Screendance *Bárbara* and its Poetics of *'BBC' Dialogues*, or Between Body, Beliefs and the City

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ABSTRACT – Screendance *Bárbara* and its Poetics of *'BBC' Dialogues*, or Between Body, Beliefs and the City – The objective is to reflect on how the work Bárbara creates artistic poetics from the dialogue between urban space and screendance, problematizing deeply rooted beliefs from contemporary art and tensioning others, different ones, from digital culture. Principles of practice are adopted as research to discuss the interfaces between dance, audiovisual technology and modern architecture in Cataguases, Minas Gerais. Recording and editing strategies are highlighted in the creative process of the videodance Bárbara, and the state of trance, of estrangement that happened both to the character, when she dared to dance in a sacred space of the city, and to the researcher who dared to venture, in a wandering way, through the hybrid paths of contemporary art that dialogue dance and audiovisual.
Keywords: **Screendance. Creative Process. Urban Space. Modernism. Contemporary Art.**

RÉSUMÉ – Vidéodanse *Bárbara* et sa Poétique des *Dialogues 'CCC'*, ou Entre Corps, Croyances et la Ville – L'objectif est de réfléchir sur la façon dont le travail de Bárbara crée une poétique artistique à partir du dialogue entre l'espace urbain et la vidéodanse, problématisant les croyances profondément enracinées de l´art contemporain et mettant en tension d'autres, différentes, de la culture numérique. Des principes de pratique sont adoptés comme recherche pour discuter des interfaces entre la danse, la technologie audiovisuelle et l'architecture moderne à Cataguases, Minas Gerais. Les stratégies d'enregistrement et de montage sont mises en évidence dans le processus de création de la vidéodanse Bárbara, et l'état de transe, d'éloignement, qui est arrivé à la fois au personnage, lorsqu'il a osé danser dans l'espace sacré de la ville et aux chercheurs qui osé s'aventurer, de manière déambulatoire, dans le voies hybrides de l'art contemporain qui fait dialoguer danse et audiovisuel.
Mots-clés: **Vidéodanse. Processus Créatif. Espace Urbain. Modernisme. Art Contemporain.**

RESUMO – Videodança *Bárbara* e suas Poéticas de *Diálogos 'CCC'*, ou dos entres Corpo, Crenças e Cidade – O objetivo é refletir como a obra *Bárbara* cria poéticas artísticas a partir do diálogo entre espaço urbano e videodança problematizando crenças arraigadas da arte contemporânea e tensionando outras, diferentes, da cultura digital. Adotam princípios da prática como pesquisa para discutir as interfaces entre dança, tecnologia audiovisual e a arquitetura moderna de Cataguases, Minas Gerais. Destacam-se estratégias de gravação e edição presentes no processo de criação da videodança *Bárbara*, e discu-

te-se o estado de transe, de estranhamento, que aconteceu tanto com a personagem, quando ousou dançar em espaço sacro da cidade, quanto com os pesquisadores que se atreveram a se aventurar, de forma errante, pelos caminhos híbridos da arte contemporânea que dialoga dança e audiovisual.

Palavras-chave: **Videodança. Processo de Criação. Espaço Urbano. Modernismo. Arte Contemporânea.**

Situating *Bárbara*

This text, a reflection on the mutual influences between technology and the process of artistic creation, is based on studies (e.g., Aires; Dantas, 2021; Linardi, 2021; Wildhagen, Andraus, 2015) that, directly or indirectly, seek to understand how is the processing of screendances in which dancing bodies dialogue with urban spaces. What poetics were elaborated, by the artists involved, for the performance of the screendance *Bárbara*, in which there is an intimate connection with the architecture of the city of Cataguases/MG? In discussing such poetics, we introduce the panorama of processes, technological artifacts, methodologies, strategies and devices used in the work, which helps to understanding our focus: possible connections between audiovisual language, occupations and artistic actions embodied with and in that city.

In order to conduct an in-depth study of interfaces between dance, audiovisual technology, and the modernist architecture of a town in Minas Gerais, called Cataguases, which is prominent in the Brazilian cinematographic scene, we adopted principles of in-ex-bodied research (Vieira, 2020; 2021; Vieira et al. 2022). This methodological proposal is based on practice as research (Midgelow, 2019), as well as on *practiced-based research* (Candy, 2006; Candy; Edmonds 2010). In-ex-bodiment, as explained by Vieira (2020, p. 205), favors corporal cognition according to the understanding that brain is body, and that there is a "bodystorm" during artistic researches that leverage practice in symmetrical relation with theory. This concept, according to the researcher, better reflects the holistic maelstrom that pervades the human being during the knowledge-building process that combines artistic practice with reading and writing, in addition to other investigative procedures, constituting layers that complement and dynamize the complex generation of thoughts in between internal and external flows, comprehensions, and reflections. The proposal also recognizes the importance of intuition and tacit knowledge in research on Arts.

The research seeking to understand the relation between dance, video and the city, despite not having followed a rigid and chronological order, can be divided into three stages: 1) somatic-spatial dialogue, between artistic body and urban space, for the choice of location where we would refine relations between dance and audiovisual media to create screendance; 2) embodiment of experimentation in screendance at the chosen location, Santa Rita Square, including the Church of Saint Rita de Cássia; 3) conception and montage of screendances.

Bárbara is the result of research that favors hybrid and collaborative aspects between dance and audiovisual media. In our view, the work comprises four categories of protagonist performers: interpreter-creator, cameraman, director-cinematographer, and the city[1]. In this intermedial context, the process of artistic creation benefits from the contamination between contemporary dance, improvisation, and the architecture of Cataguases. They all became co-performers in this investigation, in which one of the focuses was to create considering the architectural, historical and social context of the space researched in Cataguases, aiming to expand possibilities of poetic innovation in screendance.

That Screendance

Screendance, in the context of new media, is characterized by the hybridity between dance and technology. Supposed borders, when diluted, enable unimaginable poetics and narratives. Angeli (2017) reinforces this understanding by discussing the hybrid relations between dance and technology through the combination of elements and characteristics of the two languages with the support of available technological apparatuses. Such apparatuses include two important tools in the conception of artistic works: the video and the computer. In screendance, the relation of various languages (dance and audiovisual media at first) lies at the core of its existence: it is impossible to talk about screendance and not take into consideration its hybrid and intermedial aspect.

When we approach screendance as a hybrid art, based on the concept of hybrid discussed by Canclini (1998), we assume that it becomes a field arising from the intersection of other fields of artistic practice (e.g., sound, verbal, visual, corporal, kinetic). In order to understand it, it is necessary to

discuss how it is contaminated by the field of art from which it derived, as a new structure.

Since the early 20th century, artists such as Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan, subsequently Merce Cunningham and later in time William Forsythe – to name a few – have unveiled their discoveries about the potential of dance in dialogue with other artistic languages. By the use of theater's technical devices as a framework legitimizing the performing arts and with the relations between pieces of software and portable video cameras, dance has been developing permeated by intermedial relations.

In its early days, dance-related video had a character of record, since dance is considered ephemeral. The notations of Rudolf Laban (Abe et al., 2017), one of the attempts to systematize and record dance, art linked to the moment of movement, shows how difficult it has been for researchers and creators to record it by using written language or static image (Spanghero, 2003).

Far from being a mere record of dance, screendance is characterized as a form of experimentation with dance and video. Its origins are closely related to cinema, including the important works of Maya Deren in the embryonic phase of what today we know and call screendance. Spanghero (2003, p. 38, our translation) clarifies that:

> [...] what matters primarily is that the camera dances with the dancer and that the dancer places himself or herself in the space and time of the camera. In the camera's gaze. When dance is captured by the eye of the image, it acquires another existence. In reality, this adaptive game enables the blooming of new practices for dance and the modification of the body.

The author highlights three types of practice present in the relation between dance and video. The first practice consists in recording in studio, stage or other place, being nothing more than the recording of the original choreography, without its alteration. The second practice concerns the choreographic adaptation for the screen, an intermedial transposition from one medium to another. The third practice refers to dances created especially for video, "[...] a process fraught with transformations that build new concepts. These are dances created for the body of the video and for the eye that has become accustomed to living with television, video and cinema" (Spanghero, 2003, p. 38, our translation).

There are several artists and groups active nationwide (e.g., Almeida, 2021; Caldas, 2012; Graça, 2019) and abroad with dance works in dialogue with video; among those that have been widely recognized internationally, for many decades, are Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, DV8 Physical Theatre and Merce Cunningham. An example of the works of these artists is *Westbeth*, released in 1975, produced by choreographer and dancer Merce Cunningham and videomaker Charles Atlas. This screendance, which established the first of many partnerships between the two artists, is divided into six parts and is premised on the idea that the screen modifies the way of seeing dance, as it changes the sensation of time. In Latin America, several artists have been prominent in screendance for decades, such as Brazilians Analívia Cordeiro and Leonel Brum (2012), Argentinean Silvina Szperling and Mexican Pola Weiss (to learn about these last two artists, see research by Figueiredo and Vieira (2022)).

It is important to emphasize that, while videoart achieved its place in museums, probably because its creators were plastic and visual artists, screendance producers eventually found dissemination by means that are not traditional to dance, such as video and film festivals, as pointed out by Monten (2015). In Brazil, screendance festivals have been established in the national scene, such as Dança em Foco (Dance in Focus) and IMARP (International Dance Exhibition).

Aesthetic Stimuli of the Urban Element in Screendance

As our objective is to reflect on how the work *Bárbara* creates artistic poetics through dialogue between urban space and screendance, it is necessary to highlight some characteristics of this city. Cataguases is a city in the state of Minas Gerais, located in the Zona da Mata area, a geographic portion of the country that has preserved the Atlantic Forest since the beginning of the colonization process in the 16th century. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in 2021 the city had 75,942 inhabitants.

Cradle of the various cultural movements that were established from the 1920s, the city of Minas Gerais has, in its streets and corners, marks of a significant cultural heritage that is the legacy of the modernist movement. This period is characterized as a primary factor in the process of occupation,

construction and valorization of the city. Among these cultural movements, which began in the 20th century, cinema, modern architecture and the *Green* literary movement are the first artistic and cultural manifestations of the city that achieved national success and recognition.

Researchers of Cataguases' history and culture, especially that developed in the early twentieth century, are seemingly in consensus as to the impressive fact that it was (and still is) a reference in the Brazilian modernist heritage, despite the city's size and distance from large urban centers, such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. This fact concerns not only Architecture, but also Literature and Cinema (Couto, 2004).

Influenced by the Escola Carioca [Rio de Janeiro School, aka Brazilian Style], modernism becomes widespread in the city and, among its facets, Architecture constitutes a reference of modernism therein. In the beginning, *Art Deco* was the style adopted in the buildings that renovated the city in the 1930s; although modernist architecture became widespread in the city in 1940, *Art Deco* continued as one of the representations of local modernity throughout almost the entire decade (Mello, 2014).

The seat of Companhia Industrial Cataguases, the post office and the Banco Nacional branch (Figure 1) are some examples of this first modernist period in Cataguases, in addition to several residential and commercial buildings adopting the same style that constitute the city's urban space.
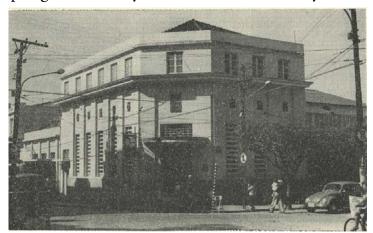

Figure 1 – Banco Nacional branch. Source: Costa (1977).

Advancing in the modernist chronology present in the city, it is easy to find buildings and constructions that bear the name of Oscar Niemeyer (Figure 2), Francisco Bologna, and Edgar Guimarães do Valle, in addition

to sculptures by renowned artists such as Jan Zach, panels by Cândido Portinari, among others. The close relationship of the local industrialists with the modernist movement, which was being established in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, was extremely important for the development of all Cataguases art and culture that would develop from the 1920s.

Figure 2 – Colégio Cataguases facade, designed by Oscar Niemeyer.
Source: http://www.catscataguases.com.br/cats2018/patrimonios/colegio_cataguases.html

It is precisely in this *setting* that the urban space was analyzed in order to produce *Bárbara*: identifying aesthetic elements present in modern archi-tecture (in this specific case, the Church of Santa Rita de Cássia) and their relations with dance and video, in the context of a process of creation in screendance. Thus, it focuses on the relations between the dancing body and the urban space, the camera operator and the camera, to research poetic possibilities.

When we think about the development of this creative process that di-lutes the boundaries between dance, video and urban space, we agree with Greiner (2019, p. 23, our translation) by adopting a performative investiga-tive attitude that not only leads to hybridization of the two languages, but also, "[...] ways of thinking and acting, permeated with a radical availability to emphasize the metastability of each of these artistic systems, irremediably weakened by exposure to what is not given *a priori*, but rather constituted in action." *Bárbara*, then, is a screendance that assumes the destabilization of the habitual; the political stance of the artists involved is committed to abandoning the comfort zone in favor of breaking paradigms, patterns and models to perceive and experience the urban space in other, unusual ways. We embrace the potential of the intersection between the arts and problem-

atize the legitimacy of art in its traditional spaces (for example, stages, theaters, museums, galleries) to enable the passerby (during recording) and the viewer (of the finished work) to see a differentiated aesthetic.

Screendance *Bárbara*

The screendance *Bárbara*[1], recorded in May 2018 at the Sanctuary of Santa Rita de Cássia, located in the center of the city of Cataguases, Minas Gerais, is discussed in dialogue with several authors (e.g., Francksen, 2014; Portanova, 2006). The relation of the interpreter-creator with the church with/in which she dances subtly establishes the rhythm, as that of a trance ritual, a strategy that, we hope, can be observed, as it was intentionally reinforced in the edition of the work. In relations with the space, the camera's point of view sometimes takes on the interpreter-creator's point of view — their gaze at the defocused city, and at other times there are effects of focusing and *close-up* on parts of their body. The proximity between the camera body and the human body seems to emphasize a certain insistence on seeking to reveal an intimacy that does not materialize. Barbara's insistent low gaze produces tension in relation to the insistence of the camera's 'gaze' at her.

The repetition of fragmented movements and gestures, the fast cuts and the acceleration contrast with the use of small sequence shots in which the character Barbara moves more slowly. *Blackouts* throughout the work, which repeat the black of the black costume, sandals and dress, seem to contradict or highlight the warm colors present: the yellow of the setting and the wine tone of the pantyhose, which seems to prolong the red hair of the interpreter-creator. In this complex relation between the human body and the setting, a narrative ellipse is formed in which Barbara seems to be upset and confused while insisting on dancing in a grandiose religious building that asks for a body in reverence, standing still. This discomfort of Barbara is revealed visually by the framing, which seeks the centrality of the character, as she moves horizontally in the garden (from side to side, fleeing from this central place), and vertically, when she 'melts' to the ground when she is in front of the ceramic wall of brown bricks.

The recording of a screendance, which is nourished by the media/digital culture, in the church, a place that maintains the religious tradition in the city, denotes the provocation of thinking about the contempo-

rary body that can exist three- and/or two-dimensionally. The modernity present in the architectural structure of the church encounters in this artistic event a body-world that confronts/faces supposed dichotomies such as physical and virtual reality, notions of space/time in/of dance and seeks to expand the possibilities of this art by means of its articulations with new digital technologies. There seems to be a clash between past and future, tradition and avant-garde, which exacerbates demands for different artistic postures and actions, embodied, theoretical, investigative, biopsychosocial, relational. Body and setting mutually feedback and question values, traditions, habits and beliefs that still prevail in dance: is screendance dance? What body dances in a screendance? Is there a need for the human body to dance in a screendance? What determines/characterizes a screendance work?

The practice of embodied reflection was fundamental to the dramaturgical conception oriented by the impact that the venue of faith and spirituality caused on the character Barbara. Questioning what seems historically consolidated both in art and dance and in religiosity. How to recognize modernist, romantic, classical, neoclassical, traditional, ancestral principles and other references present in our contemporary works?

For the conception of the screendance, the script was based on Francksen's (2014) discussion of dance and digital technology: in this relation, the body is not one, it lies/is expanded. Thus, body and digital technology do not separate when in relation. This is the state of becoming of the body being digital-living emerging. This idea supports the way the interpreter-creator reconceptualizes their dance and simultaneously interweaves time, space, movement, gesture, with the potential of what is continuously emerging. If there is no 'self,' if we exist in relation, or rather, we coexist, this is a way of understanding the human body in relation to digital media.

This movement of relation, human body and architectural body/temple of faith, was evinced in the edition, in order to build a poetics that evidenced three aspects of dramaturgy:

1) Approaching other beliefs: The grid separates the place of the church from the remaining space of the square. Crossing to the inside of the grid is like being/letting oneself be caged to finally free oneself through spatial/temporal exploration in the articulations between body and ma-

chine. A split marked by the Industrial Revolution then seeks, in the work, moments of reconciliation when Barbara decides to launch herself into the space of discovery, novelty and (re)cognition of the infinite possibilities that are provided with the dance that is produced in close partnership with digital technologies. Conceptions engendered in contemporary dance can pose challenges that subvert our artistic 'faith.' This conundrum is evinced in Barbara's encounter with the church, a place that congregates churchgoers who must obey ecclesiastical authority. The connections of dance with digital culture do not seek to reinforce centuries-old divisions. On the contrary, by 'embracing and caressing' (as Bárbara does with plants in the church garden) the invention of unprecedented articulations, an attempt is made to expand and make more flexible the ethical-aesthetic understanding of art. Allowing an to approach to other beliefs, proposals, poetics, languages and cultures may afford a sense of being more at ease in the process of freeing onseself from faithfully following dogmas dictated by predetermined codes and recognizable genres.

This approach to other beliefs is represented in the video by two main characteristics: the *shots* showing the route followed by the creator-interpreter in the church garden (Figure 3), and the *shots* showing her interaction with the door of the church chapel.

Figure 3 – The character Bárbara enters and explores the church garden. Source: Authors' archive.

In the garden, she observes, touches, walks and moves in that space that is assumed as the Garden of Eden of the sacred paradise. There she seeks to find an apple (which never appears in the work), a symbol, in the Christian faith, of the fruit of knowledge, but which is at the same time the fruit of sin. The apple's reddish color is subtly present in Barbara's hair and

pantyhose. The red color invades her inquisitive thoughts, curious to better understand this kind of screendance, this world of new technologies, and covers her legs, which move restlessly, as if she were a wanderer in new and strange lands, but who has lost her map. Barbara's wanderlust is directly connected to that which Lepecki (2016) points out: a possibility of the unusual encounter with oneself, with other beings (living and non-living, human and non-human, visible and non-visible) and with other spaces and times, allowing oneself to be guided by drift, getting lost, and going astray. Bárbara dances in a state of movement and pauses without knowing exactly where she is going. It is as if she were in a trance (which will be discussed below).

Lepecki (2013, p. 56, our translation) argues for art works in dialogue with urban spaces and identifies this orientation as a policy that, unlike the politicians' political malpractice, is "an intervention in the city's movement flow and representations". Therefore, Bárbara's dance opposes a supposed view of the public space as empty or without uneven terrain. The garden soil features stones and grass, even the ceramic floor of the church has irregular portions. Screendance transforms the church's sacred place into a space that produces tensions in relation to "pre-data subjectification vectors" (Lepecki, 2013, p. 56, our translation).

The door symbolizes passage, process, and transition phase. Inside the door, for a few seconds, we can see in the background a churchgoer making the sign of the cross and a representation of Santa Rita de Cássia, both out of focus. What movement does Barbara need to perform to get closer to other beliefs? The fast pace of images reveals uncertainties as to being outside or inside the grid surrounding the church, and also as to entering or not entering the chapel. These two *shots* were chosen to be used in editing the screendance because they are metaphors of a sort of curiosity in relation to the novel (virtual, digital, technological world). This is particularly evident in the shots and framings that show Bárbara's journey through the garden — a place of constant death and life. The *zoom shot* seeks to bring the viewer closer to this moment of conflict experienced by the character. The inner world stirs as the plants of the garden stand firm and rooted; only the leaves of the plants move gently in the light breeze.

2) Personal *insights* or encounters with small epiphanies: the church's wall with brown ceramic coating is presented as a path of faith to be carefully followed. Barbara measures this journey with her hands. The mathematical sentence makes her go down to the ground at the *aha* moment. Spirituality reveals possibilities of understanding the incomprehensible through epiphanies; it is possible to walk while lying down, letting the feet be led by faith. Her horizontal body allows her to climb the sacred building vertically.

3) Transformation by faith: the grid and the garden are highlighted again. The city and the world are inviting and they call Bárbara. There are combinations of fast and slow, continuous and broken movements during the transformation that occurs in the internal and external flow. The hands unite and are placed as a symbol of respect and reverence, which is reinforced by the curved body. There is consolidation of the work's dramaturgical process: approach, encounter, and transformation.

The name Bárbara was chosen because of a historical fact present in the slaveholding Brazil. In our country, slavery began with the production of sugar in the early 16th century. The Portuguese brought African men and women from their colonies in Africa to use them as slave workforce in the sugar mills in northeastern Brazil. The slavery period, which also had the use of indigenous slave labor, officially lasted until 1888, the year in which Princess Isabel signed the Golden Law.

In the daily lives of slaves, practicing the activities that were common when they lived in Africa was practically impossible, the same in relation to religion. The Bantus, from Angola, Congo and other countries, brought with them their religious practices, such as Candomblé of the Angolan nation and Candomblé of the Ketu nation, as well as devotion to their orixás.

Therefore, practicing these religions constituted grounds for punishment. On several occasions, when slaves prayed or sang to Iansã, an orixá present in these cultures, appearing as the lady of winds and storms, in order to avoid any type of repression they replaced the orixá with Saint Bárbara, worshiped in the Catholic Church as a protector against lightning and storms.

The choice of the name Bárbara as the title of the screendance arose from the historical context of religion in Brazil, a fact that shows religious

syncretism as one of the main characteristics in relation to this sociocultural aspect. Umbanda, created in the early 20th century, is a productive example of this syncretism, as Catholic saints and orishas are revered and used in its cults and rituals. This combination of black and European beliefs relates to the hybridity present in screendance, as discussed above, as well as to the embrace of various genres, languages, techniques and vocabularies in contemporary art.

Another reason for choosing the name was the corporeity present in several African beliefs, in whose rituals dance plays an important role. Ritualistic temple body. Body in ritualistic temple. Faith and spirituality manifest not only internally; they gain space and dialogue with the space.

Aesthetic and Technical Options

The instability in the image is oriented by the rhythm of a religious trance. Performance occurs as a rite of passage, of crossing. A body in cyberspace that allowed itself to be contaminated by the space of the church that exhibits modern architecture in Cataguases, but which, at the same time, produces tension in relation to the modernist principles that underlie such building.

Changes in corporal and consciousness states have been studied in practically all human societies, especially in the scope of religious practices, presenting in different ways. In this context, the terms "trance" and "ecstasy" are common words for various religious believers and churchgoers. The Aurélio Dictionary of the Portuguese Language defines ecstasy (from Greek *ékstasis*, through Latin *extase*) as intimate rapture; enrapture, elation, trance, rapturous delight, enchantment or admiration of supernatural things; amazement, astonishment. What does Barbara find strange in the building?

The trance, therefore, constitutes a complex ritual practice, as it attracts supernatural beings, whether spirits, deities, saints or orishas, but it is necessary that the person have skills to enable this altered state of consciousness. According to Rivas Neto (1994, p. 109, our translation), "not all human beings are vehicles of spirits," in addition to an extensive list of competencies that are necessary for the manifestation of a deity in the body of a human being.

These definitions do not exhaust the meaning of the aforementioned terms and introduce three types of meaning that are generally associated with it, according to Maués (2003): first, a meaning linked to states that, although emotional, can be experienced by everyone (rapture); secondly, altered states of consciousness caused by psychic illness; and, thirdly, mystical or non-mystical states, resulting from an influence, considered external, on the individual's body and mind, through hypnosis, spirit intrusion, among others.

As pointed out by Schneider and Antunes (2010), one of the most widespread forms of trance throughout history, in different cultures around the world, is the use of psychoactive substances. In religious contexts, the use of these substances helps the believer to have an experience of transcendence, mediating the transition between the physical world and the spiritual world. In rituals, substances are used as a means of accessing the divine, with hidden wisdom stored in herbs and plants with power capable of providing inspiration through visionary experiences. Such plants are known and used since antiquity, serving as a bridge to the sacred, favoring the spiritual pursuit.

In Brazil, since the beginning of colonization, numerous practices have employed these substances. One of the most popular is the jurema, plant of the legume family, quite present on the northeastern coast. The plant is widely used in indigenous religious rituals, among other syncretic manifestations, such as Catimbó and Umbanda. Ayahuasca, used in shamanic rituals, is prepared with *Psychotria viridis*, also known as chacrona, a dark-stemmed tree plant of the Rubiaceae family. Chacrona, along with cipó-mariri, is a key ingredient in the preparation of the entheogenic drink.

The trance plays a role of great importance in ancient tribal cultures and, according to Krippner (apud Ramalho, 2016, p. 22), the ability to experience expanded states of consciousness is a basic psychobiological capacity of all human beings, developed in the Middle and Higher Paleolithic eras, being institutionalized and instrumentalized in procedures and techniques through shamanic traditions.

Krippner (apud Ramalho, 2016) also notes an important characteristic about shamans: their mastery over trance experiences, in which they allow themselves to be possessed by spirits, but still have control, only abdicating

it in specific situations, resuming it at any time, that is, the shaman directs the trance experience, entering and leaving it when they want and communicating openly with other individuals during ecstasy.

The shamanic trance is defined as a shaman's trip in the spirit world; in the possession trance, a spirit (generally an ancestor or an orisha) enters the body of the believer and possesses them. The second type of trance is linked to traditions from Africa and the Mediterranean basin, as well as in America populated by African slaves, while the first one is linked to American and Asian indigenous cultural areas.

Rouget (1986, p. 30, our translation) defines possession as:

> […] an individual's socialized behavior that, given some special circumstances, consists in a change taking place in them, with the effect that their usual personality (which operates in their everyday behavior) is transferred to the deity, which leads to different forms of behaviors; this replacement must come with an alteration of psychic activity called, generally, a trance.

The trance experiences that were once part of the traditional knowledge of ancient peoples and non-European cultures, in addition to being used therapeutically or as access to a transcendental reality, began to be persecuted, with the expansion of the Catholic Church (Ellenberger, 1970), as witchcraft practices or came to be understood as originating from the influence of demons.

5rhythms[2], by American choreographer and musician Gabrielle Roth (1941-2012), features in this interface between dance and religiosity. Created in the 1970s, it is a moving and dancing meditation practice created by Gabrielle Roth during a lifetime of radical explorations in dance, trance, healing, theater, and spiritual practice. The 5rhythms are not sonic rhythms in the sense of drum patterns, but rather experiential rhythms that describe landscapes of physical movement. Each of the five rhythms is a dynamic field of energy with which the dancer moves, with and through. The rhythms are called *Flowing*, *Staccato*, *Chaos*, *Lyrical* and *Stillness* and together in sequence form a wave.

Simple, creative, and vast in potential, the 5rhythms present as a potent map of the body's presence and the soul's fulfillment. This practice of physical waves is the basis of Gabrielle's "maps to ecstasy," which also include the work with emotions (Heartbeat); personal history and the mind

(cycles); the dance of the Ego and Soul (Mirrors); and mystical realization (Silver Desert).

What interests us in this approach is exactly that first meaning suggested by Maués (2003). Bárbara, at certain moments of the screendance, finds herself in a kind of trance. This trance is evinced through unsteady camera movements. The instability of the videographic image, achieved through the bodily movement of the person filming, can happen through two means: one, of a technical scope, relative to the characteristics of the equipment used; and two, of a subjective scope, in which the *cameraman* purposely assumes a shaky posture and favors, from there, an unstable image.

In relation to *Barbara*, we consider both as causing the instability of the image. Regarding the first scope, the equipment used was a low-tier DSLR camera with a 50 mm lens without image stabilizer. In technical terms, a 50 mm lens usually has between f1.2 and f2.0 aperture of the diaphragm, and the lens used in the process has f1.8 aperture. The aperture of the diaphragm can range between a larger aperture (causing a great depth of field) and a smaller aperture (causing little depth of field, that is, only a zone of the plane will be in focus), which usually goes up to f22. The 50 mm lenses are considered clear lenses, due to the aperture of the diaphragm, although they are not the only lenses available on the market with this aperture.

In this case, this lens was chosen, in a large part of the video, for two reasons. The first concerns the camera used, in this case a Canon EOS Rebel T6S, with a cropped sensor. Cameras with interchangeable lenses can be divided between *full frame* and *crop* (because it is a Canon brand equipment, cropped sensors are called APS-C), which relate to the type of sensor that the camera has. The *full-frame* sensor has a size of 36 x 24 mm and the APS-C sensor has 22 x 15 mm. This size variation allows some differences in shooting, which can make one or another sensor more interesting, depending on the aesthetics chosen for a given work.

Therefore, the image is cropped: if it is necessary to include much of the plane in the scene, a distance from the subject to be filmed is necessary. The video indicates and shows the part or parts of the performer's body that the spectator is expected to observe, thus directing the gaze. In the screendance filming/experimentation, the cowboy shot, the close-up shot, and the big close-up shot were used, resulting in a kind of *videographic*

scanner. The frame was practically all occupied by the dancer's body, and at no time, when using this Canon 50 mm f1.8 lens, the performer's whole body was recorded. Several shots showed the performer from the upper part of her body or from the lower part.

The screendance *Pé de Bolso*[3] (31 seconds, Brazil, 2009), by Anahi Santos (Figure 4), exhibits this characteristic. It was filmed in the *Videodança de bolso* workshop, taught by Nacho Durán and Maíra Spanghero, in 2009, at LabMis in the Museu da Imagem e do Som, in São Paulo.

The *Pé de Bolso* screendance shows a sequence of images of parts of the dancers' bodies in a certain rhythm, associated with a soundtrack, leading the viewer to a sensation of movement, although they do not show the bodies in their entirety and much less in wide movement. The dance is legitimized through this dialogue, by means of the *dance of frames* contained in the screendance.

It should be noted a characteristic present in the visuality of the screen dance, in *Barbara* and in *Pé de Bolso*. Although the main characteristic of dance is movement, in the context of screendance, movement takes on other forms. The movement arises from the image and the bodies present, not to mention the possibilities of image manipulation in the editing, permeating the screendance with even more movement. From this perspective, movement is the main characteristic of dance, just as it is of video; therefore, screendance is doubly contaminated by movement.

Figure 4 – The frames in *Pé de bolso* show hands, feet, eyes among other parts of the bodies, although several of them have no movement, an idea of dance is transmitted.
Source: Frames from the screendance *Pé de bolso*.

Directing the gaze, a particularity of the videographic image and which, in a way, is a movement of the image, enables the viewer to perceive other possibilities of the concept of dance, enhancing the expressiveness of

both video and dance. The movement of the image (the sequence of frames per second) suggests expressiveness in any segment of the human body, for example a torso, which is already extremely expressive, as in the case of Merce Cunningham's screendance *Westbeth*. As pointed out by Capelatto and Mesquita (2014), Cunningham's screendance provides the viewer a metonymic view of our body, since a framing of the torso can be as communicative as the human body in its entirety. In addition to the matter of expressiveness, the framing conducts the viewer to a narrative.

The second reason for the use of this lens in *Barbara*'s production was the blurred background that this lens provides at its maximum aperture. This screendance was filmed on the outside of the church, which has a wavy marquee, supported by steel pilasters throughout the church's facade (Figure 5).

As an aesthetic choice, it was decided to partially reveal the Santa Rita Square, through the movements of the performer. The square is revealed in the video at times, most of the time blurred, thus allowing a distance between foreground and background. In just one moment of the video, the background is in focus. Purposefully, the camera's focus alternates between the performer's hands placed above her head and the Cataguases City Hall building in the background, built in neoclassical style in the 19th century (Figure 6).

Figure 5 – Facade of the Church of Saint Rita de Cássia. Source: Authors' archive.

In addition to technical issues having been decisive in the making of the video, the subjective scope stands out here as another characteristic of image instability. Filming with the camera in hand or in motion, with some type of structure, such as a *steadycam* or image stabilizer, enables a closer and more humanized image. This humanization is highlighted as a subjective characteristic, from the perspective of those who watch the video.

Figure 6 – Bárbara blurred and the city hall building in the background in focus.
Source: Authors' archive.

Numerous audiovisual works use this resource in their aesthetics. In a certain scene of the film *City of God* (2002), by Fernando Meirelles, we can perceive it: the character Buscapé runs after a chicken and the camera goes all the way through the character's course, including viewers in the scene, leading them to experience the action of the scene being inside the scene, viewers accompany and follow, even if only visually, the path traveled by the character.

Another film we highlight here is *Irréversible* (2002), by Argentine director Gaspar Noé, divided into scenes that were recorded in sequence. At various moments in the film, the viewer follows the unfolding of the story transiting through the scene, as a silent character who observes everything that is happening, becoming a viewer-character with a subjective view, a human view, who does not interact with or affect the story, but remains present at all times.

In *Barbara*, this subjectivity is represented by the movement of the camera, and its consequent approach, distancing and scanning, performed

by the camera. The viewer is invited to enter the religious context and, more specifically, the trance that overtakes the performer in the video.

From this perspective, the image instability inthe screendance *Bárbara* was provided, at first, by these two scopes, the technical, related to the technical issues of the equipment used, which consequently determined some aesthetic choices; and the subjective, in which the instability was purposely provided, emphasizing the notion of the trance that the character experiences. A trance in which the character questions the principles of modernism present in the architecture of urban space and, at the same time, embraces the contemporaneity that dancing in the city assumes as a political posture.

In the screendance *Barbara*, it is observed that, at various times, the performer is revealed by the camera through a body division between upper and lower limbs, or, when the same shot shows the dancer in full, the camera performs a *videographic scanner*, as described in the previous topic. Regarding the movement of the upper limbs, in several segments the performer performs movements of opening, closing, raising and lowering the arms and trunk, in addition to touching the trees in the garden and the pilasters of the marquee. About the movement of the lower limbs, the performer flexes, raises, lowers, turns, among other movements of legs and feet.

The choice for the division between trunk, arms and legs, in addition to the technical issues described above, also had a symbolic basis in some characteristics present in Christian culture. First, a conceptual division was carried out between the spiritual plane and the physical plane. In Christian culture, there is a division between heaven and hell, or some antagonistic parallel as fate in the *afterdeath*. According to some beliefs, those who are charitable, kind and servants will win the graces of the kingdom of God; whereas those who do not follow the precepts of kindness, preached in various religious contexts, will go to hell and pay for their sins for eternity.

Thus, there is a division between the physical and spiritual planes and our fate after death will be conditioned by our behavior on earth. Moreover, it is on the spiritual plane that entities, deities and saints live. If the trance comprises an internal and spiritual process, favored by some specific situations, such as the person's availability for the situation or the use of

psychotropic substances as a trigger for the process, the character Bárbara comes into contact with the spiritual plane.

This contact with the spiritual plane is evinced by the division between movements of upper and lower limbs. The character symbolizes a bridge between the physical plane and the spiritual plane. We highlight here two characteristics of this connection between these planes: hands raised and standing. Her hands and arms move in various ways, and sometimes we notice her hands raised. In the Catholic Church, raised hands symbolize supplication and surrender to God, in addition to being a common behavior of those praying. During almost the entire screendance, the character Bárbara is standing, the position of someone who listens with attention and respect, in addition to indicating readiness and willingness to obey. Barbara is ready, willing to obey, listens attentively and gives herself to God. Let's say then that her upper limbs represent the spiritual plane in which Barbara is in contact through this trance. At the end of the video, we see the character with her hands together and over her head. Another characteristic of Christian culture is the hands together, symbolizing the search for God, interior recollection, supplication, faith and surrender.

Thus, the character acts as a bridge between the spiritual plane and the physical plane, thus favoring her trance, showing the dichotomy of the human being who is literally *imprisoned* in the physical plane, but comes into contact with the spiritual plane.

Elements found in the Montage of the screendance *Barbara*

We now highlight another issue related to image instability: effects used in video editing. Since the beginning of the research, the idea of a dancing camera, which would make it possible to perceive the dance of images, had been worked on. In addition to the dance of images provided by the moving camera, the dance of images was also planned in video editing.

If we consider screendance as a hybrid language, which differs from that simple videographic record, as pointed out by Spanghero (2003), dance becomes the main characteristic of screendance, being perceived through the movement of dancers/interpreters and through the movement of the image. There lies a double meaning of dance: physical dance (in its

first meaning, in which dance is characterized as an a *priori* physical action, that is, performed by human beings) and dance of images.

In the montage of the screendance, some characteristics were employed to emphasize the trance of the character. As discussed above, trance is a common feature in numerous religious practices, and, in several of them, trance is reverberated through bodily movements, a type of connection between entity and corporeity of the person who undergoes this process.

Thinking about the possibility of the trance occurring randomly (in the sense that each transcendental and spiritual journey can happen in the most varied ways) and subjectively, three characteristics were chosen in the edition: acceleration, regression and repetition. These characteristics were also conceived as a visual representation for the viewer of a possible spiritual trance.

We see the character Barbara perform her movement in an accelerated manner, most of the time, and repetitively: the character undergoes an internal and personal process through which numerous perceptions and images arise, represented by acceleration and repetition, although we do not know for sure what *insights* and images possibly Barbara is having.

The trance thus becomes corporeal and favors, through this shift from the spiritual to the physical, a trance state of the spectator. Viewers perceive a trance that the screendance character is having, but the trance is always personal and will depend on internal and external factors. What reveals to the viewer a possible perception of this trance is the dance of the images, the choreography created according to the choice of segments, as well as their order and characteristics in the edition. The trance becomes double, the character Bárbara experiences this trance and the dance in the screendance (through the physical dance and the dance of images) invites the spectator to see, perceive, notice or feel the character's trance.

The image instability in the screendance *Bárbara* is characterized, thus, by three main characteristics: aesthetic choices based on the technical apparatus, camera movement as *image destabilizer* and use of temporal effects in editing. Therefore, image instability provided, through the creation process — understood as comprising all stages from the experiments to the finalization of the video —, a perception of the spiritual trance experienced by the character Bárbara.

All the above characteristics were highlighted by some technical and aesthetic aspects: the very division between upper and lower parts, as stated above, image instability provided by camera movement and change in the speed of scenes, causing a certain malaise, due to the irregular movement of the images and the use of an almost hypnotic soundtrack, which emphasized visual instability.

Provisionally-Final Considerations

We highlight editing strategies adopted in the creative process of the screendance *Bárbara*, such as image instability and framing divided between trunk and legs, as aesthetic elements that reinforce the dramaturgy about the fragmented space, in constant mutation, and the urban chaos, as well as the mutual contaminations between the dancing body and the city.

It is evident the relevance of the technical characteristics of the camera as coperformer adopted in the experimentation and recording of the screendance *Barbara*, and of the editing program used for enhancing the ambience and dramaturgy of the work. We emphasize that, unlike in the recording of dance, in screendance a dancing aesthetic is sought through the technical elements and ethical-aesthetic choices, which in *Barbara* was materialized through the elements of the technological apparatus used; for example, the camera and its characteristics, and the possibilities of the editing program used. Dancing with a camera attached to the body required the interpreter-creator to be able to rely on light and suitable equipment to accurately shoot changes in levels, rapid movements, body inversions and so on. This elucidates how, in screendance, the technical and aesthetic dimensions of the creative process are linked and interrelated in the conception of the work itself, combining with the ethical commitments of artist-researchers involved in the presentation of a work capable of exploring differentiated poetics.

Thus, *Bárbara* was consistent with the point of view argued by Stamatia Portanova (2006): human beings' connection with digital technology enables the choreography poetics to become a self-po(i)etic composition, animated by new ideas and rhythms, which brings to light different powers and stimuli to perform impossible movements and idiosyncratic movement phrases. According to the researcher, such connection allows biological and

anatomical laws to be challenged, as the expanded digital body enables the exploration and discovery of capacities and abilities that were perhaps previously unbeknownst. Artists who work in screendance unveil opportunities to always discover what they still can achieve with the aid of technological devices. The composition acquires almost infinite opportunities at the time of editing, expanding the dramaturgical possibilities. Combinations of movements, steps, gestures, pauses, spatial arrangements, and displacements are multiplied and, therefore, there are countless possibilities.

Still dialoguing with the thoughts of Portanova (2006) with the creation of *Bárbara*, we assume that the enjoyment of the work can lead to questioning as to beliefs and ideas concerning the very nature of dance, the dancing human body, and the role of urban space in artistic composition. The possibilities of reviewing the work several times, pausing the video whenever desired, and starting to watch it at different times lead to changes in the work/artist/audience relations, because whoever watches it is also another artist who can dinamyze and enhance what they are watching, also creating another artistic event through the technological possibilities of the devices used to enjoy the work.

In the screendance *Bárbara*, the characteristics found in Brazilian religiosity, such as trance and possession, both featuring in religions of African origin, came to light through the *aesthetics of instability*, adopted in the experimentation, recording and editing of this work. Another religion-related characteristic was the use of a Catholic temple (Church of Saint Rita), not as a setting for the work, but as a space to be built in the relationship with Bárbara, which enables us to perceive, at subjective levels, antagonistic and power relations, considering the entire history of European colonizers in relation to African religions. The Catholic Church constituted the official religion of the Empire period in Brazil and religious syncretism was established through the interaction between African religions and Catholicism, in addition to crosses between them; among Africans enslaved here, one of the objectives was to preserve the cultural practices they had in Africa before the process of slavery and colonization.

As for the modern architecture present in this work, we observed that the structures and their characteristics (structures on pilotis, ample spaces for the use and movement of passers-by, minimalist aesthetics) provided a

feedback for the experimentation and consequent structuring of this screendance, with the Church of Saint Rita, with a modernist style, being the place of the experiences lived by the character throughout the work, in addition to being among the prominent places in Cataguases' religiosity.

For structuring the video, three aspects were considered central in this creative process (approach to other beliefs, personal *insights* or encounters with small epiphanies, and transformation by faith) and, through the technical characteristics of the filming equipment, an *aesthetics of instability* was sought, thus representing the religious trance experienced by the character Barbara. Another editing and montage strategy was to highlight the division between the upper and lower parts of the character, thus emphasizing (or trying, at least) the materiality of the human being as a conglomeration of cells and feelings, that is, a physical being *of flesh and bones* and their relationship with the spiritual plane.

As creative and editing strategies for the screendance *Bárbara*, aspects present in religious practice were employed, exploring the space through dance in dialogue with the technical characteristics of the equipment, which made it possible to emphasize the trance experienced by the character, in addition to the filming, whose stage was the facade of the church of Saint Rita de Cássia, one of the tourist attractions of the city and traditional temple in the Catholic culture of Cataguases.

Given the complexity involved in this research, we discuss the trance and ritual of passage that we, artists-researchers, experienced. In the screendance Bárbara, we approach the concept of contemporary digital art discussed by Parisi and Portanova (2012): the aesthetics of the so-called 'error' or digital chance shows that digital codes are modes of thought, insofar as they concretely do or accomplish things, albeit by many people. Considered as imperfect or erroneous modes, codes are production devices that can be governed by order and control, but also by confusion and chaos.

Bárbara can elicit, through digital technology, differentiated sensory effects or alterations in how human bodies/subjects perceive the modernist architecture of Cataguases. Digitizing the images of the performer's interactions with the geometric lines of the church building and with the natural elements of the garden that appear in the work have the potential to reveal the physical source and purpose of art, as suggested by Hansen (2004). In

this line of thought, screendance would establish different interactive relations between structural geometric systems and embodied phenomenology, by exploring unimaginable and unexpected manners of evoking 'other' perceptions and physical experiences in the spectator. Those watching, simultaneously, would see and imagine the time and space of the city of Cataguases from other angles, framings, rhythms; different from those without technological mediation. Video filming and editing would then seek a more fluid way to create a setting for interaction between humans and digital technology.

Parisi and Portanova (2012) propose another logic, the aesthetics of what they coined as *soft thought*, because they believe that digital technology is a conceptual mode of thought, which is, in itself, a mode of feeling ordered in binary codes that should not be confused with human sensations and thoughts. From this viewpont, Barbara then creates an urban space that does not yet exist, because it will be an experiment with shooting images during the performer's interaction in her relationship with the urban space, and there is also experimentation conducted through the editing software. In Bárbara, we do not present only the prototype of the modernist architecture of Cataguases; the architectural data do not model an existing urban space, but rather build its order. The work does not establish references to ideas predetermined by modernist architecture or to the concreteness of reality, but simply describes a conceptual apprehension of this architecture of abstraction.

Barbara is not the footage of a person who dances and interacts with a ready-made city; the choreography of the filming and editing builds a city that grows and shrinks, contracts and expands. Beyond the filming of images of a city whose architecture is ready and finished, and only needs to be shot, architecture is dynamic, as it is reprogrammed, redone, redesigned as technology elaborates the dance that develops. Structural limits, such as the garden grid that separates the church from the rest of the square and the city, seem non-existent when the camera focuses on the performer in the foreground, and she integrates with the city in the background, which is blurred by the machine. Natural light is absorbed by the camera sensor, enhancing and brightening certain colors such as the wine red in Barbara's hair. As argued by Parisi and Portanova (2012): things (or machines) do

not think, but are thought. They do not only host thoughts or become implementations of a predetermined cognitive structure. Thoughts result from the modes or mannerisms of the machine: what thought becomes is how the machine thinks. The machine/camera, then, does not complement human thought; it is its own thought[4].

Notes

1 Link to screendance *Bárbara*: https://vimeo.com/291991127. Access password: burlemarx. Accessed Jun 2, 2022.

2 5rhythms website: https://www.5rhythms.com/. Accessed Jun 2, 2022.

3 Link to screendance *Pé de bolso*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4wC9E8d-rE. Accessed Jun 2, 2022.

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