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PEDRO COSTA, A BRICOLEUR¹

ABSTRACT

In this article, we analyze the evolution of the filming method of the Portuguese filmmaker Pedro Costa. Costa, a great admirer of the punk movement of the 1970s, does not hide the influence that the movement exerts on his way of making movies. From the DIY - do it yourself - idea, the director becomes a *bricoleur* when using the technique of gluing in the making of his films, especially in pre-production. This is bricolage as a technique. From *O Sangue* (1989), Costa's first feature film, to *Cavalo Dinheiro* (2014), the director's production process has progressed towards a way of filming his own and increasingly approaching Anthropology. The term bricolage arises consecrated in the Anthropology by Lévi-Strauss, when referring to the mythical thought, opposing it to the scientist. In cinema, the figure of the *bricoleur* is represented, especially, by Jean-Luc Godard. It is also sought to analyze the stages in which Costa's process, his modus operandi, consists of the extra film material that permeates his work, such as his interviews, written and the course taught by the director.

keywords

Portuguese cinema; punk movement; *bricoleur*; visual anthropology; "non-actors".

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INTRODUCTION

Its power is to emerge out of nowhere, or a pitch so deep that the darkness conceals them by the contours of the alleys. In the dim light, away from the most obvious negotiations, its appearance thus shines in a much more intense light (Caiafa 1985, 9).

The above sentence by Janice Caiafa (1985), written in the introduction to his book on the punk movement in Rio de Janeiro, can be used to refer not only to the emergence of the movement in Rio lands, but, taken out of context, we can also have transposed it to the photograph² of Pedro Costa's films. But the punk influence in the director's films is not restricted to the appearance, it is present, mainly, in the conception of the film.

Pedro Costa never hid his admiration for the punk movement. As a teenager, packed with the sound of Sex Pistols and Wire, accompanied by a gang of friends, which he calls gang, Costa had his first contacts with the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Jean Marie Straub.

He joined the Higher Film School in 1976, shortly after the revolution; what animated him was the anarchist ideals that hovered in that period among students. António Reis, one of the most important Portuguese filmmakers, who immersed himself in the representation of rurality and peasant life, was one of his first teachers. Costa (2016a) said he always wanted to make music but having Reis as a teacher made him continue studying film. At the university, he learned how to operate the sound equipment, filming and editing, which allowed him to work in several functions before making his first feature film, *O Sangue* (1989), screened at the Venice Film Festival.

In the context of Portuguese cinema, Pedro Costa emerges as a decisive figure in the renewal of the so-called Portuguese School, which “[...] is anchored in author's cinema where each director's film lives on its own originality” (Barroso and Ribas 2008, 146), and whose consolidation took place in the 1980s. After the New State of establishment in 1933, the Portuguese cinema was divided into three parts: the official cinema system - whose themes were apolitical and moralists - represented mainly by António Lopes Ribeiro; the commercial cinema of entertainment and the Portuguese *Cinema Novo* (New Cinema), created as opposition to the regime. In the period between the Revolution of April 25, 1974 and the beginning of the 1980s, Portuguese cinema turned to collective productions and

² His photograph is marked by the minimal use of artificial lighting and using shadow as a dramatic element.

documentaries, influenced by Cine clubs. It was only at the end of this decade that this cinematography was highlighted, given the emergence of a new generation of directors, featuring Pedro Costa among these names.

According to the authors:

With a growing importance during the 1990s, there is a dilution of fiction, evident in important Portuguese cinema films such as the *Acto da primavera* (Manoel de Oliveira, 1963), *Belarmino* (Fernando Lopes, 1964) or *Trás-os-Montes* (António Reis and Margarida Cordeiro, 1977), where fiction and documentary coexist in the creation of something new. For this dilution, the significant help of the introduction of digital - which is a paradigmatic case for the work of Pedro Costa (Barroso and Ribas 2008, 150) contributes.

Pedro Costa's cinema blurs the boundary between documentary and fiction. Even works considered fictional by the director end up competing in documentaries festivals.

The fiction glues to the documentary, in a hybrid work, that exempts classifications. For this article, the genre in which the work results interest less than how Pedro Costa employs its methodology to achieve it. The focus here is to unveil the direction method adopted by Pedro Costa, who considers his cinema a collage cinema. I use in this article the term bricolage as a technique.

His method is not fixed; Costa is always innovating, exploring the possibilities of contact between its interlocutors, with new devices and equipment. Each movie has its own different device, steps, teams and method.

In Eduardo's words:

Perhaps it is necessary to return not exactly to the filmography, searching in it the historical and aesthetic matrices or hunting with glasses the author's mother cell, but to return and to know each specific film, each sequence, each plane, without domesticating them or framing them in definition of a set. To know again, if necessary, but without recognizing (Eduardo 2010, 43)

Although, from *O Sangue* (1989) to *Cavalo Dinheiro* (2014), Costa has innovated in the way of making his films, they are all permeated using

collage.³ *O Sangue* was carried out in the traditional film molds. With a great team, sophisticated equipment, script or as the director himself nominates: “a film within the system” (Costa 2016a), yet its aesthetics and content stand out from commercial films.

This article analyzes the influence of bricolage on the feature films of Pedro Costa, from DIY - do it yourself, personified in the *bricoleur* figure, using not only the films as a parameter, but mainly his interviews, his writings and the course I attended in 2016. That is, it discusses his *modus operandi*, the method of making his films.

I begin by outlining the use of the term in the punk movement - which is based on the DIY philosophy -, anthropology and cinema, to then analyze the stages of the film maker’s production process, which consists of researching the theme, choosing and directing the “non-actors”.⁴

PUNK AESTHETIC AND BRICOLAGE

The punk movement emerged in the early 1970s, concomitantly in England and the United States,⁵ from the musical style adopted by bands like Sex Pistols and Ramones, respectively. Time when young people found themselves unhappy with the economic and political situation in which conservatism had come to power in several countries and the recession hit much of the population.

In England, punk arises as a reaction to the ultraconservative values with which Margaret Thatcher ruled the country and which grew a xenophobic and racist sentiment among the population. The young people were discontented that they did not feel represented in the arts, considered as massifs and elitists, which mirrored this retrograde feeling.

³ This review does not consider his documentaries *Onde Jaz o Teu Sorriso?* (2001), *Ne change rien* (2005) and his short films.

⁴ In the analysis of Iranian cinema, I refer to non-professional actors as “non” actors, in italics, to reinforce my conviction that even if they are not professionals, in films, they act, they are fabulous and are directed by the filmmaker. It is a relationship of being that establishes itself during their performances. They act as if they were themselves or other characters. This topic was discussed by me during the master’s degree studies (Pessuto 2011). The same can be said of the subjects who work on the films analyzed here by Pedro Costa. Vanda, Ventura, Vitalina, among others, are people Costa found and ended up being part of his films, sometimes acting as if they were other people, sometimes acting as if they were themselves.

⁵ Some writers claim that the punk came with the Sex Pistols show in London, opposite the studio of Vivienne Westwood, while others argue that it began in the United States with Ramones (Gallo 2010; Caiafa 1985; Bivar 2001).

Punk appears as a rebellious attitude from the idea of building another culture capable of representing everyone: blacks, immigrants and minorities, through music, literature, the visual arts and the adoption of a visual as an identity factor.

In search of autonomy in the face of civilization, they refused to join the proposed channels of political participation, moving away from the left-wing parties for which they were criticized, and assuming independence in the various instances of life, expressed in the motto features Do It Yourself (Gallo 2010, 287).

The DIY motto appears on the punk movement as a political issue and soon joins the aesthetics and music, based on the idea that any individual can participate in the cultural creation process. It is conceived as a more democratic and less elitist process. As I will discuss later, Pedro Costa incorporates this democratic process in his cinema, in which anyone can be an actor, anyone can be the writer.

The punk look is distinguished by the combination of characteristic elements, fleeing trendy patterns. Fans of this look adopt an aggressive style, such as leather jackets, jeans, with brooches, pins, flaps, symbols and nails glued and sewn into their clothing, to the detriment of branded clothing and conservatism.

Punk is the breaking of conventions, it is the abdication of the norms in force in favor of a more stripped-down and democratizing style. Punk music is characterized, for the most part, by approaching the public through the simplification of its lyrics, ranging from political and social issues (anarchism, nihilism, unemployment, defense) to topics such as sex, drugs and fun. They are songs that are easy to play, with up to three chords that go into the DIY philosophy, encouraging other young people to create their own bands.

In Portugal, punk musical groups began to emerge in the late 1970s, with the Portuguese band *Aqui d'El Rock* being the first to join the punk musical style (Lemos 2011). Soon after, others emerged. In addition, Pedro Costa began his artistic career as a musician, integrating one of these bands.

In Anthropology, the use of the term *bricoleur* appears for the first time in Levi-Strauss, who uses the term bricolage to explain the characteristic patterns of mythical thought, differentiating it from the scientific thought. It distinguishes the means used in the bricolage technique and those of the scientist (in the figure of the engineer), since the former uses finite means, of what is at hand, reusing available materials, while

the engineer uses raw material, instruments created for certain purposes. *Bricolage* operates with the opportunities that present themselves. Thus, objects are defined by their instrumentality, in which “elements are collected or preserved according to the principle that ‘this can always serve’” (Lévi-Strauss 1989, 33), and such elements enable an extensive set of relations.

Levi-Strauss calls bricolage the “first” science, which prevents calling it primitive because, for him, there is nothing primitive in *bricoleur* technique. “Nowadays the *bricoleur* is the one who works with his own hands, using indirect means, comparing himself with the artists” (Lévi-Strauss 1989, 32). Thus, this technique consists in using the means that are offered at the time for the realization, being able to achieve “bright and unforeseen” results (Lévi-Strauss 1989, 32).

In cinema, Jacques Aumont (2004, 156) calls “improvisational spirit” filmmakers who practice bricolage, he says they use “so much more noble material as the most stripped” and says the more literal use of bricolage among those who practice found footage, which appropriates images already made, to the detriment of the imagery. In this case, the role of the filmmaker is in the organization of this material. As an example, we present the cinema of Alain Fleischer and Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi, who carry out their works with existing material.

Also, for the author, between bricolage and Hollywood cinema, there is another level of experimentation in the cinema: crafts. The craftsman filmmaker is the one who, for each new project, seeks “intellectual and artistic material and the economic and institutional means” (Aumont 2004, 161), such as the case of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. Still in Aumont’s view (2004, 162), “The craftsman is, by excellence, the one who invents everything alone” that in each work uses diverse means and processes.

The bricolage, in the literal sense as approached by Aumont, appears with intensity in the works of Jean-Luc Godard, one of Costa’s cinema confessed inspirations.⁶ Godard works with the idea of imaging bricolage, when he uses archival materials such as films, photos, colors, book covers and discs; by citing several authors and by using anagrams and intertitles, already widely explored by the author since the 1980s; and the phonetic or sound, from the collage of sounds. Collage, as a battlefield, in his films, produces intertextuality.

⁶ Pedro Costa is also inspired by the work of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub (Gallagher 2009; Gorin 2009).

Robert Stam (2013), in his essay *From text to intertext*, prefers to talk about intertextuality and non-genres when referring to cinema, since, for the author, the term genre has a passive and determining character, while intertextuality “[...] is more active, thinking the artist as an agent who dynamically orchestrates preexisting texts and discourses” (Stam 2013, 227). In addition, intertextuality relates other media and arts.

In *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-98), Godard explores to the maximum the possibility of intertextual collage. Driven by video usage, which provides a greater field of experimentation than film, the filmmaker uses fragments of films, newspaper clippings, paintings, drawings, overlapping images... “[...] all combinations, all deviations or approximations proper to elicit new forms and meanings” (Rancière 2013, 40).

Thus, the meaning of the image in the film is not only that captured by the camera, but the dialectic that the confrontation between images produces. The director’s method “[...] is based on the bold and irreverent redistribution of the combination of competing sign systems” (Delle Vecche 1996, 114), which is possible, for example, when the director, through collage, contrasts colors, textures and forms, to evoke what is not there, or “what simply exists in an intangible, unactable way” (Delle Vecche 1996, 111).

In Pedro Costa film, who usually refers to his method as collage, bricolage appears in the appropriation of materials, not those already filmed, but rather found by the filmmaker (2012, 2013, 2016a, 2016b). Such materials are not printed films - such as authentic *bricoleurs* - but locations, neighborhood people, improvised dialogs, among others; renouncing constructed scenarios, professional actors and elaborate scripts. That is why Costa makes a distinction between creating and finding. For the filmmaker, collage for is the union of these materials, so it is a *bricoleur*, which adapts such materials and, at the same time, an artisan, who has a method suitable for each film. Costa’s bricolage is closer to the conception of the term in Anthropology, denoting the instrumentality of the presented opportunities, to the detriment of an instrument created for a specific use, than of its conception according to the theory of the cinema - of the one exposed by Aumont.

The punk movement and DIY ideals act in the Pedro Costa cinema, mainly in his films conception method. Whether by climbing “non-actors” to such films, rather than by professional actors, or by promoting a democratic method of realization, in which it does not impose a preconceived script but rather foster joint creation.

Costa does not obey the traditional rules of filming (neither documentaries nor fictions). He abdicates from the great productions, the numerous teams, the sophisticated equipment, in favor of a more intimate cinema, in which the figure of the producer does not prevail and where he can have more freedom. “All the people I like best end up producing themselves, Godard, Jean Rouch, they’re all little production units. (António) Reis proposed this a lot and did it himself” (Costa 2016c).

The materials that Pedro Costa says he finds are the locations. Firstly, Cabo Verde, a country that made him change his way of making films, as I will explain later; the same happened with Fontainhas, an immigrant neighborhood in the suburbs of Lisbon. Also, the actors of its films are people found in the neighborhood, like Vanda, Ventura and Vitalina; sounds, such as the noise of the demolition of the Fontainhas neighborhood, and dialogues that are given by the actors, among others.

I often use the term collage because, in the most literal sense, collage is, on the one hand, a way of making art very cheap... for example, in painting, are glued papers, collage of found materials, and this is applied in movies I do, which are always with very low budgets. The elements I use are found, as is often the case with collages. Collages, at least in the sense of the visual arts, plastic arts... for example, the Cubists did a lot of newspapers with a lot of colored paper [...], and I, too, work a lot with found materials. I usually say that we during the process of shooting, preparing, shooting any of the movies we found many things on the streets. Sometimes they are people. For example, Vitalina who was with me now, was a person, now an actress, that we found during the film. We were waiting for another character. The film would be one thing, then we found her literally on the street, and she was another element that sticks to the movie that already existed (Costa 2016b).⁷

The elements that Pedro Costa uses are found in the empirical world itself, of which he also takes advantage, or of what he calls “waste of reality” (Costa 2016b). He usually works with what is at the margin of society: the immigrant, the poor people, people disadvantaged by the system.

Which is not exclusive to his cinema. Italian neorealism, for example, appropriated leftovers, people found on the streets (besides professional actors), the postwar wreckage. Like Iranian cinema, in the figures of

⁷ Audio from the interview held is available.

Abbas Kiarostami and Jafar Panahi, who use real locations, “non-actors” and seek themes inspired by the daily life, often of these characters themselves. What differs from Pedro Costa’s cinema is that the director carries out a collaborative process. Both the Neorealists and the Iranian filmmakers mentioned use improvisation, but the plots are not usually based on the experiences of the “non-actors” themselves.

His method is also close to Kurdish cinema, especially that of Bahman Ghobadi, who denies major productions, pre-conceived scripts, professional actors, scenarios and studios, in favor of a more documentary cinema in which “non-actors” and their experiences.⁸

BRICOLAGE IN THE CONCEPTION

The first Pedro Costa’s film, *O Sanguê* (1989), was made conventionally, that is, from a screenplay, with a large team, 35mm camera, sophisticated equipment, film plan, professional actors and funding from Instituto Português de Cinema (IPC).

The first and main aspect of bricolage, as a technique, begins to appear in the Pedro Costa’s cinema already in the conception of his films, that is, in the pre-production, from *Casa de Lava* (1994).

It was during *Casa de Lava* that Pedro Costa completely changed his way of working, influenced mainly by the field he encountered in Cabo Verde.⁹

Pedro Costa wanted to film in a traditional way but was affected by the landscape and the local people, which made him abandon the previous script of his film and boycott the filming, because he felt that it was not a movie within the mainstream that he wanted to perform. “When I arrived in Cabo Verde, I met people who behaved, who moved, acted and spoke contrary to what I had read, seen and thought at a distance” (Artecapital n. d.). Thus, the previously written script had become obsolete, which made him completely change his work plan.

The director would leave the team asleep and leave with his sound engineer to meet people and collect stories: “Go out and talk to the people on the street” (Costa 2016a). But this was not his first contact with the region. Two years before filming, the director had visited

⁸ The relationship between Bahman Ghobadi’s cinema and Pedro Costa’ cinema is being developed in my doctoral thesis (Pessuto 2017).

⁹ Cabo Verde was a Portuguese colony from the 15th century until its independence in 1975. It was the main site for the slave trade and served as a commercial and provision warehouse for being on the sea route between Portugal and Brazil.

Cabo Verde as a “preparation trip” for the film, as he calls his field research.¹⁰ (Costa 2013)

In an interview with the Artec capital portal, Costa tells how the notebook he took to notes on the film ended up having another purpose, during his second trip to the field already for filming:

I was completely lost when I arrived at Fogo and began to glue on the checkered leaves of the women from *Chã das Caldeiras*, a village right at the foot of the volcano. I also pasted news clippings from newspapers, fait-divers, magazine photographs, postcards, small fragments of texts or images that had to do with the film, or the story I was beginning to realize in that land. They were allusive notes, nothing very direct, were more things of the order of poetic association (d. n.).

His film was building through these associative ideas, and what would become one thing became another, from the moment the director gave himself the freedom to dare, to break with the traditional cinema process and allow the notebook to replace the script.

In a script it will always be pretentious or even offensive to quote Aeschylus or refer to a drawing by Paul Klee to describe a character. Here we can put the poet Desnos to speak Creole and this type of encounter can be affirmed and underlined unreservedly (Costa 2013,2).

The result was published in the book *Casa de Lava - Caderno* (2013), in which Costa takes to the extreme the collage by overlapping, contrasting and associating photographs, poems, paintings, postcards, colors, newspaper clippings and testimonials. A kind of Costa field notebook, scrapbook form, which the director calls “Facsimile” (Artec capital, d. n.).

¹⁰ The work of Pedro Costa approaches visual anthropology, especially the methodology used by Jean Rouch in performing his ethnicities, a theme that will be addressed in my next article.

figure 1
Casa de Lava
 notebook¹¹.



The original script, which was used to obtain funding and in which the entire production team had based its planning and equipment selection, was based on the film *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur 1943), for which Pedro Costa has intense admiration (Costa 2013). But it turned out to be the experience of Mariana (Inês de Medeiros), in this country that is a mystery to her and where she seeks self-discovery, through contact with the locals and with the volcanic scenery. The character here represents the director himself, the discovery of his new method, the encounter with the Cabo Verdean people, the music, and, why not, his passion¹² for the country, translated by the platonic love that Mariana feels for Leão¹³

¹¹ Image available at <<https://pierrevonkleist.wordpress.com/tag/lava>> Visited on: Apr. 17, 2016.

¹² In his interviews, courses and in the Pedro Costa own films, it is clear to realize that the interest for the culture and people of Cabo Verde emanates from a feeling of fascination by the topic.

¹³ Leão (Isaach de Bankolé), the Cabo Verdean character of *Casa de Lava*, suffers an accident when falling from the crane where he works in Lisbon. After the event, he is transferred in a coma to his home in Cabo Verde and the nurse Mariana accompanies him in his convalescence.

figure 2
Photograms
of *Casa de
Lava* (Pedro
Costa 1994).
Superscription:
[Marina is
affected by Cabo
Verde and its
inhabitants].



It is a film based on the encounter, in affecting and being affected by the context. He does not feel comfortable writing a script because it makes him realize that he is losing contact with the place, with people or with reality (Costa 2016b): “The principle of a film and the reason, are usually associated with a person or several people or people and places, which was my case at the beginning of the relationship with Fontainhas” (Costa 2016b). Therefore, research is essential in his method. It is only by knowing the people and their relations with the places where they inhabit that the germs of the Costa films emerge. And he also appropriates the result of the meeting of the filmmaker and his camera with these subjects.

During *Casa de Lava*, in his conversations with the residents, the director was asked to bring to Portugal gifts and letters to those who were overseas. Upon returning to Lisbon, Costa visited the Fontainhas neighborhood, where most of the letters were addressed. It was then that he discovered the place and people who were part of his later works.

Fontainhas was a community formed mainly by Cabo Verdean immigrants, located in the suburb of Lisbon, composed of humble houses and narrow alleys. The neighborhood was demolished in the early 2000s, and its inhabitants transferred to a housing complex in another neighborhood, Casal da Boba, which does not have, however, the liveliness of Fontainhas. Costa had his first contact with the neighborhood in the 1990s, when he returned from Cabo Verde with the letters. Fontainhas became his field of research since then.

figure 3
Photograms of
No Quarto de Vanda (Pedro
Costa 2000).



The messages made his entrance into the neighborhood and the contact with the people easier. The letter became a metaphor for his way of making movies. He does not know the contents, neither of the letters nor of the film he performs, but we can see the reactions.

As soon as it began filming, the neighborhood began to be demolished and its subsequent films mark this process of demolition. *Juventude em Marcha* (2006) shows this transition and the lives of some of the residents in his new home.

It was in Fontainhas that Costa met his main characters, Vanda and Ventura, who would become actors in his following films: *Ossos* (1997), *No Quarto de Vanda* (2000), *Juventude em Marcha* (2006) and *Cavalo Dinheiro* (2014).

Almost a decade of research and contact with the locals mark the work of Costa, who, after *Ossos*, leaves the preconceived script to plunge into these people life stories, dreams, anguish, and yearnings.

A DEMOCRATIC METHOD

Bricolage is also present in the texture of the plot, in the making of the film, through the work with the actors. The plot is often created from material that the “non-actors” themselves provide. Here we witness the influence of the DIY punk movement, based on the search for a more democratic, horizontal and less hierarchical art; in refusing to create a script, by appropriating the material given by “non-actors”.

When I say that the neighborhood counts, I just want to say that every day I had a reality that took me further than the mere surface that glues to the eyes and the lens. Ventura, Vanda, and Lento are prisoners of their little story and History. And, simultaneously, they are the guards of their prison, of this my prison that is the film and of which I am the director. They are the scriptwriters... (Costa 2012, 29).

In recent years, Pedro Costa has preferred not to create a script. The stories come from a collective of people who write or create their actors together and, therefore, calls its method of democratic (Costa 2016a). In turn, these “non-actors” are also found by Costa.

Vanda Duarte was found in the Fontainhas neighborhood. She had never worked as an actress, but Costa invited her to join *Ossos*. He already had the sketch of a plot in mind after reading in a newspaper about the story of a woman who had lost her baby in a bathroom. A gas atmosphere also came to his mind... “I had the gas and the baby, I had to find the faces in the neighborhood” (Costa 2012, 39). That’s when he met Vanda and her sister Zita: “I come to the neighborhood and, as soon as I see her, I like her, humanly, plastically” (Costa 2012, 39). The two sisters appeared as opposing and complementary beings; which Vanda possessed as an extrovert, Zita kept within herself. Costa did not hesitate and called them to join the film. At first Vanda had refused, claiming to be very busy. Costa found it strange because he had heard that she spent all day in your room, inhaling heroin. After insisting, Vanda accepted (Costa 2012, 39-44).

Vanda’s character was created in conjunction with her: “We invented a maid character, a female plot, a women’s group around the lost boy with the baby” (Costa 2012, 41). Thus, *Ossos* plot appears. Costa first idea and the complement of Vanda and the other characters, as a true collage of opinions.

This film was still performed conventionally - with a written script, a big team and cinema equipment - and Costa intended Vanda to follow what he proposed, but during the filming she surprised him, and when he asked her to cry, she neither laughed nor cried, she was serious; when I

asked her to say good morning, she said good night. Costa realized that it was she who wanted to invent, propose, until she invited him to make a movie in her room (Costa 2012, 45-47) and the director accepted. Thus, *No quarto de Vanda* (2000) was born, the director's fourth feature, in which Costa follows Vanda's routine, her addiction to heroin smoking, her conversations with her sister and neighbors, his relationship with her family, her anguish, and dreams.

So, at the origin of [No quarto de] Vanda, there was also this challenge: to face a real *real*, a truly documentary game. But it was necessary that this documentary invitation be fed by a fiction. A documentary that does not begin with a fiction of this genre does not exist. They invite me to some place, I like people, they like me: this is what makes a movie (Costa 2012, 47).

figure 4
Photogram of
No Quarto
de Vanda



It was two years of filming *Vanda* in her bedroom. Costa spent hours, sometimes even days within Vanda's room. This was possible after Costa adopted the digital, which allowed, in addition to the proximity to Vanda and her sister, to abandon the use of artificial light that the film imposed and record many hours of materials, because the cost of digital is lower, compared to 35mm.

Vanda and Costa had the themes, since the base was to make a movie with her and her family, in the bedroom, in the house, in the neighborhood. The boys and their houses came later. The direction was as follows, as the director explains:

They were relatively simple things, almost documentary, and then, inside this documentary we had some themes, some topics that were: how was the neighborhood many years ago, when you were little, school, father, mother, linked to her life, and so when we started any scene, for example, about childhood in the neighborhood, what was being drawn, what happened the first time was to tell the story. What I did when she finished and began to repeat, therefore a work of perfecting that history; it was me to choose what interested and what did not interest the film. It was so with Ventura or Vitalina. [...] In the second shot, in the second count of the story already has reduced a lot and already begins to have a notion of a line, where we left and where we arrived. From there it is always a kind of reduction (Costa 2016b)¹⁴.

Pedro Costa is based on repetition. In his course, the director emphasized the influence of Charles Chaplin in his way of directing the actors and even of conceiving the film, as well as exhibiting *Unknown Chaplin* (Kevin Brownlow and David Gill 1983), a series of documentaries that present the process of direction of the filmmaker. The series shows how, despite his improvisation, Chaplin repeated the same plan hundreds of times until he was perfect, and the story unfolded. Often, he did not have a written script, he started the film by *gagues*¹⁵ and that quid pro quo that was responsible for bringing up the scenes and the entanglements. As a trial and error game, if it did not work out, it was only to start again.

In the course taught in Bologna, Peter emphasizes: "The person enters the bar, asks for something, but he/she has no coins. I need to film before and after. I need to organize the film around that" (2016a). Just like

¹⁴ Audio interview available.

¹⁵ Improvised joke.

Chaplin, who starts from a *gague* to compose his narrative.

I do not know when something of creation begins to emerge. When you create a character, a thread of the story. I am not sure if it is the order of creation, if it is the order more than repetition, and the fact that when we start working, we already have a lot of data acquired. I mean, there is already a lot and it is not possible to leave some paintings that are already imposed by being filming with Ventura or Vitalina; one being the Cabo Verdeans, the other speaking one language, the other having a certain personality, that is, I never try to change, like other filmmakers, for example, time, the rhythm of people. I prefer it to be done in the assembly, in the plans (Costa 2016b).¹⁶

Pedro Costa respects what the person has to say, the counting and the way the person wants to do it. He corrects only small things, which have to do with light, but not with the internal time of the actors/characters (Costa 2016b).

It is in this sense that the director classifies his works as fictions, as he does not consider his films observational documentaries. He interferes with the choice of themes in the dialogues, asks them to repeat themselves several times, cut them off.

figure 5

Photogram of
Cavalo Dinheiro
(Pedro Costa
2014).



¹⁶ Audio interview available.

Ventura was the first resident from Fontainhas neighborhood. Costa met him during the filming of *Ossos*. They became friends until the director invited him to make a movie. It was *Juventude em marcha* (2006). In it, Ventura is a kind of father for residents. His immigrant condition, homesickness, and especially his wife Zulmira, who he was forced to leave behind, mark the theme of this film, which deals with two exiles: the first is when these immigrants had to leave their homeland in searching for better conditions of life, leaving Cabo Verde towards Portugal, and the second exile of these actors characters is when they have to leave the neighborhood where they established ties to another cold and distant location.

The letter that Ventura writes to his wife is told and repeated throughout the film:

I would like to offer you a hundred thousand cigarettes / a dozen more modern dresses / a car / a lava house that you wanted so much / a bouquet of flowers of four pennies / but before all things / Drink a good bottle of wine / Think about me (*Juventude em marcha*, 2006).

Robert Desnos, a French surrealist poet, wrote in the 1940s from a concentration camp a letter¹⁷ addressed to his wife. Costa seeks inspiration in this message and together with Ventura creates a version of the letter in Creole, that would never come to his wife, but expressing the feeling of those who have the hope of one day be reunited... “Neither Desnos nor Ventura have found their wives again. Neither Desnos nor Ventura received even a reply to these letters. Neither Desnos nor Ventura will see the women they loved with the dresses they dreamed of” (Bénard da Costa 2009, 26).

After losing his home, Ventura wanders immersed in a sense of nostalgia. He visits Fontainhas as well as his new home in Casal da Boba, going from house to house visiting his false children. One of these houses is that of Vanda, who now has a daughter and a companion and tells, among other things, that she is clear of addiction.

They are joint creations, in a collaborative process, which Costa (2016c) exemplifies with the security man that participated in *Juventude em Marcha*. He was really a supermarket security man and wrote his own

17 “100 000 cigarettes, twelve dresses from great dressmakers, the apartment at Rue de Seine, a car, the house the Campiègne woods, that in Belle-Isle, and a five-cent flowers sprig. In my absence, buy the flowers, and I will pay them. The rest, I promise you for later. But, above all, drink a bottle of good wine and think of me” (Bénard da Costa 2009, 26).

text. Costa asked only to tell him that he has a complicated life and that in the museum he makes more money than in the supermarket, even though he does not work in the museum. And the dialog developed by the security man was given as follows:

Watching this place is not like watching the open-air market from my land. Here you wield an iron hand with a velvet glove. There, it is just an iron hand. Nothing but misery. Blacks, whites, gypsies, old people, children... Everyone steals. So much hunger and sadness that makes you feel bad. I know what I am talking about. Here is another world. An old, unperturbed world. No one screams, runs or spits on the ground. It is elegant and easy. I can even take a nap. So, the afternoons here in Egyptian Art are sacred. It is a problem when someone like you shows up. But you do not see people like you or me here often. We are left alone (*Juventude em Marcha* 2006).

The boy, in his words, articulated elements of his memory still in Cabo Verde, his experience as supermarket security and his experience as a black immigrant, what it would be to work in a museum, what he imagines to be this work. As Costa states: “Everything he says comes from his idea” (Costa 2016c).

The dialog is an important part of the film, and the lines and actions of the actor/character were created together, in the same process that Costa played in the previous film. This process also occurred in *Cavalo Dinheiro* (2014), in which Ventura was also the protagonist.

About Ventura, Costa reveals: “What he was saying, I knew it came from him, from his life experience” (Costa 2016c). And yet: “It’s a set of personal culture, his life, his experience, a little culture of the island, life there at the beginning, those years (to be a child of the 1950s).” (Costa 2016c).

The director says that the dialogs developed by Ventura could never have come from him (Costa) or from a scriptwriter, because they come from Ventura’s experience and use words that are not part of the filmmaker’s vocabulary, such as: *young life* or *report*, rather than remember. “Sometimes I have no ideas because it is very foreign to me” (Costa 2016c).

Cavalo Dinheiro delves into Ventura daydreams, in the shadows and ghosts that haunt him. His memories, his gift, and his imagination blend into a somewhat spooky movie about whether the characters seen by Ventura are alive or dead. Dinheiro (Money) is the name of the

horse Ventura left in Cabo Verde, which he believes has been devoured by vultures, as his dreams of a better life in the colonizing country were devoured.

Ventura's past and the past of Portugal blend, stick together, refer to each other. He says he is 19 years old, but we know he is not. It is this memory of his youth, of his past in Cabo Verde, of the arrival in Portugal, of the Revolution of 1974, that are updated in Ventura's actions and dialogs.

As time is mixed, the places do too. Cabo Verde, Portugal, asylum, Fontainhas... exist in the memory and in its update. Even though Fontainhas no longer exists, its presence continues in the film, through the imagery of Costa and Ventura.

The process of making the film is like the previous ones: *No Quarto de Vanda* and *Juventude em Marcha*, with dialogs created together, with testimonials perfected by repetition and cut, with the restricted use of equipment.

Such directing work, which prioritizes joint creation, had already appeared before in the history of cinema, as well as in Anthropology. One of the greatest representatives of this type of film is undoubtedly the anthropologist-filmmaker Jean Rouch. In Jean Rouch's anthropological cinema, this collaboration, associated with the view of interlocutors as subjects, became known as shared anthropology.

In the shared anthropology used by Rouch, the characters are not only seen as objects of study, but as subjects of the film, because there is a collaborative process between the director and the subjects in its construction. Such collaboration develops in the improvisation of these subjects, in the creation of the story together and in the comments in *off* that the "non-actors" weave in their films even after they are ready.

They are perspectives that unite themselves because the film is born from the meeting. "Rouch marks his films with the multiple voices present in the field and in the exchange relationship that occurs in ethnographic/cinematographic research, the product of the meeting is the result of the symbiosis of both perspectives" (Barbosa, Cunha and Hikiji 2006, 289).

In cinema and theater, when the text is created jointly between the director and the actors, whether they are inspired by the lives of these actors or not, it is called a collaborative process. We can see this process in Costa's cinema, mainly in the films *No Quarto de Vanda*, *Juventude em Marcha* and *Cavalo Dinheiro*.

STORYTELLER

It is in the assembly that Pedro Costa plays the role of storyteller. It is at this time of the film he interlinks all material collected. It is here that he becomes the complete *bricoleur*. “It is the most important moment of construction” (Costa 2016a), because it is the stage in which the director acts with more autonomy and authority, in which he chooses the right time of the plans, the takes that have become better. It is the union of the plans that will give the narrative of the films. Vanda, Ventura and Vitalina told their stories, now is the time for the director to tell his story.¹⁸

In No Quarto de Vanda, Juventude em Marcha and Cavalo Dinheiro, the process took place in the editing room, as they were videotaped... *In No Quarto de Vanda*, for example, the director had 100 hours of recorded material, which he took two weeks to watch.

Costa works with the idea that each scene has points of contact with the others, not necessarily then, but that a spoken phrase at some point in the film later repercussions in the narrative, for example (Costa 2016b).

His films follow the syntactic order of parataxis, which is what the phrase sequence is called in grammar without a subordinated or coordinating conjunction, that is, without dependence between terms. In the cinematographic assembly, the parataxis is configured as a juxtaposition, in which the scenes are not subordinate to each other; there are no hierarchies, and a plan, a scene, or a sequence is just as important as others.

Parataxis is a common practice in collage cinema, unlike hypotaxis, in which there is greater subordination, that is, dependence and fit between terms or blocks of meaning, to create a narrative. Hypotaxis occurs in dramatic classical decoupage, in conventional cinema, in which the assembly is made according to the conventions that allow it to become transparent.

In *O Discurso Cinematográfico*, Ismail Xavier (2005) differentiates between various types of decoupage in cinema. In the classic decoupage, which is the most common in the cinema, to show a fact, the director performs several cuts within the same scene, a change “[...] from the point of view to show from another angle or another distance from the ‘same fact’ that, supposedly, did not suffer a solution of continuity, nor did it move to another space” (Xavier 2005, 29); and the use plan and counter plan for example. Such a situation gives the impression that the scene was filmed at once.

¹⁸ Besides the editing, the director’s look, the choice of frames, the lighting, among others, are ways of telling the story and are options of the filmmaker.

In Costa's cinema, the scenes are longer, in most cases, uninterrupted, and the links between scenes are created from the chaining of the planes and configure themselves at the level of themes. In fact, some of these blocks may be presented separately from the rest of the film. For example, the elevator scene, in *Cavalo Dinheiro*, which became an independent block and was transformed into the short *Sweet Exorcism* (2012), to compose the film *Centro Histórico* (Pedro Costa et al. 2012), made with various filmmakers' episodes.

figure 6
Photogram of
Cavalo Dinheiro
(Costa 2014).



Pedro Costa overlaps the audio in this scene in different layers. Ventura's (live) voice is mixed with several ghostly voices in the offing (Ventura's own, the soldier's, a child's). A song also invades the soundtrack. Pedro Costa performs sound collage. In Vanda's Room, for example, the outside noise of the demolition of the neighborhood invaded the internal scenes and were incorporated into the dialogs, reinforcing the rhythm of the film.

The imagery collage is explicit in the introduction of *Cavalo Dinheiro*, for example, which begins with photographs by Jacob Riis, a Danish photographer, linked to American social movements in the late nineteenth century, which documented New York's *favelas*.

figure 7
Photogram of
Cavalo Dinheiro
(2014).



In these screenshots, you can see how Costa worked with *bricolage* in his film. In the first planes, Riis pictures are shown. They are black and white photographs, with their edges weathered, as well as their surface. There are 12 pictures shown, for about six seconds each. Soon after, there appears the framed picture of a black man, hanging on a wall, which we cannot distinguish from where it is. Follows a panoramic camera movement, and we see a man, also black, with his back, down a dark staircase; this is Ventura.

The connection that the pictures constitute with the following plan are not of the order of subordination, but the linkage. So, it is with the following sequences of Ventura delusions.

Its elliptical assembly creates an opacity effect, contrary to transparency. It uses both temporal and spatial ellipses. In *Cavalo Dinheiro*, Ventura is transposed into the past through his dialogs and the places in which he finds himself. Ellipses help to confuse present and past.

In *Juventude em Marcha*, for example, the scene in which Ventura is at Lento's house is cut by a space ellipse to a painting by Rubens at the Gulbenkian Museum, a building Ventura had helped build but never enjoyed (Martin 2009; Rancière 2009; Silveira 2015). We have both a temporal and a spatial ellipse. And so, all the following sequences are followed.

Thus, the parataxis and ellipse employed in the editing by Pedro Costa stitch his films. It is at this stage of the *bricoleur* process that work takes shape.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Pedro Costa's cinema is a rich material both for studies in the field of Anthropology and Cinema. The director uses some features of the ethnographic film, such as filming people in their own context, thereby using "non-actors" performs an extensive field research, and the subjects of his films become also the scriptwriters, because they are works that have the collaboration of their interlocutors; also uses some resources of the fictional cinema, like the direction of actors, the repetition, the sound mixing, among others. This article does not aim to define the genre of his works, but rather the contexts in which they were realized and how their realization occurred.

I sought to explore the *bricoleur* side of his *modus operandi*, since the methodology employed by the director takes a similar stance as the youth of the punk movement, in the search for a culture in which any individual can participate in the cultural process (DIY) - what Pedro Costa calls of democratic method - and the refusal to make a cinema within the mainstream.

For that, I interpreted his cinema, as the director himself defines it, as collages, instead of creations. Pedro Costa uses found and not created materials (locations, "non-actors", stories). The director does not use previously written script, since the dialogs come from the "non-actors" themselves, based on themes that the director proposes, just as it does not aim to create a beginning-middle-end story. The scenes and plans stick to their rhythm, with their development, not according to a story the director has previously imagined.

In this article, I did not intend to analyze scenes, plans or sequences of his films, because the focus is on the conception, its method. What interested me in the analysis was the extra film material, which explains his method of direction.

The elements with which Costa works are those given by the places where he films and by the people who inhabit them. Costa deals with the dreams, the memory and the daydreams of the people who take part in his films. In *No Quarto de Vanda*, *Juventude em Marcha* and *Cavalo Dinheiro*, this is more explicit.

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