

Audience during the event Da Casa – Performance Act Series. Photography by Fred Medeiros, 2003.

COMMUNITY X SELF-DESTRUCTION – CHALLENGE AND RESISTANCE

(or How to Form a Pangea from Our Islands)

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This article provides a historical account and critical analysis of the *Ciclo de Ações Performáticas* [Performance Act Series] that took place at Casa Hoffmann – Centro de Estudos do Movimento [Center for Movement Studies] during 2003, and of its role for the construction¹ of an artistic community in the city of Curitiba. It relates to the concepts of work in progress, identity, and the current art scene.

The term ‘community’ emerges from the sociological theories of the late 19th Century, particularly from the distinction that the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies made between *Gemeinschaft* (community of small or country towns in intense and permanent contact) and *Gesellschaft* (a mass society with many relations, yet superficial ones).² In the 1970s, North American historian Thomas Bender, unlike the sociologists who made claims about the end of the North American community,³ preferred “[...]to reconceptualize community, suggesting that it is not a static social form that is disappearing, but rather that new, dynamic, overlapping forms of small-scale networks have arisen...” (Banes 1993, 37).

It is difficult to regard an artistic community in Curitiba; the dialog about common interests and needs from a broader perspective—be it political, structural or artistic—is not a habit imbued in its culture. Group segmentation is easily verified and quickly noticed by artists who come from other regions of the country, and who have already perceived the importance of joining forces and focusing on actions that can strengthen their local productions artistically and politically. The movement *Arte Contra a Barbárie*⁴ [Art Against Barbarism], in São Paulo, and the musical scene of Porto Alegre⁵ are poignant examples of structured actions, although they do not necessarily indicate the existence of artistic communities.

It’s important to stress that by addressing the creation of an artistic community, I refer to actions that can generate

a favorable environment for the construction of a mentality focused on aesthetic research and on the empowerment of the local scene—be it in artistic or economic realms—, respecting the idiosyncrasies of its members, but also allowing for a rigorous, non-evasive analysis of their production.

The Performance Act Series urged the beginning of a substantial transformation in the local scene. It housed different arts, trends, and aesthetics, and fostered the debate

[1] I use the term ‘construction’ because we have not experienced an artistic community in Curitiba. Instead, we find the idea of an ‘artistic class,’ which is the term adopted by local artists.

[2] According to North American sociologist Thomas Bender, the ideal models of Tönnies were misunderstood by the North American sociologists of the 20th Century, who framed them in a community–society evolution line where community history decomposes itself and inevitably becomes a society. Bender, on the other hand, disagrees and prefers to note the patterns of human relationships and interactions without imposing a linear community–society picture. (Engerman, David. *Neglected Book*, on-line n/d article about the book *Community and Social Change in America*, by Thomas Bender, 1978.)

[3] A reference to the puritan model of community, strongly connected by shared ties of religion, work, and family.

[4] “*Movimento Arte Contra a Barbárie*” is not engaged in political parties. The Movement began in 1999 and freely associates citizens from the areas of theatre and culture, who are interested in reflecting upon and developing public and democratic cultural policies at city, state and federal levels. Artists, intellectuals, and groups from various aesthetic and ideological trends came together with a common belief: the practice of Theater involves Ethics and social commitment. On June 26, 2000, the Movement released its Third Manifesto signed by more than 600 artists, intellectuals, and producers who attended the event at Oficina Theater in São Paulo. One of the action proposals was the opening of the *Espaço da Cena* [Space of the Scene] in July 2000 with free public meetings every fortnight, meant to promote in-depth discussions about the needs of artistic productions and how to allow the population to fully access cultural goods. During the first *Espaço da Cena* an emerging work group developed the law project called “Fostering Program of Theater for the city of São Paulo”, later presented by Councilman Vicente Cândido and passed as a law in January 2002, during Mayor Martha Suplicy’s administration. (Source: electronic magazine *Fomento ao Teatrol* Consultant: Márcia de Barros)

[5] Porto Alegre is renown as one of the major self-supporting rock production centers in Brazil. The musical scene there became stable throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, though in 1967 there were already a profuse scene with more than 100 active bands in town. (Sources: *in loco* research and the e-magazine *Senhor F – A Revista do Rock*, by Fernando Rosa)

about local production, occasionally provoking conflicts or somewhat evasive dialogs, but, above all, promoting the contact amongst artists and their respective research.

In this article, I do not intend to praise the artistic works that were presented during the events I helped to curate or organize. Rather, I reflect upon the initiative of offering an open, inviting space for experimentation and for the showing of works in progress, where the coexistence of diversity appeared to be more important than the mere association of segmented groups.

Historiography of the Performance Act Series

The Casa Hoffmann – Center for Movement Studies⁶ activities program began in June 2003, with the Commented Video Screening, presented by Leonel Brum.⁷ It was clear during his workshop that the artists who attended it hardly knew each other. Several arguments took place about the local scene, revealing the lack of dialog and knowledge among them about its production. Thus, Brum became the person who broadened the perspective of participant artists regarding the strengthening of local production.

The following workshop with Sarah Michelson⁸ was focused on creation and choreographic thought. From then on a group would begin to take shape, thinking and establishing a dialog about the importance of an artistic community. The outspokenness and respect, which came into effect among the local artists who integrated Michelson's workshop was, perhaps, something unusual—if not unseen—in the local scene.

In July 2003, Rosane Chamecki and Andrea Lerner, the Casa Hoffmann curators, urged the Artists-in-Residence and workshop participants to submit proposals for the creation of events to occupy the studios during the free hours. With this opportunity, some artists began to send their curatorship proposals, until they finally agreed that it would be more productive to integrate their events.

Responding to this call, a bar reunion of some of the artists who attended Casa Hoffmann took place at the *Café do Teatro* [Theater Café], in Curitiba, on July 21, 2003 with the objective of discussing their event proposals. The persons at the table were Olga Nenevê, Eduardo Giacomin, Ricardo Marinelli, Andrea Obrecht, Sheylli Caleffi, and Cristiane Bouger.

The concept of a series of events that would occupy Casa Hoffmann, at Largo da Ordem [Historical Center area] every Tuesday evening emerged from this meeting. Artists Andréa Serrato, André Coelho, and Michelle Moura joined the group later, thus establishing what came to be known as the Performance Act Series – Casa Hoffmann 2003.

Several inspirations and influences—although they were not necessarily the same for each artist—shaped the action core of the group. Amongst the influences that inspired the desire for transformation of our scene were the artistic community of Greenwich Village,⁹ in New York in the 1950s and 1960s; the Cabaret Voltaire,¹⁰ home

^[6] Casa Hoffmann [Hoffmann's House] was built in 1890. Casa Hoffmann served as residence and commerce of fabrics and haberdashery for the family of Austrian immigrants until 1974. The house was also occupied by a private high school in the 1990s. In 2003, after restoration, it was reopened under the name Casa Hoffmann – Center for Movement Studies, under the coordination of *Fundação Cultural de Curitiba – FCC* [Curitiba Cultural Foundation] and *Prefeitura Municipal de Curitiba* [Curitiba City Hall].

^[7] Leonel Brum is the Director of the events *dance on focus* and *Dance Brazil*, in Rio de Janeiro. See an interview about Brum's work in this issue.

^[8] Sarah Michelson is a British choreographer who lives in New York. During her workshop, she often emphasized the importance of the artistic community and of an outspoken attitude that should pervade it. Read an interview with Michelson in this issue.

^[9] Greenwich Village, in the Lower Manhattan, is the area around Washington Square. It stretches North–South from 14th Street to Houston Street, and East–West from Broadway to West Street. The Village is the legendary home of the North American avant-garde. Several movements in dance, theatre, performance, underground cinema and the visual arts emerged in this community, with names such as Andy Warhol, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Judson Dance Theater, Allan Kaprow, Fluxus, The Living Theatre, and many other groups and artists that gave new forms to North American art, building up new ways of perceiving the body, the media, women's role in society, and the concepts of art and community themselves, opening the path for post-modernism in the following decades (Banes, 1999). Additional sources: *in loco* research and the *Guia Visual Folha de São Paulo*.

^[10] German writer Hugo Ball and poet Emmy Hennings founded the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916. Amongst those who joined them were the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara, the painter Marcel Janco and the paint-

of Dada; the realization that it was necessary to create a strong and collaborative community in a city renowned for its non-supportive drive, and, finally, the influence of Casa Hoffmann's first instructors, Leonel Brum's and Sarah Michelson.

Three events were conceived as a result of this meeting: In-side CWB,¹¹ curated by dancer Ricardo Marinelli; *Da Casa* [From Home], curated by myself and by dancer Michelle Moura, and *Mostra Temática* [Thematic Showing], with curatorship by actress Olga Nenevê and by actor and costume designer Eduardo Giacomini. Shortly after, the program was expanded with *Improviso* [Improvisation], curated by dancer Rocio Infante,¹² and with *Circuito Inserções* [Insertion Circuit],¹³ under my curatorship.

The event In-side CWB aimed to create an impartial mapping of dance, theatre, and performance in Curitiba to acknowledge the diversity of its local production. *Da Casa* [From Home] presented to the general public the performances created by the artists who attended the workshops of the Center for Movement Studies, fostering their research in progress. The *Mostra Temática* [Thematic Showing] was focused on "Body and Matter". Dancers, performers, actresses and actors, visual artists, and choreographers were invited to create works pertinent to the theme. *Improviso* brought together artists from various areas for a collective improvisation, and the Insertion Circuit¹⁴ (that was featured in the October agenda of the Series in the same year) was meant to bring to Casa Hoffmann researchers from Academia whose work was relevant for the development of an artistic thought focused on contemporary issues. It aimed to gather audiences, artists, and scholars, thus establishing a dialog between academic research, the studies carried on at Casa Hoffmann, and the art scene of Curitiba.

It became evident for this group of artists that for an artistic community to emerge in our town, some kind of action was necessary in order to bring different aesthetic agendas together, to foster inclusion and, also, to protect ourselves against the (culturally inherited?) self-destruction trait, working towards an aggressive self-control of our own self-destructive condition. It was necessary to face it: if Curitiba is self-destructive toward its artists, we, the artists in town, are actually the ones who embody such a behavior.

Therefore, we talked about finding a new way of perceiv-

ing and relating to each other, in which the profusion of ideas was the priority. It was necessary to understand that the unbearable habit of blaming a city for all the evils of a boring artistic scene—as if a mysterious and invincible fog would circumscribe our geographical territory—was something of a cynicism worthy of the mediocrity that surrounded us. To change this scenario would mean, above all, to be mindful toward this self-defensive behavior and to work effectively to expel the introjected thought from our conduct, assuming the role of a community that empowers all of its artists by empowering each of them, and that supports its own existence as a collective by respecting each of its own artists.

Thus, the objective of the Performance Act Series was, from the beginning, to open the doors of Casa Hoffmann to foster dialog in the artistic community, extending and multiplying the information that was generated in that research center, by boosting such information through performance creation. The curators and event organizers took up several tasks, including press releases, the design of programs and posters, the coffee preparation to welcoming the audience, and hosting the artists.

er, sculptor, and poet Hans Arp, thus beginning the Dada movement. Russian folkloric dance, polyphonic readings of different poems, bizarre dances with masks, Lao-Tsé quotations, and texts by the mystic Jacob Böhme, among additional kinds of expression used to be presented at Cabaret Voltaire. (Source: the Dada Dictionary/*Dada: Monograph of a Movement*, by Hans Bolliger and Willy Verkauf).

^[11] The expression in English is meant to merge the aviation code for Curitiba (CWB) and "In-side" to focus what takes place in the city of Curitiba (both geographically and at its core), but also outside of the circuits of conventional art.

^[12] Rocio Infante claims that her proposal for the event *Improviso* was presented to Casa Hoffmann's curators Andrea Lerner and Rosane Chamecki before the existence of Performance Act Series. According to Infante, her proposal made possible the reception found at Casa Hoffmann for the additional events. In spite of this, *Improviso* integrated the Performance Act Series.

^[13] The analysis presented in this essay, therefore, is not impartial, although I aim to offer the stance of someone who had the privilege of being among those who conceived/ witnessed the initiative, as also seeking a critical/ self-critical distancing to read the facts under scrutiny. Other organizers and curators might disagree with aspects of this article.

^[14] When the *Circuito Inserções* was created, the schedule of events had already been closed. Because of this, the event took place on Fridays

An additional and equally important aspect imbued in the event series was the intention to bring the audience closer to performance art and the frontier arts, allowing it to witness works in process,¹⁵ which discussed moral, physical or semantic limits.

Diversity, Contamination, and Identity

A certain perplexity assails us when we think about the cultural identity of Curitiba. We do not see a clear picture of the history of its cultural production, and artists seldomly acknowledge or credit the artistic influence they received from their peers.

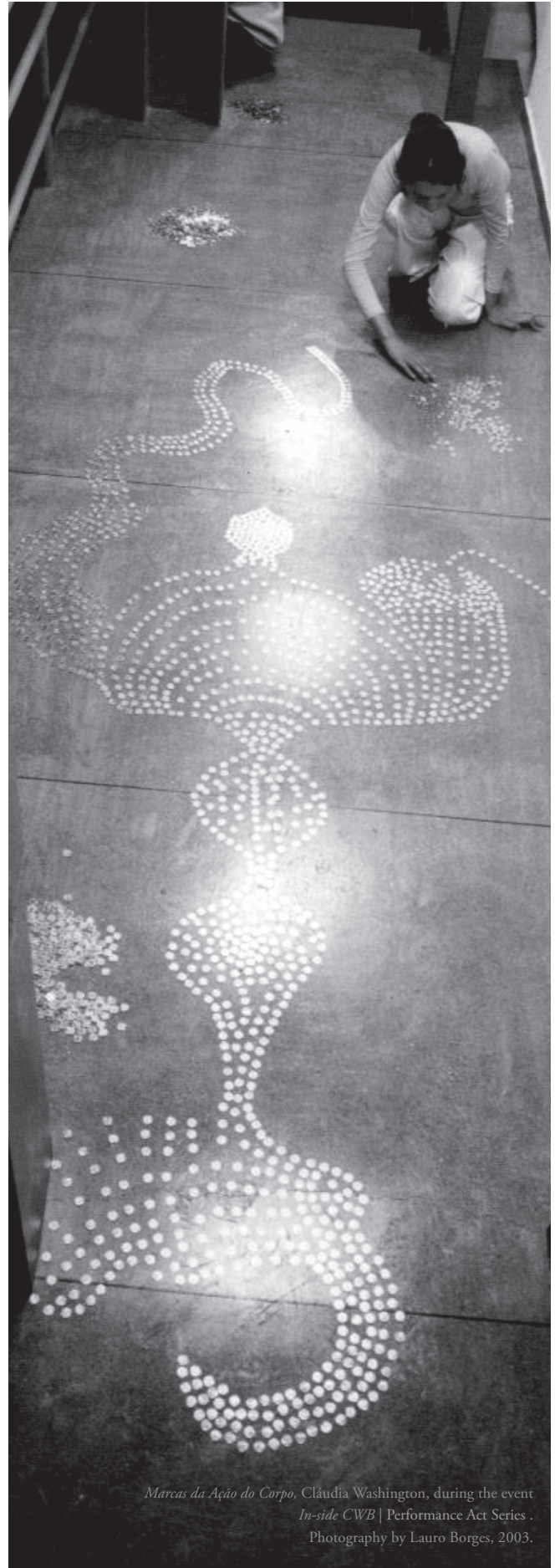
Nevertheless, it is possible to find previous gatherings, movements, and artists in Curitiba's art history, who did work toward a mentality that is similar to the one found in the Performance Act Series. In the 1980s, for example, some groups such as *Convergência* (1980–1981), *Bicicleta* (1982), and *Moto Contínuo* (1983) brought new vitality to the art scene in the city. From *Moto Contínuo*, artists such as Raul Cruz, Geraldo Leão, Mohamed Ali El Assal, Denise Bandeira, Eliane Prolik, and Rossana Guimarães started emerging with individual art productions.

Reflecting on *Moto Contínuo* and the newspaper/manifesto/artwork released by the group in 1983 as an addition in the newspaper *O Estado do Paraná*,¹⁶ Paulo Reis states that:

The experimentation of *Moto Contínuo* opened itself to artistic expressions out in the streets, open discussions, posters, and the collaboration of poets, musi-

rather than on Tuesdays, as the usual program.

^[15] It is important to stress that interest upon work in process is found in other events in Curitiba. In 2003, the group Multiprocessador also created events in which the audience took part in its process research. The Cia. do Abraço has featured *Abraço entre Amigos* [*Abraço among Friends*] and ACT – Ateliê de Criação Teatral [Theatre Creation Workshop] normally opens its doors to showings of the research process of the group. The Performance Act Series, however, shows not only the processes by artists who are connected to Casa Hoffmann, but also by other artists from the city, as it may be verified in the objectives of each event. This article focuses on the production that is related to the Performance Act Series, and it will not address other actions found in Curitiba.



Marcas da Ação do Corpo, Cláudia Washington, during the event
In-side CWB | Performance Act Series .
Photography by Lauro Borges, 2003.

cians, and dancers, focused as it was upon a radical search in the artistic environment (...) *Moto Continuo's* use of the newspaper took for itself the construction/creation/implementation of a space where people could engage in public discussion. With the gradual recuperation of civil liberties by the process of political opening in the 1980s, they conquered public space, institutional space, academic space, and the space that was open for artistic and intellectual enjoyment. Such was the space of poetry and of a new expanded possibility of freedom.¹⁷

Moto Continuo, however, did not influence the Performance Act Series. Yet, one could ask why no historical bonds exist between these actions. Why was not there a dialog between them? One might wonder whether the creation of a community intended by the Performance Act Series also leads to a quest on the understanding of its own identity¹⁸ and of the contemporary art history in Curitiba, whether or not in an experimental sense.

It is plausible to ask whether a search for identity will not resonate as one of the most remarkable features of the Series: its diversity. Be it for the diversity of curatorial thoughts or for their attempt to understand the local scene, the Performance Act Series did not seem to be an event that was done for a certain group of artists or to respond to the scope of a single aesthetic agenda; rather, it was a receptive space that embraced what was happening in the local scene.

In the book *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*, Zygmunt Bauman discusses the promise of the modern project to set the individual free from inherited identity, transforming the issue of duty into one of doing. In other words, to construct an identity in modernity was an individual task for which the individual was responsible (Bauman, 1997). As we address postmodernity, however, the concept of identity becomes fragmented and we notice that the “[...] contemporary person lives in a permanent confrontation with an enormous multiplicity of possible and changing identities and may, temporarily, establish something in common with them” (Carreira 2002).¹⁹

For Bauman the postmodern identity is “[...] a series of ‘new beginnings,’ experimenting with instantly assembled yet easily dismantled shapes, painted one over the other...” (Bauman 1997, 24).

On the basis of postmodern theory, trying to seek an

identity would thrust us into historical contradictions. To understand their scene's identity, however, seems to be urgent for the Performance Act Series curators, whether or not the concept of 'identity' embodies mutability. Other questions arise during this process: is it possible to regard a cultural identity after the immense influence of European, North American, Eastern, and Brazilian artists from various regions that came to Casa Hoffman to share their creative processes and research? What is the borderline of influence, contamination, and acculturation? What do we in fact produce and whom do we talk to? What kind of hybrid identity takes shape as a result of the direct exchange with the artists-instructors at Casa Hoffmann?

What we see through the events of Performance Act Series is the result of the contamination of all the aesthetic currents studied and experienced during the workshops, as they merged with the individual creative drive of each artist (clearly seen at the event *Da Casa*). Above all, it is of note the interaction of this contamination with artists who never attended the Casa Hoffmann workshops and who come from different and diverse thinking, schools and interests (as seen in the events *Improviso*, *In-side CWB*, and *Mostra Temática*).²⁰ Often this diversity was the driving force behind the dialogues about the art that was presented at Casa Hoffmann, creating both exchange and conflicts.

It is relevant to emphasize the contamination experienced by the artists who attended the Casa Hoffmann

^[16] The newsletter/manifesto/work had eight pages that were used by the six artists and by the poets Alberto Puppi, Josely Baptista, the writer and journalist Cesar Bond, and the illustrator Foca.

^[17] Reis, P., “Moto Continuo”, Electronic magazine *Lendo Arte*. [Our translation into English]

^[18] The concept of identity emerges from the Age of Enlightenment. According to Hall (1999), the subject of Enlightenment “was based upon a concept of the human being as a totally centered and unified person who had the capacities of reason, consciousness, and action.”

^[19] “A (des)construção da identidade na obra de José Saramago” [Identity deconstruction in José Saramago's works], and article by Dr. Shirley de Souza Gomes Carreira, UNIGRANRIO. [Our translation into English]

^[20] As the popular art by Hélio Leites, Kátia Horn, and Mundaréu



(1) *Ela*, Andréa Obrecht. Photography by Frederico Medeiros; (2) Clóvis Cunha and Fábio Salvatti. Photography by Fernando Augusto; (3) *fmdocomeço*, Lauro Borges. Photography by Fernando Augusto. Events (1 and 3) *Da Casa* | (2) *Circuito Inserções*. Performance Act Series – Casa Hoffmann, 2003.



(1) *Corpos Intensificados*, Andréa Serrato,
Photography by Fernando Augusto;
(2) *Desenhos de uns sexos*, Ricardo Marinelli
and Wesley Soares. Photography by Fernando
Augusto; (3) *Multiprocessador*, Júlio
Silveira, Henrique Horn, and Pablo Colbert.
Photography by Luiz Cequinel.
Events (1 and 2) *Da Casa* | (3) *Improvviso*.
Performance Act Series –
Casa Hoffmann, 2003.



workshops in 2003: a total of 15 workshops; contact with 17 instructors; more than 10 different creative processes, which involved aesthetics, procedures, training, and various philosophies—sometimes complementary, sometimes paradoxical. An overwhelming flow of information²¹ reframed thinking and movement patterns in the bodies of these artists. The confluence of all this information triggered the reformulation of creative potential, seen either in the beginning of the maturation of the individual processes of each artist, or in the unfiltered contamination to which these same artists were exposed. We were able to witness the most diverse experiments, which were sometimes naive, sometimes grandiloquent in their simplicity or sophistication. Experimenting became the word of freedom, which could only be fully realized because the artists found a home and a group that welcomed the diversity of their thinking; a group that despite explicit aesthetic differences, relied on the cooperation of the group, which included the search for frankness and generosity in the criticism and reception of their respective works.

With the objective of opening Casa Hoffmann to the public and the local artists, the proposals of the Performance Act Series featured diversity, eloquence, and generosity. A total of 19 events took place in 2003,²² with the participation of more than 50 artists, companies, and researchers—both from within Casa Hoffmann and from other venues—, bringing together an average audience of 40 per evening.²³ The spectators/participants shared performances, conversations, discussions, and coffee and cake with the artists, curators, and organizers.

An initial mapping of our local art began to be done, gathering at the same space current research on visual, performing, and musical arts, as well as on theory. If it was not possible to find an ‘identity,’ the Series allowed for the opening of perception and recognition of various local manifestations and investigations, placing at the center of our vision what was cast to the margins or to the make-believe of non-existence. What is also to say: local artists from the most diverse areas began to have a face for their own ‘community’.²⁴

Community and the Paradox of Contemporary Experimentation

In the Chapter, “Postmodern Art, or the Impossibility of the Avant-garde,” Bauman, states that:

The concept of the avant-garde conveys the idea of an essentially orderly space and time, and of an essential coordination of the two orders. In a world in which one can speak of the avant-garde, ‘forward’ and ‘backward’ have, simultaneously, spatial and temporal dimensions.

For this reason it does not make much sense to speak of the avant-garde in the postmodern world. Surely, the postmodern world is anything but immobile—everything in that world is on the move; but the moves seem random, dispersed and devoid of clear-cut direction (first and foremost a cumulative direction). It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to judge their ‘advanced’ or ‘retrograde’ nature, since the past coordination between spatial and temporal dimensions has all but fallen apart.... (1997, 95)

If, on one hand, the desire to create a community was influenced, partly and substantially, by the 20th century avant-garde art, on the other, we know that there is no point in looking toward the creation of an avant-gard²⁵ movement anymore, even if experimentation, non-conformist positions, and risk are often present in the actions of these artists. Paradoxically, the Performance Act Series featured the avant-garde and messianic goal of allowing for the dialog with experimentation and questioning art

Group; the performances by Nara Heemann and Margit Leisner; the theatrical research of group PalavrAção; and the musical improvisations by Ângelo Esmanhoto and Edith de Camargo.

[21] The contact with the butoh of Tatsumi Hijikata brought by scholar Nanako Kurihara and dancer Ko Murobushi; the influence of post-drama, of feminist theory, and of performance art; the contemporary dance techniques *Flying-Low*, by David Zambrano, and *Solo (Re)Working*, by Thomas Plischke and Katrin Deufert; the contact with the creative processes of Sarah Michelson, La Ribot, and Lia Rodrigues; and the contact with the philosophy of Deleuze-Guattari, Bachelard, and Merleau-Ponty, brought by André Lepecki and Eleonora Fabião are examples of the information range.

[22] From September 2 through December 2, 2003.

[23] Source: administrative records of Daici de Lara, Casa Hoffmann’s Coordinator.

[24] The word ‘community’ appears in quotation marks to emphasize contradiction.

[25] The term generally means experimental, innovative, heading an ar-

that was established in Curitiba, while it also desired—unlike avant-garde movements—to create a space for the coexistence of diverse artistic actions, so that ‘artistic ideal’ and ‘personal taste’ were not necessarily tied to the decisions of its different curators (which sometimes also generated conflicts with the artistic ideals of the curators themselves).

The influence of the avant-garde art is present in the actions of these contemporary artists; nevertheless, there is a disconnection in their objectives. If, we take as a fact, that the Series was conceived in a moment that these artists started working toward mapping their local scene to recognize its fragility by fostering critical discussions among artists and audience in a constructive environment, it is plausible to conclude that these very artists have a previous understanding that their local art is not compelling. In this regard, we return to a characteristic that is found in all avant-garde movements: the desire to break up with established art and the belief to be looking ‘forward’ or to ‘something better’. The contradiction resides in the fact that ‘looking forward’—the possibility that has been rejected by Bauman—makes no sense when contemporary experimentation does not tear, but seeks the avant-garde movements of the past, ‘looking backwards.’ The paradox—it is necessary to emphasize—resides in the fact that the goal of Performance Act Series was not to set hierarchies of quality among the various works presented at Casa Hoffmann.

Although the goal had been to recognize local production, it was only later that it became clear, along the curatorial and organization process of every Tuesday night, that this group did not wish to ‘accelerate’ any artistic processes as the modernist avant-garde groups did. It wished to offer space for the coexistence of the manifestations allowing for them to perceive each other. Therefore, works that are strongly divergent regarding their aesthetic concepts and understanding of the role of the interpreter, performer, and of art itself,²⁶ were featured at Casa Hoffman in the same evening program.

But what about the search for a community? Do the dispersion and the casual dynamics mentioned by Bauman also apply to our goals? Can we talk about collective interests in the current historical and cultural context (and I do not refer only to Curitiba but to the contemporary scene in general)? Might the values of the artistic communities that we mentioned as influences be too distant and even limited to their original contexts? Is the action

of allowing for the contact among artists enough to begin the creation of a community? Or might perhaps each individual join and detach oneself from the collective proposals in a succession of experiments and exchanges? Did a mentality focused on the artistic community beyond Casa Hoffmann begin to be created? Was an artistic community created at Casa Hoffmann? Is the duration of collective interest a determinant factor in the legitimation of a collective action?

Risk and Exposition against Provincial Puritanism

In the contemporary scene, the procedures that function by means of using relativistic modes, superimposed and simultaneous narratives, the merging of text/images and subliminal signs, the possibility of reading the fragment, are coherent with the mental linkages of our time (...) We are facing a new episteme, in which ‘harmony, balance, and proportion are replaced by disharmony and narratives that have no closed meaning’ (Michael Heuvel apud Cohen).²⁷ This leap, which breaks up with paradigms dating back to Plato and Aristotle, establishes a second revolution in modernity or, according to some authors, a passage from the modern into the post-modern. (Cohen 1998, 22)²⁸

Performance art implies the risk of action. Curitiba is a city with a moralist and provincial mentality. We, as artists, are a result of this context and struggle to change this condition—not to force any revolutionary social transformation, but because our art surpasses such a mentality. Curitiba is, above all, a town that discredits itself when it believes too hard in its art produced for friends.

The Performance Act Series proposed exposure and risk.

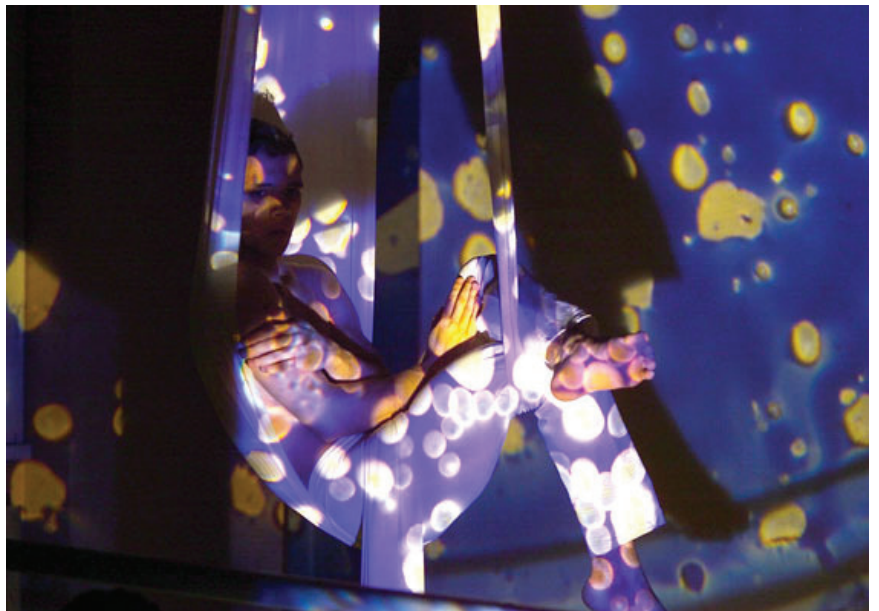
istic or literary movement or trend. Avant-garde literature and art are against tradition and convention. (Source: *The Oxford Companion to the Theater*, Fourth Edition.)

[26] This was more evident in the events In-side CWB and *Improviso*.

[27] Quotation apud Cohen from Michael V. Heuvel. *Performing Dramal Dramatizing Performance*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991.

[28] [Our translation into English]

- (1) *sem nome*, Lucianne Figueiredo.
Photography by Fernando Augusto;
(2) *Corpos Projetados*, Fausto Franco.
Photography by Fernando Augusto;
(3) *Resultados podem variar*, Angelo Cruz.
Photography by Fernando Augusto.
Da Casa | Performance Act Series –
Casa Hoffmann, 2003.



It wished to create a community that challenges itself rather than one that ages enclosed in fixed concepts. It wished to foster art that is able to perceive both its frailty and its potential. These objectives are ambitious for those who come from a defensive local culture. Our town, and we might as well say our artists, carry provincial and conservative values. This is perceived both in the majority of works performed in the city, and in the lack of newspaper space for local critics who are able to establish a dialog with experimentation and works that subvert Cartesian and Aristotelian narratives.

When the public experiences performances by artists with such different approaches as the cruel lyricism of *Tempus Fugit*, by Maria Inês Hamann, the chiding sarcasm of the play *O Cavalo de Bronze e o Domador de Circo* [The Bronze Horse and the Circus Tamer], by Companhia Silenciosa, and the objective elegance and intelligence of visual artist Cláudia Washington in the work *Marcas da Ação do Corpo* [Signs of the Body Action], people may ask themselves: “What is happening?”²⁹ Apparently, this perplexity causes the audience to notice that many things are happening away from the city’s non-alert look. At the same time, it also provokes a certain confrontation and often uneasiness regarding the artistic ideals of the Performance Act Series curators and organizers, who have been committed to work with such diversity.

As we address the Performance Act Series, we talk about an experimentation and recognition field, where the body with the full load of its functions, cultururation and identities—social, sexual, economic, and political, among others—is placed in a checkmate. In this space of experimentation we could rarely see ‘beautiful’ plots grounded upon a Cartesian logic. Rather, there were dialogic and idiosyncratic experiments, and above all, open works with multiple possible readings.

In a review for the newspaper *Gazeta do Povo*, of December 2, 2003, the critic Joanita Ramos wrote:

The organizers of the Performance Act Series do not give up insisting upon the essential aspect of art: provoking a question, even regarding the meaning of art itself. Thus, if a stairway suits the performance of one of the artists, it is salutary for someone to ask: is it a stairway or is it also art from 7 to 8 p.m.?

The polyphony, the simultaneity, the fragmented attention of the audience who controls the zapping action,³⁰

the freedom to come and go, the choice of participating or not, and of paying attention or being disperse were very common during the events *Da Casa*; the coexistence of explicitly different aesthetics frequently appeared during In-side CWB; the multiplicity of stances regarding the same theme/object and the interference of specific backgrounds in the construction of these stances were the basis of the *Mostra Temática*; chaos, lack of action and the anarchic diversity marked the nights of the event *Improviso*.

The talks that took place among the curators, artists, and the audience after each event were meant to broaden the reception of the works and allowed the audiences to experience an additional level of relationship with the alternative scene, while the artists gained important feedback from the audience regarding their works in process.

Something will happen. Something is already happening.³¹

The effervescent body above all underscores the material quality of the body: its lower regions, its fluids, its exchanges of interior and exterior surfaces and depths, its procreative function, and its union with other bodies—in short, its fleshiness. (Banes 1993, 235)

I witnessed, in the works that these artists and researchers were searching and proposed to share at Casa Hoffmann—and it should be clear that there are many arts and many paths—an intense commitment to communicate concepts, sensations, desires, utopias, and uncertainties. In fact, this is what art generally does. The substantial

[29] This questioning was clear in the perplex audience looks during In-side CWB on October 7, 2003, when these artists who were mentioned performed.

[30] The term refers to the action of continually shifting TV channels on the remote control and seeing just parts of many programs/channels. The action of zapping has also become common in the Internet. (Sources: *O Globo* / June 12, 2000; *O Estado de S. Paulo* / June 26, 2000, and *ZapMania*). I apply the term here regarding the events that featured simultaneous performances throughout the space of Casa Hoffmann.

[31] Deleuze & Guattari (p.12)

matter is that such communication has been broadened by the availability of an audience that began to become familiar with polyphony and aesthetic diversity, as well as to experience the artists' works, both for the simple willingness to observe them and for choosing what they want to see, as for interacting with the featured performances.³² In addition, there was the availability of the artists who began to 'converge their islands' by getting closer to each other, exchanging experiences as they shared their work, broadening their artistic practice and creating a field of motivation and effervescence. Between invention and influence, contamination and originality, artists from very different areas showed their work to an alert and receptive public.

Would this be the beginning of a strong artistic community in Curitiba? It is too soon to embrace a positive answer, but Casa Hoffmann and this group may very possibly represent a significant historical shift in the artistic and aesthetic production in the making.

The stimulus offered by Leonel Brum and Sarah Michelson not only had surprisingly quick results, but was also very effective. The Performance Act Series was a direct and legitimate result of the meetings made possible by Casa Hoffmann and by the fact that it was a space envisioned as a state-of-the-art research center in town. The enormous amount of information could only lead to the overflow, which was revealed in the Tuesday night showings. It is evident, however, that all this process represents the initial impulsion; a process that needs time in order for these very investigations to reach maturity and to create a solid base, which will be capable of supporting the continuation of these artists' research. ♦

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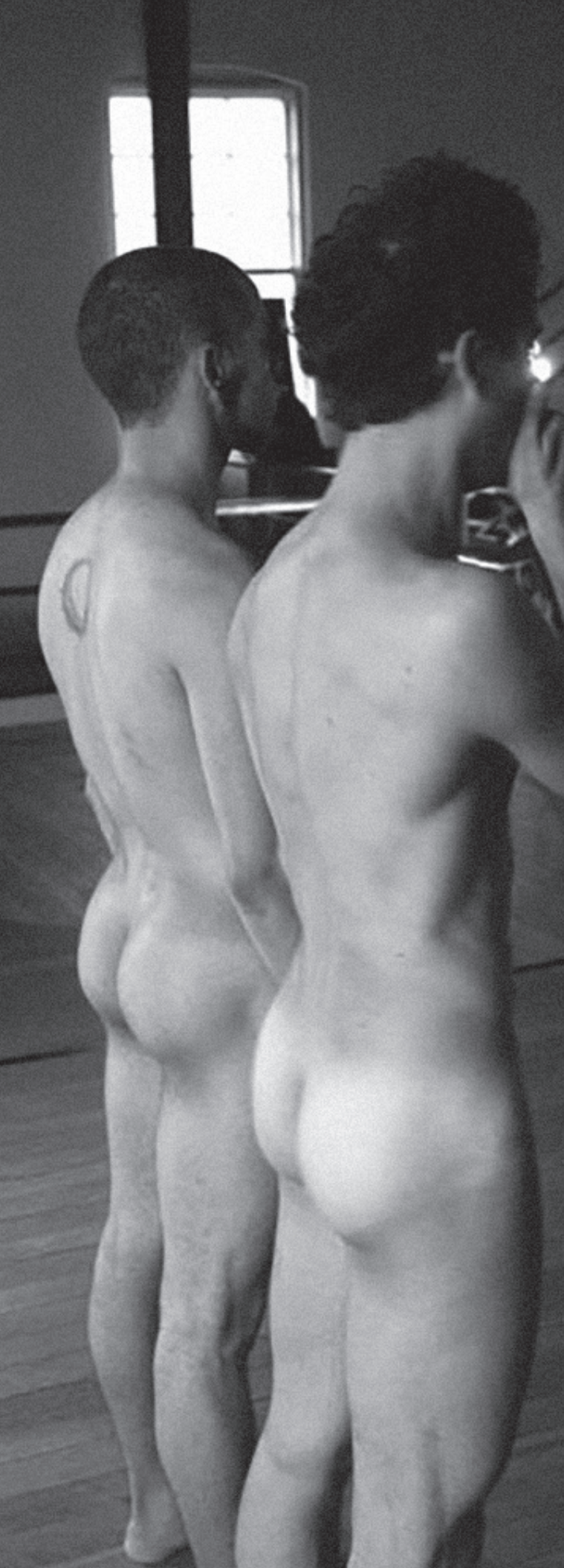
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Cristiane Bouger (1977) is artistic director, playwright, and performer. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Performing Arts – Direction, at Faculdade de Artes do Paraná [College of Arts of Paraná] in 2002. She had a scholarship for the course of Contemporary Philosophy at Instituto Paraná Desenvolvimento [Paraná Development Institute], with philosopher Olavo de Carvalho and economist José Monir Nasser (2001–2003). She was an Artist-in-Residence at Casa Hoffmann – Centro de Estudos do Movimento [Center for Movement Studies] (2003) and received a scholarship to participate of the Summer Institute at The Kitchen / Sarah Lawrence College, in New York (2004). Her own works feature: *The Last Supper* (1999), *Polifônica Sincrética* [Ode to Persephone] (2001), *Red A Hundred 40/ Vermelho 140* (2003), and *Sensuality in (and) America* (2004). She is the author of the script and director of the video documentary *Community, Activism and the Downtown Scene – an independent documentary about the experimental scene in New York*. She was one of the curators of the Performance Act Series – Casa Hoffmann and a member of the editorial board of the electronic magazine *Relâche*.

^[32] Works as *findocomeço* [endofthebeginning], by photographer and performer Lauro Borges, and the installation *Corpos Intensificados* [Intensified Bodies], by choreographer Andréa Serrato, are examples of pieces that were open to interaction with the audience.



Desenhos de uns sexos, Ricardo Marinelli and Wesley Soares
Da Casa | Performance Act Series – 2003
Photography by Fernando Augusto

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