

De-Colonizing Art Institutions

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Paço Comunidade (Paço Community) Project / Paço Das Artes – São Paulo – Brazil

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**ONCURATING
PROJECT SPACE**

PAÇO COMUNIDADE (PAÇO COMMUNITY) PROJECT | PAÇO DAS ARTES – SÃO PAULO – BRAZIL

Paço Comunidade (Paço Community) is an art education project whose objective is to generate closer ties between Paço das Artes—an institution connected to the Culture Secretariat of the State of São Paulo—and the surrounding community. The program aims at expanding sociocultural accessibility, contributing to contemporary art training of the participants and encouraging the creative potential of these individuals based on the demands of the community itself.

It was from the perspective of rethinking its institutional role, aiming at creating devices that are more connected to the community surrounding the institution, that Paço das Artes created the project in 2013. Idealized by Priscila Arantes, the project was born from a basic perception: that most of the Paço das Artes visitors were middle to upper class, and that the population surrounding the Paço das Artes, especially the residents of the São Remo community, did not know or visit the institution. The project objective was to create a device that could somehow bring Paço das Artes closer to the people who lived nearby but who did not have access to what it provided. Based on this initial perception, we started investigating and mapping the region to bring us closer to Jardim São Remo, a poor neighborhood in the western zone of São Paulo while Paço was based at the University of Sao Paulo (USP), the major institution of higher learning and research in Brazil.



Stencil and painting workshops in the São Remo community (Photos: Mariana Ambrosio/Paço das Artes)

Thus, we established a fluid “format” for Paço Comunidade, and it is remodeled with each edition, based on dialogue between the participants and featuring a guest artist to offer workshops to the residents of the community. As a result of the workshops, an activity is developed, be it an exhibition and/or intervention at the Paço das Artes space or in the community itself. The first edition of the project took place in 2013, based on the stencil and painting workshops taught by artist Anderson Rei. Topics covered included urban interventions and public spaces, and the actions developed at the workshop culminated in a collaborative intervention at Jardim São Remo, especially on a wall that separates São Remo from the University.

In the first half of 2014, it was the turn of artist, teacher, and art educator Alberto Tembo. Working on the theme “Obra-jogo de construção, uma instalação artística coletiva” (*Building work-game, a collective artistic installation*), Tembo and the participants, based on several workshops, collectively created tridimensional objects, like toys, sculptures, and prototypes for a playground that was set up together in the community.

For the 3rd edition of the program, Paço das Artes invited artist Mônica Nador, a reference in the art/community field, to teach weekly workshops on stenciling on fabric to women at the NGO Girassol. During the meetings, the participants created forms from their experiences and personal memories that were replicated in stencils and printing. Later, the fabric and the prints gained another conceptual dimension, being transformed into clothes by textile designer Renato Imbroisi, invited to participate in the project by Mônica Nador. In addition to the clothes being made with prints developed by the participants, the model for each garment was a replica of the preferred clothes of each participant in the workshop. The results of these workshops—the prints, as well as the clothes developed—were then exhibited at Paço das Artes, at the [exhibition Mônica Nador + JAMAC + Paço Comunidade](#), January 25 through March 22, 2015. On the day of the opening, the participants got dressed and presented a fashion show with the items they printed, to the sound of live music.



Exhibition Mônica Nador + JAMAC + Paço Comunidade (Photos: Leticia Godoy / Thais Scabio)

For the 4th edition, Paço das Artes promoted activities in several phases to resignify the community space at the [Circo Escola \(Circus School\)](#). For the activity, Paço das Artes invited the artists of the SHN (Coletivo Rua Produções Artísticas [Street Collective Artistic Productions], which includes Eduardo Saretta and Haroldo Paranhos), responsible for street art theoretical-practical meetings and for the occupation of the spaces with contributions by graffiti artist Izu, who lives in the São Remo community. As a result, as proposed by the young participants, walls were painted in the lateral and external areas of the Circus School, in São Remo, covering 100 sq m in paintings.

In 2016, while searching for a permanent headquarters (Paço das Artes lost the headquarters in which it had operated from 1994 to 2016, at the University of São Paulo/USP), the program expanded its coverage and started running throughout the city of São Paulo. Thus, Paço das Artes promoted the 5th edition of the project between September and December, within the sewing workshop in the Occupation at the former Hotel Cambridge, located at Avenida Nove de Julho, 216, in partnership with the Occupation of the Homeless Movement in the Downtown Area (MSTC).

This Occupation, which includes over one hundred families, currently counts on several external and internal activities, including language teaching to foreigners; an artistic residence; a bakery; a sewing workshop; a beauty parlor; a vegetable garden; a second-hand clothes store; a dentistry office, etc. In 2016, the occupation also started housing several activities geared towards culture and arts, fields that include Paço das Artes' activities. For the

occasion, curators Claudio Bueno and Priscila Arantes invited artist, stylist, and fashion consultant Agustina Comas to hold workshops alongside the Occupation sewing team, focusing on the *upcycling* concept.

Upcycling is the process of making residues or disposable products into new materials, increasing their value, use, or quality, and placing it back into circulation. Different from discarding a product for a new one to be produced—as is typical in the recycling process of plastic material—the *upcycling* work method makes use of the structural qualities of something existing. Working together with the sewing group of the Occupation, it was, therefore, proposed as the sharing of practices by artist Agustina Comas, with the production of garments that use the waste of the textile and garment industries in the city of São Paulo as input.

Finding the fabric or the discarded clothes to be remodeled allowed us, in this context, to find an abandoned building that we desired to inhabit, but it was, firstly, necessary to transform it, sensitize it another way, turn it inside out, from hotel to housing, from square to cultural institution (current situation of Paço das Artes, while prospecting new spaces, in 2017). In the process experienced, the garments—produced intentionally by the industry, as excess material, something that was known would not be turned to sales—were transformed by manual manufacturing, modelled to the singularity of each body, in the time and intimacy of the creative school-workshop, with no engagement with the fashion market or the industry, but with total freedom for experimentation.



Paço Comunidade in the Occupation in the former Hotel Cambridge (Photos: Carolina Ferreira)

The five editions of Paço Comunidade are a testament to how it is possible to build alternatives that, in fact, may contribute to the formation of citizenship and empowerment of individuals. We hope that, with these actions, and with the future editions of Paço Comunidade, Paço das Artes, as a public and democratic institution, may play its role: contributing and fostering the creative potential of an audience that often has no access to institutional subsidies.

Priscila Arantes

Artistic director and curator of Paço das Artes

Creator of Paço Comunidade

www.pacodasartes.org.br