

## Dossiê 3

Novas perspectivas de aprendizagem

# DIALOGICAL PROCEDURES IN DESIGN AND AUTHORSHIP: A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE PROJECTS DEVELOPED BY LABMODAR

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## **Abstract**

Dialogue is a practice that builds common spaces and makes possible both the appearance of new ideas and change points of view. It is purposed, in the following article, the appliance of the dialogue as a practice in contemporary Design, in which is recognized the need of broaden the approach of processes, projects, products and authorship. The last one will be discussed also as a dialogical practice in two modalities of Design project, collaboration and co-creation.

**Keywords:** Dialogical practices in Design; Collaboration; Co-creation.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The piece presented here is formulated from the notes – that perhaps should've be called “reports of experience” – about the construction of a procedural dynamic in Fashion Design, based on Dialogue. This dynamic has been designed throughout approximately ten years, in which this author has been part of the board of teachers of Anhembi Morumbi University, at the Structuring Core of the Fashion Design Graduation Program<sup>1</sup>. It is fundamental to point out that the referred Program has as compasses the relations between innovation, experimentation and sustainability, aiming to form professionals capable to relate with the subjects-users in order to propose to materialize a project of existence. Thereby, students become designers, since their approaches are symbolic, political, material, economical and, above all, ethycal, attentive to the needs and desires of these subjects inserted in societies and cultures. Its activity differs from that of the stylist, since the universe in which it operates is beyond the construction of objects for lifestyles, distancing itself from the construction of the appearance guided by tendencies.

To mold this professional, it is understood, is to model a desirable future for the field of Design, based on sustainable and ethical values, and that gradually alter the general perceptions regarding the field of Fashion Design. It is important to remind that, back in the early 2000s, in the universities of Brazil, when defining Fashion, it was used the systematic construction understood by Lipovetsky (2009), that Fashion would be par excellence ephemeral, seasonal and nourished by the desire for novelties. In the passage from the first to the second decade of the twenty-first century, discussions about these values found those about sustainability, which then sought to resolve environmental issues. Fashion brands launched their collections promoting, with some noise, actions of “neutralization” of the carbon footprint left in the production of the pieces shown.

Therefore, this discussion and neutralization actions<sup>2</sup> were emptied, since they were mostly ineffective. The production continued to waste resources, generating waste and using low-paid labor and, as has been known since the nineteenth century, often operating in inadequate facilities, under conditions often analogous to slavery, without regulation, and by labor- immigrant work, illegal and deprived of the rights reserved to citizens and immigrants in more favorable situations.

Aware of this reality, some graduation programs have invested in a deeper understanding of sustainability and its implications, including a transformation in the production chain of fashion products. Concepts such as Resilience, Lowsumerism, Minimal Waste, Circular Economy, Upcycling, among others, and especially Co-Creative, Collective and Collaborative productions (FLETCHER: GROSE, 2011; SALCEDO, 2014). Within the scope of what is investigated within the university, each of these concepts has its moment of investigation, however, for purposes of factual realization of the extension project, it became necessary to better understand how to use the Co-productive / projective / inventive Design, and then modeled a thought in Dialogue to do Design.

This happens because it was taken as a concept that Design is a project activity carried out from people to people and with people. As a sheltered field under the umbrella of Design, Fashion Design does not escape this definition.

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<sup>1</sup> Anhembi Morumbi University has two Graduation Programs in Fashion: one in Fashion Business and the other in Fashion Design.  
<sup>2</sup> It was quite common for brands to come up with solutions such as planting a number of trees, or buying carbon credits, as realized by Osklen in 2008, cf. Toss (2011)

It begins with the proposition of Dialogue, as construction of a conceptual model, first read in the work of Maurício Ianês and complemented by the orientations of Amos Oz in the intention to propose “better ideas”. These are two works, one visual and the other literary, that guide the implementation of the dynamics of LabModAR, an extension group formed in Fashion Graduation Program at Anhembi Morumbi University, which carries out collective, co-creative, socially and environmentally responsible projects. economically viable through the participation of supporters. About the Lab and the projects it has done, it will be dealt with later.

## **2 ABOUT THE PROJETO PÉROLA AND THE FORMATION OF LABMODAR, OR THE MEETING OF FASHION WITH RESILIENCE**

Over the last decade, many investigations and proposed projects have been carried out in which group work, the look at sustainability - addressing both materiality and procedures, and increasingly, a look at the subject user's Design object been developed and refined. Many were the opportunities to carry out these propositions, but, it is possible to put as landmark the year of 2011, in which the Bachelor's in Business and Fashion Design were approached by Dr. Faride Amar Cohen and Mrs. Carmelina Amadei to support the Spring Show promoted by the Reference Center on Women's Health Hospital Pérola Byington<sup>3</sup>, offering clothes that had been produced by the students.

At that time, already involved in research on sustainability but still unable to completely disentangle from some pre-established models of production of parts for an industry that chooses to standardize bodies and the ways these bodies formulate their existence in society, has encountered a problem. Yes, there was a lot of work done, all of which culminated in the production of garments, but few - probably at that time, none - served real bodies (read bodies larger than size 36 in the middle grades of production measurements).

At the other end, the women served, it was known, did not fit this pattern, and some of them had, by virtue of the treatments to which they were being subjected, undergone changes that reached in full their formulation of identity and the construction of self-esteem.

It was the very moment in which the Projeto Pérola was found. A small group of teachers and students began to craft a collection and tried to build from donated pieces by the patients themselves, new garments. Some teachers took to their classes the activity of disassembling the pieces and reassembling surfaces, and so happened the first collection developed for this partnership. All this process was experimental, of experiencing and overcoming difficulties as they were presenting themselves, and at that moment, the project was limited to the production of clothes and accessories.

Already in 2012, however, the group had learned from the experience and wanted to make the Project a more complete experience. In addition to conceiving a collection based on a concept (and not a theme), it was sought to know better the patients, their

<sup>3</sup> RCWH Hospital Pérola Byington is a public health network hospital linked to the State Government of São Paulo and located in the central region of the city of São Paulo. Provides hospital care in the gynecological area, highlighting the treatment of gynecological and breast cancer, human reproduction, family planning, sterility, sexuality, sexual violence and urogynecology. In addition to the medical-hospital performance, it promotes community health education, research, teaching, technology development and exchange with teaching institutions, serving the metropolitan region of Greater São Paulo.

questions and experiences, the history of their lives and the difficulties they experienced, besides what they expected for the moment of the Show. A choreographed and scoped performance was conceived, accompanied by track and video of the patients' testimonies and presented in the amphitheater of the Anhembi Morumbi University campus, Downtown. From this presentation, the partnership between the two entities was consolidated, making the Project appear in the calendar of extracurricular activities of the Graduation Program of Fashion Design of the Anhembi Morumbi University.

The group of teachers involved in coordinating the project remained essentially the same since the first event, which was very important so that one could understand the value of using the skills developed throughout the individual careers to build a collaborative project. Then, the invitation for the students to experience co-creation in voluntary activity and free of the assignment of notes, acting in diverse fronts. Some, having the opportunity, discovered traditional possibilities of materialization and, therefore, relegated to obsolescence, such as needle techniques (crochet, knitting, embroidery and loom). These apprenticeships, conducted in workshops, predicted error, mismatch, and uneven construction of wearable surfaces and structures, a practice that bridges the irregularities of the bodies of ordinary women.

However common, these specific bodies that the group planned to wear also involved other irregularities resulting from surgeries and other procedures related to the treatment of female cancer. It was then that Resilience was adopted as a concept to build a guiding line for the processes, which could govern and guide raw material choices and procedures. Resilience is adopted as the physical property of matter to recover after suffering a strong impact, but also the reading of psychology, as described by Barlach (2005), who understands resilience as a rereading of reality on the part of the one who suffers from adversity (or trauma) in order to produce new meanings and references, and thereby becomes capable of proposing innovative solutions to existing and latent problems.

By adopting Resilience as a project leader, we adopt the stance and understanding that there is a medium hit by an impact from which it needs to recover. Of course, an analogy was made with the cancer patient's own cure, but for the designers involved in the project, the recovery to be done should be done on the professional activity.

Figura 1: Backstage of ExtraOrdinário Show, from LabModAR to Projeto Pérola, 2017. Mrs. Júlia, model-patient from RCWH Pérola Byington, and Regina Barbosa Ramos, LabModAR's coordinator.



Source: LabModAR

It is necessary to retake the conceptualization on what would be the Fashion System, a pattern in which the fashion making fit into the first decade of the twenty-first century and that goes back to the relations of imitation and differentiation between nobility and bourgeoisie dating from the end of the middle ages (LIPOVETSKY, 2009). Such systematization of the professional practice of the fashion designer should be governed by constant renewal, seasonality and therefore obsolescence. However, in a context in which sustainability issues are discussed, not only in environmental, but in social and economic terms, and in which it is perceived, for example, that the disposal of finished parts and waste from the textile industry can not continue to be practiced in the same way (not to mention practices that pollute the environment, excessive use of water, the nature of the fibers used and unhealthy working relationships), it is necessary to rethink a whole project of Fashion System. It is also part of this questioning the production and business models, and consequently the monetary, social, cultural and even affective values attributed to these pieces.

With so many surrounding issues, a group was formed to develop the Projeto Pérola, which at first was called Fashion and Resilience Collective of Fashion Design.

Thus, a model of thought about Design was consolidated in consonance with the concept of Resilience, and, since the group had as main occupation the construction of a collection project, also was opened space for the formulation of a horizontal practice of project, in which individual authorship is replaced by collective creation. Certainly, the figure of the project coordinator has not been abolished, but its function is to mediate a collective process.

Such a construction allows the contents to be translated in different ways, and decisions are taken together, with shared responsibilities and knowledge.

Image 2: Stencil Workshop - LabModAR to Projeto Pérola, 2018.



Source: LabModAR.

The groups is formed not only by professionals and it is open to anyone who wishes to support and learn (figura 2).

After some years as Fashion and Resilience and observing the internal dynamics of the group, it was proposed to rename it.

It was then that, in 2017, the collective was called LabModAR, in which the practices are experimental, the projects are of Fashion, but that in addition to Resilience,

it also adopts the Resistance and the Recovery of Handicrafts. Resistance is understood as the refusal to submit to existing models and practices already consolidated by a stale market. Resistance is also the constant exercise of rethinking the context of Design and the fashion designer in the contemporary. It is understood, therefore, that the making of a designer is not only a function practiced within an industry, but, if the designer plays the role of symbolic mediator before a society and, by this means, it is intended to belong to a community, its production and profession is political, although nonpartisan.

In the Recovery of Handicrafts, also recovers the collective and dialogic practice of producing knowledge and coexistence and replicates the idea of a design made by people, people and people.

Finally, in the spelling of the name of the group, it was decided to write the last two letters in the upper box, to “air” the discussions, to oxygenate practices and thoughts, to renew ideas, to bring an infinitive idea of a verb, of constant action.

The group’s coordination, however, saw the need to work with models that outlined for the participants the methodology adopted. The Dialogue was recognized as a methodology and it was decided to approach it from the reading of the work of Mauricio Ianês, exhibited at the 28th Bienal de Arte de São Paulo in 2008, called Dialogue Area (Figura 3).

Maurício Ianês is from the city of Santos, born in 1973, Fine Arts graduated at Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation, São Paulo - SP. About what he produces, according to the curriculum published on the Prêmio PIPA website ([www.premiopipa.com/pag/mauricio-ianes](http://www.premiopipa.com/pag/mauricio-ianes)), to which he was nominated in 2014:

His work questions verbal and artistic languages, their expressive possibilities and limits, their political and social functions, often proposing the participation of the public in their actions to create situations of exchange where language and its social consequences come into play. Ianês searches for references and influences in philosophy, poetry, social criticism, literature and music.

As drawn by Ianês, the Dialogue Area, as it is composed of two interpenetrating parts, makes it perceptible that it is necessary for the parties engaged in the creation of the possibility of a dialogical exercise to become permeable and allow themselves to be contaminated by the other, relating in a balanced way in order to build a new area common to both parties.

Image 3: Área de Diálogo, Maurício Ianês, 2008.



Source: Image produced by Regina Barbosa Ramos.

It should be emphasized that in the modeling construction of the artist, the engaged parties remain intact, but the practice has, it is necessary to underline, a transforming potential.

At the same time, the reading of the work of Amos Oz<sup>4</sup> was taken, in *Como Curar Um Fanático* (published in Brasil by Companhia das Letras, 2016), who understands the conflicts - in the case of the aforementioned work, between Palestinians and Israelis - as resulting from “bad ideas”. Oz suggests that the way to get rid of bad ideas is to come up with better ideas, which emerge through the use of four practices, simultaneously: empathy, humor, art and dialogue.

In the same way, LabModAR adopts, for the consolidation of a dialogical practice of Design, what Oz calls “compromise agreement” (2016, p. 16), and that begins by “imagining other living rooms, other loves and other nightmares can make us leave our living room and go to meet the other person halfway the bridge” (OZ, 2014, p.16). Such practice deals mostly with the presences, similarities, recognitions (of the differences, inclusive) and common desires and less with the absences that complementarity presupposes, and allows the designer to place himself in a context in which he can experience different and convergent modes to exist.

In this way, the dialogic procedures in Design are permeated by empathy, the practice of imagining oneself in the condition of the other, understanding themselves and the other as coexisting alterities.

Regarding the art used to potentiate good ideas, Oz characterizes it as “the ability to make a third eye open on our forehead. Let us see old and beaten things in a whole new way” (2016, p. 13). In a similar way, we can design a practice in Design that approximates this understanding of art, characterized by the creation of spaces to destabilize visions and crystallized positions regarding itself, on the other, objects, projects, processes, spaces and, consequently, the very way in which the subject places himself in these relations and which characterizes his modes of existence.

The next practice, humor, Oz suggests through the use of *chutzpah*, the “subtle conjunction of faith, a tendency to argue and make humor of oneself. And it results in a particularly irreverent reverence” (2016, p. 31). It is then considered that in order to do Design in a dialogic environment, it takes a bit of *chutzpah*. It is necessary, in order to construct the new, to question the old, as said about art, to turn over concepts, to discuss - which is quite different from to discourse - and not to fear iconoclasm. Making you laugh and laugh at yourself are acts of disobedience in a field of sacredness and truth. Designers seek reliable and reliable definitions and categories for a changing environment that deals with the new, with the characteristic shifting relations of the period termed by Lipovetsky as Hypermodernity, inhabited by:

...ua liberal society characterized by movement, fluidity, flexibility; indifferent as before never went to the great structuring principles of modernity, which had to adapt to the hyper-modern rhythm not to disappear. (LIPOVETSKY, 2004, p. 26)

However, this context of Hypermodernity is partially correct, since from the mid-1990s “counter-tendencies that rediscover and re-evaluate in a decisive way the memory, the origins, the roots, the dense and slow time, the territory, nar- rations, ethnic,

<sup>4</sup> Amós Oz was born in Jerusalém in 1939. Since the 1960s he has devoted himself to an extensive literary production that includes novels, essays and critiques. As a writer and political activist, he is considered the most renowned Israeli intellectual of our day.



apart from sharing and expressive experimentation “(MORACE, 2009, p.15).

Thus, opting for humor can be “a reliable instrument of survival in a hostile world” (OZ, 2016, p. 31), because it enables bridges to be created among subjects willing to engage in dialogic practice and, hypermodern (dis)ordering. As for humor, Botelho defines it as “the consciousness of the grain of absurdity that exists in all human affairs” and “authentic humor” as that which “identifies with the object of its own laughter” (BOTELHO, 2014, p.16).

In this way, the practices in the dialogue unfold, whose figure suggested by Oz is that of Peninsular Man (figura 4), which, like the conversational forms of lanês, promote the perception of interferences, tensions, transformative possibilities constituted from such engagements, also identifying areas that need to be maintained intact. In order to introduce us to the Peninsular Man, Oz says that:

... no man is an island, but each of us is a peninsula: in part connected with the firm ground of family, society, tradition, ideology, etc. - and partly turned to the elements, alone and in deep silence. (OZ, 2016, p. 32)

Image 4: Conceptual Model of the Peninsular Subject, 2017.



Source: Regina Barbosa Ramos, 2017. Graphite and watercolor on paper

This construction coincides with the reading of Colapietro (1989 apud SALLES, 2014, p.151) who understands the subject as “distinguishable, but not separable from others, because his identity is constituted by relations with others.”

Thus, one can say that dialogue is a place “in between”, in which one experiences overlaps, tensions, spikes and the discovery of the voids left by these spirals, and which allow one to glimpse other realities that are not untouched and that do not are depopulated and / or devoid of mapping.

### 3 THE SEA BETWEEN US

In the last sub-section, the notes on the formation of a group were displayed from the proposition of a project. Over the years, components of the group have entered and exited, some have returned, others produce at a distance and as their daily lives permit. A group of individuals can come together to make a project happen, but it takes a collective, aligned look of contributions and desire to make it work, so that something that is done for the good of others and returns nothing but new discussions are maintained and carried out with excellence.

It was this context that received the project proposal in partnership with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), called The Sea Between Us.

This is a project in progress that began in 2017, through a graduate of the Fashion Design Program of Anhembi Morumbi University, and currently PhD student at RMIT, Fernanda Quilici Mola. It has built a possibility for dialogue between the two entities to investigate new approaches to an environmental problem that affects what separates the two largest countries in the Southern Hemisphere: the disposal of plastics in the oceans.

In the “ocean between us” float plastic islands that threaten the marine life, produced from nonrenewable resources and that will not be absorbed by nature. The proposal then was for each of the institutions to collect plastic, mainly from shopping bags, in a frank discussion about consumerism and waste, to exchange this material and to produce pieces, wearable accessories<sup>5</sup>. Skype meetings were held where each group was able to show a little of their approach to materials and projects.

From the dynamics of LabModAR, we could understand that the vocation of the group is to be guided by design. In this way they were developed in weekly meetings, and from the practices already exposed, by means of the techniques of crochet, manual weaving with loom and nails of fusion, surfaces that could be transformed into a casa-queto, a skirt, corsets, necklaces, props of head and bags (Images 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10).

Images 5 to 10: Samples of LabModAR's production to The Sea Between Us, 2017.



<sup>5</sup> O produto dessa investigação foi exibido entre Agosto e Setembro durante a Melbourne Fashion Week em uma locação chamada Tasma Terrace (<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/tasma-terrace/>). A exposição recebe o nome de The Illuminated Sea, the sea between us.







Source: LabModAR.

The Brazilian group learned the technique of fusion with the Australian group, and the exploration of this material has unfolded in other current projects of the LabModAR, such as the Projeto Pérola in 2018, in which accessories and fixtures are being constructed in plastic from bags discarded.

#### 4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The open channels in practices such as those presented here make it possible to rethink the materialities and materializations of a medium deeply linked to practices that derive from ephemerality, from seasonality in propositions that understand that innovation can be the result of the confrontation carried out from new approaches that challenge crystallized ideas, of authorship and disposability, and bring in values such as perennality, ethics, dialogue and co-authorship the possibility of creating a fertile ground for the construction of a possible Fashion Design in the near future in which the disruptive propositions are mainly propositive and positive.

Because it is not a solitary job, I open space in these final considerations to thank the LabModAR team, Eloize Navalon, Adriana Martinez and Fernanda Quilici Mola for the challenges proposed and resolved in dialogue.

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Received in: 24/09/2018

Accepted in: 14/11/2018