



MONITORING OF CREATION PROCESSES: SOME REFLECTIONS

***ACOMPANHAMENTO DE PROCESSOS DE CRIAÇÃO:
ALGUMAS REFLEXÕES***

***SEGUIMIENTO A LOS PROCESOS DE CREACIÓN: ALGUNOS
PENSAMIENTOS***

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Abstract

This article proposes some reflections on the research methodology in the monitoring of theatrical processes within the scope of creation process. It is presented a history of the development of such researches in the Graduate Program in Communication and Semiotics from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, which began to offer a critical approach to the artistic production process. Specifically, some possible purposes are presented, as well as contexts of monitoring and forms of recording observations, from a few examples. Finally, some paths are proposed on the questions concerning the theoretical foundation.

Keywords: Process of creation, Review of process, Monitoring.

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é propor algumas reflexões sobre a metodologia de pesquisa no acompanhamento de processos cênicos, no âmbito dos estudos sobre processo de criação. É apresentado um histórico do desenvolvimento de tais pesquisas, no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação e Semiótica da Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, que passaram a oferecer uma abordagem crítica de processo para a produção artística. De modo mais específico, são apresentados alguns possíveis propósitos, contextos de acompanhamentos e formas de registros das observações, a partir de alguns exemplos. E por fim são propostos alguns caminhos, diante dos questionamentos relativos à fundamentação teórica.

Palavras-chave: Processo de criação, Crítica de processo, Acompanhamento.

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es proponer algunas reflexiones sobre la metodología de investigación en el seguimiento de procesos escénicos, en el ámbito de los estudios sobre proceso de creación. Se presenta un historial del desarrollo de las investigaciones en el Programa de Postgrado en Comunicación y Semiótica de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de São Paulo, que pasaron a ofrecer un abordaje crítico de proceso para la producción artística. Específicamente, se presentan posibles propósitos, contextos de seguimientos y formas de registros de las observaciones, a partir de algunos ejemplos. Y por fin se proponen algunos caminos, ante los cuestionamientos relativos a la fundamentación teórica.

Palabras clave: Proceso de creación, Crítica de proceso, Seguimiento.

The aim of this article is to propose some reflections upon the research methodology while tracking the artistic creation process in theater. Throughout the development of this critique of processes, in dialogue with different theories and great diversity of records or documents of creative journeys in different manifestations, I have been proposing some theoretical tools to deepen the understanding of creation. It is a possible critical theory that discusses the creation process as a network under construction in dialogue with the thought of complexity¹. These theoretical reflections are the theme of my books *Unfinished gesture: process of artistic creation*, *Networks of creation: construction of works of art* and, more recently, *Group creation processes: dialogues* (free translation).

The development of these studies is inserted in a context of constant expansion of their boundaries, as they have always focused on contemporary experimentation, which requires, in many cases, the expansion of the critical look interested in creative processes. In addition, the methodology has been expanding to other paths beyond the studies on the personal files of the artists – without leaving them behind –, for example, tracking group processes, more specifically the theatrical ones.

To start these reflections, I suggest we think about the purpose and context of such tracking. Very broadly, what is the point of watching rehearsals, debates, workshops, lectures etc. and what is the relationship of the observer with the group? As for the purposes, it would be important to raise a few possibilities that could lead to the general methodological issues of this process tracking, as well as some of its specificities.

There is no doubt that, in the case of group processes, the presence of someone along the way is always facilitated and less artificial than in the case of individual processes². The group extends, but there is always one more

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1. This critical theory of creation was built upon dialogue with the semiotics of Charles S. Peirce (1931-1935), the concept of network by Pierre Musso (2004) and upon the thinkers of complexity and culture, such as Edgar Morin (1998) and Lúri Lotman (1998).
 2. Colapietro (2014), when discussing the subject from the point of view of semiotics, says the artist, in our case, is not a private sphere, but a communicative agent. It is distinguishable, but not separable from others, because their identity is constituted by relationships with others – it is not just a possible member of a community, but the person, as a subject, becomes the community and points out what seems of utmost importance to create a crisis regarding the opposition between group processes and individual processes. (Cf. SALLES, 2017).

look and no observer is neutral – there is always interaction between group members and the observer. I believe that, in the context of complexity thinking and running from the belief in the objectivity of classical sciences, we start at the “inevitable” interaction of subjectivities. If we take the concept of creation as a network³, the observer will always be part of the network of the creation being developed by the group.

Continuing the discussion on process tracking under the point of view of the degree of the observer’s involvement, some questions have already been raised, which will generate different tracking modes. Is it about an academic researcher, a critic of the process, a critic of the performing arts, a researcher of the performing arts, an artist, an artist-researcher from outside the group that is a master’s or PhD student, or a member of the group, who experience the process itself? Is this a researcher external to the group, or someone invited to track the process? These are some possibilities, knowing such listing cannot be depleted. It is noteworthy that these different purposes generate tracking modes and several “products,” such as critical texts, academic research, documentaries etc. Audiovisual records of filmmakers invited to track the group, which can generate documentaries, will be discussed later, in the reports on the processes by Evaldo Mocarzel.

Other issues concerning the methodology of tracking are time and the ways of recording the observations. The former is related to many variables, such as the possibilities and purposes of the researcher, the opening of the group etc. As for the registration, my experience leads me to highlight the concern not to be invasive and to understand what kind of interaction the group expects, and the search for common language and critical stance. These observations can generate, for example, verbal or audiovisual notes.

Different tracking contexts

My first experience in this field was tracking the construction process of the facility of the Norwegian visual artist Inghild Karlsen, developed at *Oficina*

3. The concept of creation will be presented, in a summarized manner, hereafter. Cf. Cecilia A. Salles (2006; 2017).

Cultural Oswald de Andrade for the XXII São Paulo Art Biennial in 1994, and it faced common problems for an initial search with this objective.

The first difficulty faced was the presence of someone external to the process. However, in this case, the artist was adding other people to the initial team, consisting of her and her assistant. It is interesting to note that the presence of assistants is a common practice in productions and assemblies of visual arts when there is a type of division of labor. Because the artist was in the São Paulo Art Biennial, a choice made by a curator of her country, someone else is added as an integral part of the process. Such production conditions are relevant to understand the ease of acceptance of the presence of a critic interested in creation processes in some moments of this process.

What I want to highlight is that, although the work is by Inghild Karlsen, in her workplace she was around other people, hence my presence being natural and, therefore, not embarrassing or inconvenient. The observation occurred, therefore, when the individual process of Inghild became necessarily collective. The solitary work of an artist, in his/her workshop, would not offer the same conditions and would hinder this form of registration. Of course, there are other documents, but this tracking methodology would make the process artificial.

In this same context of processes of artists of visuality, the book by James Lord, *A Giacometti Portrait*, presents photos of the portrait painted by Giacometti, followed by comments on his experience as a model of the painter; in other words, the person responsible for publishing the book was part of the process. There is no doubt about the relevance of this work, since we have access to the painter/model relationship, regarding the mood of the studio and work routine – information difficult to obtain without the artificialization of the process, in this case, by tracking the production of a painting by some external observer. James Lord mentions, throughout the book, the cautions in taking notes after the end of the sessions, so that Giacometti would not feel invaded.

Another example that I bring from my critical practice was generated by a request to participate in the project *Um diálogo possível*, by Ana Teixeira, from *Companhia 2 de Balé* from the city of São Paulo, in 2005, when I was a theoretician invited to track this process. The proposal, made by the director of *Balé da Cidade*, Mônica Mion, and by the scenic directors responsible for

the project, Ana Teixeira and Sigrid Nora, involved tracking the activities of the *Cia. 2* when it was possible. Since I was introduced to the project, I realized that was expected more than observation of me: I was part of the group as one of the people who probably would provide new interactions, which would become one of the possible dialogues; however, there was nothing preordained how that would happen. At first, in my case, the experience lasted three months, and the methodological issues were discussed in the text "Dialogues were possible," one of the chapters of my book *Archives of creation: critics and curatorship*.

From the outset it was clear that there was a thought-provoking challenge, after all, there was a lot of new stuff: the little contact with this methodology along with the fact of being my first experience with dance. For example, how to behave during observation: would it be inhibiting if I took notes? That was quickly resolved, after realizing that the other participants were also taking notes. I still needed to learn the specific terms of the area to establish the dialogue, bringing, at the same time, analogies with other artistic manifestations. I feared being too theoretical, because this always creates obstacles in the interactions. The dialogue between the university and the artistic community are often marked by disastrous results when there is no common language. Such concern and uncertainty remained until the end of the project.

Another obstacle faced in this process tracking was the need to make esthetic judgments about some parts of the process, such as the quality of a scene proposed. As a critic, I always put myself in the position of trying to understand the esthetic pursuits of the artist (or artists) studied without expressing my own judgments. It does not matter if the critic would opt for other choices when the artists face the diversity of paths to be taken, but rather understand the trends of these decisions in the context of the work being created.

These early difficulties, if not totally overcome, were somehow minimized. At a time not defined, from external observer of the creation process of the group, I started to feel part of the process.

The dialogue expanded over time – a result of my experience with the group – and soon I was participating in some conversations in the end of days of work and proposing references, such as the network image, movies and the production of a critical text. Some of these results will be presented later, but it is noteworthy that these comments come from a critic who became part of the network under creation, in accordance with the project purpose. These are some conclusions that, based on publications, established new dialogues with both the artistic and the academic community. In addition, they were presented in a magazine of the contemporary dance field and, for offering a new methodological possibility for genetic criticism, were included in the third edition of my book, which introduces this critical approach (SALLES, 2008).

Another important example to be mentioned is the Genetic Criticism project, by *Cia. Danças*, directed by Claudia de Souza. The group had been in contact with this possible approach to the art from the master's research by my advisee Marcos Villas Boas (2004), *Communicative aspects of collective processes*, a case study on a process of the *Cia. Danças*.

Just a few years later I learned about this art project proposed by the group and talked to them a few times throughout the process. An interesting aspect in this case is that the dialogue with the group continues until today, with participation in other projects of the Company. I believe that such continuity gives some clues about how these interactions happen between the critique of process and the groups he/she studied.

What to observe?

In many cases, the question that drives this critical methodology is “what does the tracking offer to the creation process of the group?”. The researcher is thus exposed to what that process offers, without predetermination of what will be found, open to the randomness of the research, with the inevitable marks of his/her look and interests. My advisee Rodrigo Arrigoni (2006), for example, who defended his master's thesis *The communicational space of Satyro's theater: the actor and the spectator*, was a young playwright with intense anxiety regarding what he saw as “detachment” from the dramaturgy

in that moment with the spectator. The title of his research shows how his look was moved by his concerns.

Forms of interaction with the group

When discussing some tracking contexts, I brought, implicitly, forms of interaction between the observer and the group. Here are some other examples quite significant to this discussion.

I turn to the documentaries by Evaldo Mocarzel, whose letters to the editor and the different cuts of the film were studied by me, and that came out of his intention to register the processes of the theater creation of different groups from São Paulo operating in the last decades. From the audiovisual tracking of workshops, rehearsals, discussions, conversations and travels of groups and shows, the documentary filmmaker is responsible for the preservation of the memory of the recent history of the experimental theater from São Paulo and, at the same time, for the production of documentaries, which increase the knowledge about the process of theater creation.

While he was tracking the project *Cia. Livre 10 anos*, these interactions have gained interesting contours, as cinema and theater cooperate, placing the filmmaker as part of a collaborative network of creation of the theater groups documented.

In this case, the trial proposed by the director Cibeles Forjaz and accepted by him, is a good representation of this interaction. The filmmaker explains to the editor Guta Pacheco:

My original intention was to make a documentary strictly observational with *Companhia Livre*, without interviews, not based on words, which tend to be treacherous, especially regarding the rescue of the memory of a theater group. I wanted the documentation, the flashes of memory to emerge from the observation of the action of re-enacting every performance of the company, but, on the first day of shooting, I realized that this would not be possible, because, after having created a kind of 'fourth wall' documentary, to observe the performances, Cibeles Forjaz broke the modesty of observation, interacted with the camera and ended up creating a metalinguistic shot, directed by her, in which the photographer and I were placed in the center of the image, a shot with the camera very high, on the roof of the theater.

And he continues his dialogue with the future editor of the documentary:

As we know, the documentary language is a kind of unexpected architecture, it must have chance as a compositional element in our sounds and images, a porosity to the unforeseen event and, logically, at least for me, a constant concern with the otherness, with the 'other', who can also help suggest language procedures to be adopted in the creation of their own image in the film. Before this playful introduction by Cibeles Forjaz, I came to the conclusion that a too rigorous observation was not the best way for this project on the *Cia. Livre* and, besides, Theater is the temple of the actresses, actors and words.

As it turns out, the intervention of the director created a new way for Mocarzel to make his documentary. The filmmaker reviews, throughout the process, his initial choice by the absence of interviews, finding new resources through the interviews themselves:

I realized once again that it would be cruel, and even misleading, to make a documentary about a theater group without interviews, rejecting the word somehow. So, I chose the option for the interview and, little by little, I confess I also ended up interacting with everyone, not just as a filmmaker, director of a documentary film, but also as a playwright in the process.

And, lastly, he explains criteria regarding the use of interviews based on what he did not want: "but I did not want this to be a talking heads film from start to finish, one of those documentaries that almost always go through that tedious atmosphere of television reports"

There are also cases in which the observer is "absorbed" by the process of the group. I bring the example of Alexandre Mauro Toledo, my advisee, who defended his PhD dissertation *Novas configurações da direção teatral* (New configurations of theater direction), in 2011. He observed the process of a group from Minas Gerais that faced conflicts with the director close to the premiere. Alexandre then took over, because he was part of the network of that process and knew the principles that drove the group.

Something similar happened with Evaldo Mocarzel, in the project *Kastelo*, an adaptation of *The Castle*, by Franz Kafka, performed by the *Teatro da Vertigem*, which also faced some conflicts, as we see, so common

in such processes. In this case, the filmmaker, who had been tracking the process as part of his project previously mentioned, starts to direct the play with Sérgio Pires.

Some critical reflections

The methodology under discussion here also faces some questions concerning the theoretical foundation. I ask: how can the critique of creation processes assist in the reading of the observation, producing knowledge about creation?

The first aspect to be highlighted is that this is a critical approach with the same concerns of the person willing to track the process. These common searches can bring to the fore the importance of the notes and diaries of actors and directors (just to name a few examples) of the processes tracked, whose reading can broaden knowledge about the creation of that group. At the same time, the instruments of a general nature of the processes, offered by this critical approach, can generate reflections upon the specificities of the processes tracked.

To illustrate this point, I return to the process of *Balé da Cidade*, tracked by me, bringing, initially, some of the general issues of the processes, in the context of the concept of network creation. The creation process can be described as sensitive and intellectual, a construction process of artistic, scientific and media objects that, in the semiotic perspective (PEIRCE, 1931-1935), as fallible movement with trends and sustained by the logic of uncertainty, include the intervention of chance and makes room for the introduction of new ideas. A continuous process, without starting nor final point; a construction process inserted into the space and time of the creation, which inevitably affects the artist.

The trends are vague directions that guide the construction process of the works in the environment of uncertainty and inaccuracy; they generate work, in search of something to be discovered. The development of the process leads to certain decisions that encourage the formation of lines of force. These lines, in turn, give consistency to objects under construction. Throughout the process, restrictions or limitations of various natures are

stipulated, which allow the construction of the work. The trends of processes can be observed from the point of view of the construction of the poetic project and communicative practices.

For the discussion about *Balé da Cidade*, I highlight the poetic project or the directing principles of the process. In this space of vague poetic trends there is the project of the artist, which is composed of directing principles, of ethical and esthetic nature, present in creative practices, related to the production of a specific work, and connecting the work of that creator as a whole. These principles are related to the singularities of artists or groups; they are levels of values, ways of representing the world, tastes and beliefs that rule their modes of action.

The observation of the process explicitly showed it was driven by proposals built in a strong ethical aspect. In this respect, there was an ongoing discussion on the compromise that involved everyone, because the project is being developed in a public agency. This was implied in one of the questions proposed by the directors for all participants: “in your opinion, what other actions similar to this can you expect from an official dance company, which understands its political role on the national dance scene?”

This commitment was at the base of the esthetic proposal of the project, which could be defined as the need for questioning acting models and the consequent search for ways to break with an encoded matrix or with a body with crystallized memory. Thus, they were proposing the rupture of a tradition experienced by the dancers' bodies. How to own your body without the mask and the convictions brought by what is known? The path chosen for this question was to search for multiple dialogs. As dancers from a company maintained by public funds, the search was seen as a way to avoid a possible stagnation of procedures in the dance field itself.

More accurately, that is, the challenge for those specific bodies, raw material of the dancers, were questions about the resistance offered and the consequent maintenance in a known territory. In other words, what was at stake was the availability (or unavailability) of these bodies to the rupture of their habits. The difficulties faced by the proponents of the project were not always explicit, but they were there in latent mode.

From the point of view of the general aspects of the process, the anxiety was on the list of the artists of the group with the raw material chosen, which always arises from the tension between its properties and its potential. This clash becomes knowledge of the matter, which involves learning its history, its limits and its possibilities. At the time of completion of the work, the artist establishes an intimate and tense relationship with the subject chosen, through which his/her project will become palpable. In the manipulation and transformation of the matter there is mutual instigation. In this reciprocal exchange of influence, artist and matter begin to know each other, reinvent themselves and therefore extend their meanings.

I finish such reflections on the methodology of tracking the processes by adding this proposal of critical reading. The general questions of the creation processes help us, in my opinion, to get to the specificities with greater accuracy or precision, thus leaving a theoretical proposal for how the information obtained by tracking the processes can generate knowledge on the specificities of the creation of that group.

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