theorists and methodologists, notably Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2005, 2008), in order to organize, from what is to be named as the *global South*, new and diversified perspectives, views, and actions – of emancipation and of social, political, and economic development: for the historical overcoming of scientific, technological, and ideological hegemonies and hierarchies, inherent to the interference and domination of the modern world system, specifically of the then global Western countries of the *North* over their former colonies in the *South*.

4 According to the most recent surveys by the Institute of Research and Economic Strategy of Ceará (Instituto de Pesquisa e Estratégia Econômica do Ceará – IPECE, 2016), the micro-region of Maciço de Baturité is, proportionally

In addition to its proposal for South-South international cooperation and internationalization of teaching, research, and university outreach, the UNILAB is also committed to enhancing and promoting interculturality, citizenship, and democracy – along with the various societies, traditions, and realities with which it works. As an evidence of this, in May 2018, the UNILAB's Pro-Rectorate of Undergraduate Education (Pró-Reitoria de Graduação – PROGRAD) opened a selection process for admission of quilombola and Indian students to face-to-face undergraduate courses offered in the campuses of Ceará and Bahia, validating its project so that the knowledge produced in the context of academic integration is capable of becoming public policy to overcome/repair the many structural inequalities in our society.

However, the threats of retrogression and impediment to realization of the UNILAB's project of integration do not come from today. Due to this, as a result of external and internal factors, we occupied – the Brazilian and foreign students, united, organized, and mobilized –, in October 2016, the three campuses in Ceará. This occupation occurred after the media-legal-parliamentary coup derived from the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff – something which further deepened the precariousness of public education and student assistance programs for those in a real situation of poverty and social vulnerability.

Then, we were engaged in building a collective struggle of resistance against the approval of reactionary and retrograde measures of an illegitimate administration and the UNILAB's *pro tempore* rectorate – which threatened the student's assistance policy with cuts, restrictions, and delays, in order to directly affect the permanence of students from the poor, working class, more specifically women, black students, foreigners, and the other historically marginalized minorities of our society in the public university.

On that occasion, we created an agenda of mobilizations and activities – which culminated in the UNILAB Student's Congress, held on November 16, 2016. Then, there

to its number of inhabitants (about 250,000 people), one of those with lowest HDI in the State of Ceará. Comprising the municipalities of Baturité, Pacoti, Palmácia, Guaramiranga, Mulungu, Aratuba, Capistrano, Itapiúna, Aracoiaba, Redenção, Acarape, Barreira, Guaiúba, and Ocara, the region has historical structural problems, strongly associated with its economic stagnation – since the decreased yield of coffee crops, still in the early 20th century. There is not, even today, a strategic planning for social and economic development of the region, which interconnects all of its municipalities, there is no adequate access to primary health and sanitation services, the use of schools in indicators such as the basic education development index of (índice de desenvolvimento da educação básica – IDEB) is on average far below the other regions of the state – 4.6. Likewise, there are no public policies for social promotion of youth or for the generation of income and opportunities, in addition to which, in recent years, the entire population has been hostage to the violence of criminal organizations that have taken over the region, making the youth even more vulnerable. Access to Higher Education was virtually non-existent before the creation of the UNILAB, in 2010. As far as policies to promote gender equality and to combat violence against women are concerned, the whole region has no specialized service or police station, and the cases of aggression, abuse, violence and even femicide are recurrent, they are encouraged by aggressors' impunity and by the culture of silencing victims. In relation to the Recôncavo Baiano region, in spite of the high tax collections to the public coffers, originating from oil production and installed industries – notably in the Municipality of São Francisco do Conde, where the campus is located outside the UNILAB headquarters –, the conditions of poverty, social inequality, and violence among the population do not differ much from those of the Maciço de Baturité (Portal São Francisco, 2019).

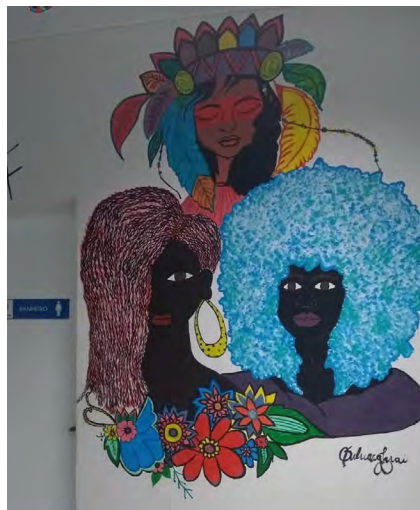
were three long days of work, discussions, and negotiations with the *pro tempore* rector, where no guarantee of maintenance of student assistance policies would be given to us. The result was the deflagration of students' strike and the continuation of occupation in all of the UNILAB campuses – extended from there to the campus of the Malês, in Bahia.

It was during these strike days and students' occupation of the campuses that we put our first great artistic intervention into practice – on a wall at the teachers' room on the campus of Liberdade. Faced with numerous incentives and always relying on the help of other students, we produced this first large-sized panel – over almost three weeks of work. It is a muralist intervention that, in our reading, represents the diversified face of the university – by means of its proposal of integration between many cultures and different ethnicities.

The panel, 3.10 m x 2.73 m, was painted under the inspiration of our then-most recent experiences of activism and affectivity, lived – in total – throughout the almost 60 days of resistance and struggle during the UNILAB's occupation. The group of students who were at the forefront of this occupation on the campus of Liberdade consisted, for the most part, of black, lesbian, and bisexual women, as well as gays and sympathizers.

As a representative expression of our student movement – notably lesbian and feminist – and they very students' life in the university, I sought to depict *affectively* and *specifically* nonwhite women's diversity in our institution. After finishing the occupation, almost all the students who took part made sure to shoot a photo in front of the panel – because, for them, such an artistic intervention, as a symbol of our struggle, became a source of great pride and even more incentive to the student's struggle and resistance.

Figure 1 Panel “Women's Diversity in the UNILAB” (2016)



Source: Prepared by the authors.

During the painting of this panel, many were the dawns talking and knowing the students' life stories, so that we got increasingly identified with their trajectories, with the courage and the inventiveness – through which they asserted their strategies and vital ways: coping with various patriarchal impositions, violence, and gender inequalities – structurally – reproduced on both sides of the Atlantic.

The stories shared, especially by the working class students, the foreign black women, and the lesbian feminists of this institution, have imprinted enchantment and criticism on our artistic perception – necessary for questions and confrontation, regarding not only capitalism and machismo, but also racism and lesbophobia – which comprise the structures of many forms of violence, injustice, and inequality (of gender, race, and class) in our daily life, both inside and outside the university.

In spite of all forms of violence inflicted on them, throughout their many life stories, none of our female interlocutors – who talked to us and our art – ceased to believe that changing their reality was possible: through agencies, struggles, and collective actions, which inform and raise awareness – cross-sectionally – among all women about the need for their empowerment, against the persistence of domination means and devices belonging to patriarchy in our society.

According to these women, the occupation – as it also happened for us –, was not a *choice*, but an imminent *need*. In order to remain in the UNILAB and in the poor surroundings of Redenção e de Acarape, the vast majority of students – Brazilian and foreign ones – depend on student assistance policies. However, the payment of aid has been invariably decreased and all institutional assistance to students is systematically threatened by successive *pro tempore* rectors since 2016⁵.

In this specific context, all the difficulties and challenges of student life in the UNILAB are added with varied and structural gender inequalities and oppressions, which mainly result from the simple fact of being a woman, black and/or lesbian, trans or transvestite. In our patriarchal society and culture, given all the injunctions of violence and death – against the bodies and behaviors of these women –, they have no choice but to resist, to rise up against all the recurring and systemic forms of oppression, silencing, and invisibility.

5 Since the 2016 occupation and the student strike, the whole situation of poor students' lives – in the UNILAB itself and also in what concerns the conditions of housing, health, safety, transport, food, and leisure in the surroundings of the municipalities of Redenção and Acarape – has been formally mapped, diagnosed, reported, and denounced to the various pro-rectories and the Rectory of the UNILAB, as well as to other bodies and official agencies. The forums, leaderships, and varied student representations have been united, organized, and mobilized – against all restrictions and threats to students' rights. In response to these formal demands by students, the university would create, still in 2016, the Student Life Observatory (Observatório da Vida Estudantil – OBSERVE/UNILAB) – which, however, has provided or provides little or no effective effects on the student community; notably as for the solution of absences or structural weaknesses, the lack of equipment and, above all, the ineffectiveness of affirmative and institutional policies to meet the students' needs for permanence and better academic and social conditions (Fórum Estudantil da UNILAB, 2019).

Subalternized and dehumanized by the world-system of capital and coloniality, they will (re)invent themselves, (af)firm themselves – politically and aesthetically – by self-determining their subjectivities, their bodies, their wills, pains, thoughts, and works... in activism and agency of their free and proper manifestations, formulations, expressions of styles and potentialities – beyond the obstacles of any of the hierarchies, orders, and/or hegemonic determinations of men.

In the midst and against all the connivance/indifference of these men – in the face of the forms of violence that women have systematically suffered in our patriarchal societies, especially non-white women –, the feminists belonging to the UNILAB's student movement also propose to fight: so that none of us are victimized by the coloniality of gender power inside or outside the university.

Resorting to the interventions of our panels throughout the university, to all of our forms and expressions of art as *feminist activism*, we declare ourselves – black, Brazilian, and foreign female students, lesbians, transvestites, and transsexuals of the UNILAB – women not subject to orders or devices of patriarchy's interference and domination. We are subversive to coloniality in the modern world-system – which, according to Lugones (2008, p. 11, our translation), assigns to women “an crucial place of inequality and dehumanization, as a condition of reproduction of forms of subjectification and capital control.”

From the spaces of occupation and feminist student activism in the UNILAB to the broader scenario of decolonial feminism – equally intersected with struggles for racial and class equality – our art also provides a body, shape, and presence to the struggles and protests of all marginalized women: united against the multiple injustices and structural inequalities in our society – notably in face of the current unfettered circumstances of the chauvinistic, fascist, racist, and ultraliberal political coup, then under way for the destruction of minorities and the working class in our country.

In fact, art on walls is historically linked to urban movements of resistance, struggle, and popular affirmation against capitalism; as a form of expression and specific agency – of historically marginalized and peripheral groups – against the multiple systems of oppression, which invariably have minorities as a target: just as in the case of feminist women in the UNILAB. In this regard, we follow the idea proposed by Bastianello (2015, p. 23, our translation), that “art forms on murals contribute to the relations of dialogue, denunciation, contestation, and claim concerning the agendas raised by struggles and social manifestations.”

Therefore, the occupation and artistic intervention in public spaces may be seen as daily micro-resistance agencies – from a political culture of transgression to orders of injustices and inequalities, as well as inspiration and push to new ethical, aesthetic, political, and existential becomings of freedom. In other words, the art on panels and/or murals can be seen as a way of expressing anti-oppression feelings and thoughts; which inform life, the

conscience, and the action of social groups – glued to the margin of society – for thinking through their ideas and attitudes, before the incongruences of social reality itself.

We refer to an art that plays the role of activism, a specific agency of resistances and social struggles, which also aims to “discuss the indifference that people endorse, in their daily lives, in face of the serial acts of violence of the State, the white patriarchy, the economic power, and men themselves against women and other social minorities” (Lugones, 2008, p. 17, our translation).

We know the elitist abyss that exists between the academy and the community, the whole technical, bureaucratic, and institutional reproduction that detaches these two worlds – which should not be far from each other, but in constant dialogue: with a view to democratizing access to knowledge and opportunities. In what concerns the premise of humanization and the reduction of social inequalities and injustices – from the perspective of South-South international cooperation and internalization of public Higher Education – we do not accept, however, that the UNILAB is just another institution... it can no longer reproduce in our countries the interests, symbolic and power fields of the white patriarchy, capitalism, and coloniality.

We believe that black women, quilombolas, Indians, from the outskirts, lesbians, trans, transvestites, from the Maciço de Baturité and from the various PALOPs are truly and courageously the most legitimate face of the UNILAB. Their bodies, their ideas, their art, their knowledge, their memories, their behaviors, and their vital experiences constitute the palimpsest upon which, even in the midst of our poverty, the new epistemologies of the South are inscribed.

In the critical reflective route, from the *uni-* to the *pluriversity* – as pointed out by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2005) –, these *new epistemologies* of knowledge (henceforth anti-hegemonic), horizontalized policies, and other heterarchical practices will decisively disarticulate, *in us* (present), all the old oppressions of gender, race, and class, under which it keeps dehumanizing the modern world-system.

In *pluriversity*, therefore, Western orders and interferences will be overcome – hierarchical and hegemonic professorships –, which are embodied in the differences of unidirectional repetitions, in practices, and in rules of the authorship and authority games... in all forms of racism, in all forms of classism, and in all forms of machismo: which have informed the seriousness and generalized indifference of academic processes and institutions.

From the monuments of sciences – which, in their systems and mechanisms, bring together, classify, essentialize, and discriminate humanity in concepts/prejudices *against humanity* – then, we will descend to the black soil, to the womb of ancestry, to the intercultural crossroads of *us*, to the menstrual flows of other feasible origins and destinations, to the complex community of popular knowledge and traditions with the ground, with nature and with the varied worlds, intersecting in the many forms of feminism... beyond all the petty orders of men.

In what this *feminist, vital, anti-racist, and ecological* activism converges on is that we believe to have the real opportunities to appreciate horizontally the best of us and what we best know how to do... and assign (to ourselves) the demonstration of all the multiple forms and expressions of artistic, political, community, cultural, and philosophical knowledge... within and outside the spaces of the *uni- pluriversity for Africa-Brazil integration* – in the unusual and promising territory of the Maciço de Baturité.

Building the home of our own: between theory and practice

In order to produce our two major artistic panels in the UNILAB, we also had as a theoretical inspiration the concept of *popular education* – as proposed by Paulo Freire (1999). According to this idea, educational processes must be constructed, perceived, and experienced, taking into account, first and foremost, the need to make real the practice of *what is already known and/or what has already been made aware of* – through many vital and community experiences of freedom (Freire, 1999).

The key idea of this *popular education* is, therefore, to associate with the educational practice the political experience of the popular agents themselves. From this perspective, educating would be, at the same time, to consciously and critically participate in the learning and social transformation processes – to cope with injustices and overcome inequalities. It was something like this that we set out to accomplish with our mural paintings.

Concerning the feminist composition of our themes, we also had as an inspiration the works by the black feminist educator and intellectual Bell Hooks (2013, 2015) – who intersects, since her youth, the making of her writing with her personal experiences of struggle and resistance against machismo and racism. The U.S. writer's perspective is also that of always bringing theory and practice together, finding in the *lived pedagogy* the mission of acting on the transformation of social reality (Hooks, 2015).

Thus, our artistic interventions have taken a common goal – i.e. changing minds and (re)occupying/resignifying spaces in the institution: through mural art and feminist activism, appreciating cultural, sexual, gender, and ethnic-racial diversity, as well as the routes and experiences of struggles of all the women who constitute the UNILAB. After all, they are all, together – students, civil servants, technicians, and/or professors – who entangle the resistance against oppressions and exploitations of the many forms of machismo and racism, besides the other physical and symbolic forms of violence that go through and structure the daily life of our societies.

The closeness to the date of achieving a Licentiate Degree in Sociology, in 2018, brought the need to go on with our artistic making – in face of the political resonances and the curricular standards of the course: always taking a critical view of the reproduction of agendas and devices of violence, injustice, and inequality in our societies. So, we resorted – again – to producing art on murals, this time in the form of a TCC.

The specific theoretical formulation of this new artistic making in the UNILAB's space, also taken as a political intervention, sought – specifically for providing the written part of the paper with a theoretical framework – some considerations from the *sociology of art*. According to the sociologist from the State of Paraná, Brasil, Luís Afonso Salturi (2015, p. 226, our translation), the sociology of art has as its main objective “studying the total artistic processes and their interactions and interdependencies between the artist and the audience – notably from the viewpoint of their political and social significance.”

As for urban art on walls, *mural painting*, its emergence occurs precisely as an aesthetic-political movement in Mexico, in the early 20th century – under the influence of intellectuals and painters who nurtured the wish to transform the country's social reality after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1924) (Vasconcelos, 2005). By evoking this birth, we see the *very artistic manifestation on walls* as a genuine way of political and aesthetic intervention – involving criticism and possibilities, but also appropriation and occupation of spaces: against the subalternization of lives, the violation of their dreams and their bodies (Silva, 2010).

So, this is a movement, an interaction, that goes beyond the experiences themselves – aesthetic, corporeal – lived by the artist in her/his daily life, overflowing her/his tensions – through art – against the forms of violence and the threats that surround her/him. According to the urban planner Paola Jacques (2008), the relations between the bodies, their politics, and the city (which, in this study may be understood as the public/collective space, either institutional or not) can be evidenced – by means of mural painting – as alternative paths, deviations from the mainstream, and escapes or becomings of resistance (Jacques, 2008).

Figure 2 Panel “I Am My Own Home” (2018)



Source: Prepared by the authors.

As we can see, this new panel (Figure 2) – like the first one – is a representation of women’s diversity in the UNILAB. In its total size of 2.25 m x 4.13 m, an Afro-Brazilian woman, an African black woman, and an Indian woman were portrayed, respectively, besides the following sentence – for empowerment and feminist self-inscription:

I am my own home.

We have chosen this message, with linguistic signs, because it clearly expresses the need for embracement, strengthening, and self-affirmation of these women: in support of each other, faced with the intrinsic difficulties that they have to cope with on a daily basis – simply because they are women from the outskirts of the capital city, due to the fact that they dare to fight for equal rights and conditions in a *world of rules and privileges of men*.

In spite of all kinds of violence, abuse, and patriarchal oppression – of our macho, racist, and elitist society –, every struggle for possessing the lives, bodies, and freedoms of women and other sexual minorities remains is worth. This is, hence, a call for encouragement: a resistance to the systematic offensives and alienations that – structurally – continue to relegate these women and sexual minorities to the positions and identities of subalternity, inferiority, and isolation before the lordship of white men.

This message, however, is not our own. It is part of the lyrics of a song, composed and sung by the Brazilian group Francisco, El Hombre. It is “Triste, Louca ou Má” (Francisco, El Hombre, 2016), from the album *Soltasbruxa*: an allusion to an expression in English – corresponding to the free translation of *sad, mad or bad* – that commonly refers, in a sexist and derogatory way, to the U.S. women who did not marry or those who chose to remain single⁶.

Thus, the lyrics of “Triste, Louca ou Má” would be a reference to the accusation and/or condemnation inflicted on all women who reject being or those who cannot be *neither*

6 Francisco, El Hombre is a Brazilian band of varied rhythms and musical styles (Latin, Mexican, and Brazilian), created in 2013 by the Mexican brothers, naturalized Brazilian, Sebastián and Mateo Piracés-Ugarte, to whom the composer, lead singer, and percussionist Juliana Strassacapa joined the same year. After her, two other musicians joined the group – completing the current quintet lineup. Francisco, El Hombre was nominated for the 2017 Latin Grammy, competing for the prize for the best song in Portuguese, with the composition “Triste, Louca ou Má” (Francisco, El Hombre, 2016). This song precisely addresses the stigmata of the loneliness of black, lesbian, fat, regarded as old women, and the need for their empowerment – in addition to criticizing the culture of submission of these women, of all women, of each of them to men – imposed by the patriarchal bourgeois society throughout the ages. The band’s lead singer, Juliana Strassacapa, explains where the inspiration for the song came from: “I channeled some things that were inside me, and feminism has always been part of my life, even when I did not know what it is” (Francisco, El Hombre, 2019). She says it all started after reading a text on the internet – a reference she did not cite – about how U.S. women were labeled as *sad, mad or bad*, because they preferred to be alone or because they did not get married. “I do not understand why things are so standardized, why there is a certain behavior mode within human relations. [...] I wrote this piece of lyrics at home, thinking about the relationship of my parents, the relationships that I see around me” (Francisco, El Hombre, 2019).

beautiful or modest or homely. Women who reject the cultural recipe of husband, family, and routine household chores. To these women foreign to patriarchal standards, the lead singer Juliana Strassacapa sings:

[...] a man does not define you, your home does not define you, your flesh does not define you, *you are your own home* (Francisco, El Hombre, 2016, our emphasis, our translation).

Indeed, a woman who decides to build her own story, to be the sole mistress of her body, and to become her own spokesperson is usually regarded as *unhappy, crazy, or malicious*. This piece of lyrics fits well the artistic intervention proposal reported herein, so we chose it as a theme for our painting: as a way to transgress the sexist orders that are imposed on us, disrespecting female individuality, diversity, and freedom – which hurt the sorority, solitude, and the very existence of women and other sexual minorities.

As stated, the choice to portray women’s diversity in the UNILAB stems from – and it will always be this way – the fact that our set of students and personnel are both very plural and unique: there are many colors, traditions, cultures, forms of knowledge, ethnicities, identities and sexualities. We are Timorese, Cape Verdean, Santomense, Angolan, Mozambican, Brazilian, Cearese, Guinean women... all our diversity of experiences, identities, cultures, and ethnicities makes us, between differences and affinities, present in the same space of integration in the UNILAB.

So, we are women from the countryside, national and international women, black, *fidjas di bidera*, African, Afro-Brazilian, Indian, and quilombola women. We are cis women, transgender, transsexuals, transvestites, queer, and non-binary women. We are heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, asexual, pansexual women, and much more... all of us are outstanding women.

We are *charming*, we are UNILABian, we rock!

That is why we deserve our numerous interests, all of our visibility, respect, courage, and freedom!

In the various areas of activity, in the multiple lines of thought and political agency, in the many forms and expressions of arts and humanities, *we are*, ultimately, *our own home!*

Final remarks

Having the mural painting “I Am My Own Home” as a basis, a new space for socializing women’s struggles was created in the yard of the campus of Liberdade – for more gender equality, for more respect and appreciation of their lives, for their bodies, for their presence,

for their ideas and feelings in the institutional relationship. This new space, on which our aesthetic-political intervention took place – involving visibility to women’s diversity in the UNILAB – is now resignified by the gaze of each person about the work, making it also an awareness-raising, reflection, and knowledge tool.

Throughout the process to construct our art, we could notice that – by preparing interventions – the Brazilian and foreign girls who passed by, almost always, stopped to see us, greet and register that moment in pictures. The women who worked with cleansing also stopped to see us and to congratulate us. Many said they were identified with that painting and felt – even more – proud that it has been done by one of the institution’s female students.

One day, some girls of different nationalities sat around the mural while we were painting it, and they remained there – to help us in whatever we needed. Then, some young men also came in and shot photos of the painting time – something which made us quite happy, sure that men also need to be educated for gender equality, as well as for appreciating feminist struggles.

In fact, our two feminist panels show – in synthesis – that it is possible to use art as a pedagogical resource and as an aesthetic and political expression, to promote resistance and struggles – for achieving a less sexist world, less violent, and potentially less offensive to women, their lives, their bodies, their freedom, and their rights. So, it is necessary to consider the various feminist artistic and cultural expressions, not only as ways to protest and/or increase knowledge, but also to promote and realize the rights to diversity, to self-determination, to freedom, and to human dignity.

From the perspective of struggle for gender equality, and against all the century-old oppressions of patriarchy, we emphasize – after all – the importance of appreciating and strengthening feminist artistic expressions on a political basis – in their struggle and resistance for more justice and social equality. This without losing sight of this art production as a social engagement between the artist and her/his work, between her/his work and the numerous social interlocutors and between them and the artist: as an equally political and aesthetic way of learning and building citizenship and human development – contrary to all forms of historical domination of men over women.

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