

Repercussions of the Artistic Experience in the face of Severe Psychic Suffering, Internment and Social Exclusion*

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Objective: to analyze the elaboration of new perspectives by actors-creators of *Projeto Bispo: treated like animals, behaving as one* on severe psychic suffering, internment and social exclusion. **Method:** it is a qualitative research in health that associated bibliographic research, fieldwork and semi-structured interviews developed and applied by this researcher. Seven artists were interviewed between June and August 2018. Content analysis with the thematic analysis technique was followed for treating the interviews. **Results:** the study revealed that *O Coletivo* operated an experiment in which the artists participated in the survey of theoretical material that served as a basis for aesthetic discussions, carried out exploration of urban space, manufactured costumes and scenic objects and elaborated narratives from the collective activities. The encounter among street artists and individuals, who lost their social place mainly due to the use of alcohol and other drugs, allowed this theme to be appropriated by the show. **Conclusion:** the analysis showed that, beyond the transformation of the perspective of actors-creators, the dramaturgy undertaken by the theater group brought the perception that it is possible to provoke the formation of new concepts and discourses about severe psychic suffering, hospitalization and social exclusion through the art.

Descriptors: Mental Health; Art; Mental Disorders; Deinstitutionalization; Social Marginalization.

* The publication of this article in the Thematic Series "Human Resources in Health and Nursing" is part of Activity 2.2 of Reference Term 2 of the PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Research Development, Brazil. Paper extracted from master's thesis "Entre loucuras: discutindo a transformação do olhar de artistas criadores do espetáculo 'Projeto Bispo: tratados como bicho, comportam-se como um'", presented to Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Santos, SP, Brazil.

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How to cite this article

Oliveira APV, Moreira MIB. Repercussions of the Artistic Experience in the face of Severe Psychic Suffering, Internment and Social Exclusion. SMAD, Rev Eletrônica Saúde Mental Álcool Drog. 2021 July-Sept.;17(3):47-56. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.11606/issn.1806-6976.smad.2021.170011>

Repercussões da experiência artística frente ao sofrimento psíquico grave, ao internamento e à exclusão social

Objetivo: analisar a elaboração de novas perspectivas pelos atores-criadores de *Projeto Bispo: tratados como bicho, comportam-se como um* sobre o sofrimento psíquico grave, o internamento e a exclusão social. **Método:** trata-se de pesquisa qualitativa em saúde que associou pesquisa bibliográfica, trabalho de campo e entrevistas semiestruturadas desenvolvidas e aplicadas pela pesquisadora. Sete artistas foram entrevistados entre junho e agosto de 2018. No tratamento das entrevistas, seguiu-se a análise de conteúdo com a técnica de análise temática. **Resultados:** o estudo revelou que *O Coletivo* operou experimentação na qual os artistas participaram do levantamento do material teórico que serviu de base às discussões estéticas, realizaram exploração do espaço urbano, fabricaram figurinos e objetos cênicos e elaboraram narrativas a partir das atividades coletivas. O encontro entre artistas e indivíduos em situação de rua, que perderam seu lugar social, sobretudo, devido ao uso de álcool e outras drogas, possibilitou a apropriação dessa temática no espetáculo. **Conclusão:** além da transformação da perspectiva dos artistas, a dramaturgia empreendida pelo grupo de teatro trouxe a percepção de que é possível provocar a formação de novas concepções e discursos a respeito do sofrimento psíquico severo, do internamento e da exclusão social por meio da arte.

Descritores: Saúde Mental; Arte; Transtornos Mentais; Desinstitucionalização; Marginalização Social.

Repercusiones de la experiencia artística ante el sufrimiento psíquico severo, internamiento y exclusión social

Objetivo: analizar la elaboración de nuevas perspectivas por parte de actores-creadores del *Projeto Bispo: tratados como animales, se comportan como tal* sobre sufrimiento psíquico severo, internamiento y exclusión social. **Método:** es una investigación cualitativa en salud que asoció investigación bibliográfica, trabajo de campo y entrevistas semiestruturadas desarrolladas y aplicadas por esta investigadora. Siete artistas fueron entrevistados entre junio y agosto de 2018. Para el tratamiento de las entrevistas, se procedió a un análisis de contenido con la técnica de análisis temática. **Resultados:** el estudio reveló que *O Coletivo* realizó un experimento donde artistas participaron del estudio del material teórico que sirvió de base para discusiones estéticas, llevaron a cabo exploración del espacio urbano, fabricaron trajes y objetos escénicos y elaboraron narrativas a partir de actividades colectivas desarrolladas. El encuentro entre artistas e individuos que perdieron su lugar social debido principalmente al uso de alcohol y otras drogas, permitió que este tema fuera apropiado en el espectáculo. **Conclusión:** el análisis mostró que, además de la transformación de perspectiva de actores-creadores, la dramaturgia emprendida por el grupo de teatro trajo la percepción de que es posible provocar la formación de nuevas concepciones y discursos sobre el sufrimiento psicológico severo, la hospitalización y exclusión social a través del arte.

Descriptors: Salud Mental; Arte; Trastornos Mentales; Desinstitucionalización; Marginación Social.

Introduction

In the 1970s and 1980s, the criticisms led by the Psychiatric Reform movement in Brazil to the psychiatric paradigm and the asylum device took place towards the achievement of a psychosocial care model with a view to producing territorial and community care and new forms of social inclusion of people in severe mental distress or in a situation of psychosocial vulnerability. Through concrete actions by the mental health workers and the construction of a broad Psychosocial Care Network, it was sought to guarantee a social place for these subjects that were considered "insane"⁽¹⁻⁵⁾. This singular perspective favored the construction of identities and ensured the consolidation of rights and conditions for the emergence of citizenship that was previously unlikely in environments of asylum and exclusion.

In this regard, aesthetic and cultural experiments that address issues related to mental health have revealed different discourses and practices on "madness" and diversity, causing changes in the perception of difference through the displacement of the mental illness concept, which assumes that the subjects are incapable of social exchanges, for the concept of psychic diversity experiences⁽⁶⁻⁷⁾.

In this way, artistic-cultural projects were displayed as a non-institutional device that fosters the discovery and expansion of potentialities, stimulating autonomy and the creation of new forms of social inclusion for people with mental disorders or in situations of psychosocial vulnerability^(1-5,8). Among the diverse types of artistic expression, we used elaborations of the performing arts to compose this work, considering their creative power and their political aspect of transformation.

This article is the result of the research study that sought to analyze the transformation of the perspective of actors-creators⁽⁹⁾ of the show *Projeto Bispo: treated like animals, behaving as one* about issues related to the mental health field, in its trajectory from 2012 to 2015. Such an artistic proposal belongs to the contemporary theatrical scene and was conceived and presented by *O Coletivo*, a group that had as its purpose elaborating a scenic work that distanced itself from the conventional space of theater and institutionalized art and that functioned as an aesthetic and political instrument for critical discussion of the Brazilian reality, in addition to portraying experiences similar to those experienced by creative-actors and the audience⁽¹⁰⁻¹¹⁾.

Research studies and experimentation of *O Coletivo* were guided by the collaborative process, methodology of creation and reflection where the artists carry out a production whose authorship is shared by everyone⁽¹⁰⁻¹¹⁾.

At the first meeting of the group, made up by artists between 18 and 35 years old, it was decided to survey the biography of Arthur Bispo do Rosário and on issues related

to mental health. The artists defined the territory of the Historic Center of Santos/SP as an area for fieldwork, surrounding *Vila do Teatro* (an artistic occupation that sheltered the *O Coletivo*). From the reconnaissance of the territory, the first experiments of the group were delineated, which were weekly. It is noticed at this point that the presence of people who lived in a situation of social and psychological vulnerability in the surroundings of *Vila do Teatro* radically changed the course envisioned for the show. The perception of the correspondence between the exclusion of people with severe psychological distress and the marginalization of people on the street has led the creative actors to incorporate into the creative process some issues related to this part of the population. The collaborative process of *Projeto Bispo: treated like animals, behaving as one* lasted a year and two months until the show's debut, in July 2013.

The final assembly of the staging had two distinct acts: *The street*, composed by creative actors who exposed, among other issues, the psychosocial vulnerability and the abuse of psychotropic substances; and *the asylum* where the artists and the public were taken to the experience of confinement inside *Casa da Frontaria Azulejada* (a historic building located in Santos/SP). In this way, the artistic conception carried out by this group revealed different aspects of psychological suffering that are intertwined by social, political and cultural issues of our time.

In the first scenic survey of *O Coletivo*, the intention was to create a show that articulated collective creation in process to the social experience of those considered "insane", different and excluded, through aesthetic and political experimentation based on fieldwork and theoretical research on madness, internment and exclusion⁽¹²⁻¹³⁾.

The group's purpose was to enable the staging to represent a tool capable of contributing to the strengthening and visibility of the anti-asylum struggle, in addition to collaborating with the transformation of the perspective on the person with severe psychic distress. In this way, it was believed that the way of doing and its artistic conception operated in the sense of making public a certain political, economic and cultural context in the field of mental health.

Given the aforementioned, this article aimed to analyze the possibility of cultural and artistic expressions constituting new concepts about severe psychic suffering, hospitalization and social exclusion. Thus, from experiments carried out during the collaborative process of the show *Projeto Bispo: treated like animals, behaving as one*, it was sought to analyze the perception of the actors-creators regarding the production of this artistic intervention and its effects on the reflection on

madness, internment and social exclusion conformed by the hegemonic psychiatric paradigm.

Method

This work was submitted for evaluation by the Ethics and Research Committee on Human Beings of the Federal University of São Paulo – CAEE: 02623218.1.0000.5505, having been approved under number 3,200,786.

In the search for an investigation that privileged the perspective of the artists of the *O Coletivo* group on the topics of “madness”, hospitalization and exclusion, qualitative health research was chosen, an analysis method that encompasses cultural values of groups and individuals, interrelationships and historical and social processes⁽¹⁴⁻¹⁵⁾. The methodological path followed associated bibliographic survey, fieldwork and conducting semi-structured interviews developed and applied by this researcher. The interviews were conducted between June and August 2018 at the *Cadeia Velha* Cultural Center (Santos/SP), headquarters of the *Baixada Santista* Theater Movement.

At the first moment, a bibliographic review was carried out in search of theoretical appropriation related to the themes of “madness”, internment and social exclusion. To this end, the thoughts of Michel Foucault⁽¹⁶⁻¹⁹⁾, Robert Castel⁽²⁰⁾ and Erving Goffman⁽²¹⁾ were used as a theoretical framework. Writings of Franco Basaglia⁽²²⁾ and Franco Rotelli⁽²³⁾ were reviewed with the purpose of rescuing the deinstitutionalization movement and the deconstruction of knowledge about “madness”. Likewise, texts produced by authors involved with the transformation that took place in the city of Santos/SP in 1989 during the intervention of *Casa de Saúde Anchieta*, which triggered an intense relationship of mental disorder with the city by means of territorial and community health services⁽²⁴⁻²⁵⁾. References on the Psychiatric Reform⁽²⁶⁻²⁸⁾ were consulted in order to situate the regional experience where the show was staged.

In the phase related to fieldwork, Participant Observation techniques and Field Diary Records were used. There was a gradual approach with the artists who participated in the montage, reflected according to the reception and understanding of their daily lives. At first, an individual approach was carried out, which enabled the presentation of the study proposal to the artists and the invitation to participate in the research. The approaches took place in specific activities of the *Baixada Santista* Theater Movement, such as the Santista Theater Festival (*Festival Santista de Teatro*, FESTA) and the Theater Scenes Festival (*Festival de Cenas Teatrais*, FESCETE). Thus, a more effective approach was made to the cast of *O Coletivo*, in order to analyze its dynamic characteristic of social interaction^(14-15,29).

The participants were invited to collaborate with the study according to the following inclusion criteria: being over 18 years old; having experienced involvement in the collaborative process of the show and acted in at least three performances; and having agreed to collaborate with the work by signing the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), as indicated by the Research Ethics Committee for research studies involving human beings. The exclusion criteria were as follows: not having participated in the research and creation process of the show and/or having participated in only two of its performances. Thus, seven artists were selected for this study.

A script was developed with four guiding questions, for the semi-structured interviews: 1) What motivated you to participate in *Bispo do Rosário Drama Research Center*?; 2) What did you think about severe psychic suffering, hospitalization and social exclusion before the creative process of the show?; 3) How was the collaborative process of creating the montage carried out?; and 4) What is your current perspective on severe psychic distress, hospitalization and social exclusion? There was only one interview with each artist, which was recorded using an audio recorder with his/her permission. The interviews lasted a mean of one hour each.

Thematic Content Analysis⁽¹⁴⁾ was followed for the treatment of the interview material, operated in the following phases: it started with the ordering of information, supported by the transcripts of the interviews, reading and organization of the material according to the theoretical basis adopted for this research and through the identification of central themes, such as “madness”, *internment* and *social exclusion*, being considered before and after the process of creating the show. Subsequently, the material exploration stage was verified, with reading of clippings and fragments of the interviewees’ statements. In this way, a floating reading of all the transcribed material was carried out, in order to establish a relationship between the objective of this research and the data of the interviews; finally, the phase of treatment of the results obtained was conducted and the interpretation took place with approximation of these clippings with the theoretical framework previously constituted, transcending the meanings presented in material⁽¹⁴⁾.

In order to ensure anonymity, the artists were identified with the word “interviewee”, followed by numbers that indicate the order in which the interviews appear in the text (Interviewee 1 to Interviewee 7).

Results and Discussion

The question that introduced the interviews sought to examine the motivation that led each of the artists to approach the *Bispo do Rosário Drama Research Center*. The intention was to examine whether there was an

intention on the part of the stage directors to carry out a drama research study on issues related to “madness” and social exclusion or if the interest was centered only on the performance of a show, whatever its theme.

The testimonies revealed that the main impetus for bringing the group closer was the willingness for a study on severe psychic suffering and social exclusion within a theater collective. The problematization of family issues regarding mental disorders and the identification between artists and “insane” or marginalized people, considering the limit situation they occupy in society, were also pointed out as an incentive to participate in the collaborative creation process⁽⁶⁾.

The second question presented during the interviews dealt with the encounter with psychic suffering prior to the process of creating the montage. The purpose of this item was to investigate the initial experiences and conceptions of these subjects regarding severe psychic distress, hospitalization and social exclusion. The testimonies of the artists revealed that, in most cases, their own or family psychic suffering guided their first perceptions. Events such as hospitalization of relatives and abuse of alcohol and other drugs were reported.

The participants extrapolated the initial object of the topic and addressed in their statements themes such as: the relationships between mental disorder and religiousness, homosexuality and social exclusion and the lack of respect for the difference, mainly referring to experiences on the margins of society⁽³⁰⁾. It is worth mentioning that the interviewees said they perceived the “insane person” as someone unable to integrate into society or even a strange, different and enigmatic person, as explained by the literature⁽¹⁶⁻¹⁷⁾; they demonstrate knowledge about the role of social and moral control played inside the psychiatric hospitals. Certainly, the repressive behaviors practiced in asylum institutions in the name of the social order derive from the appropriation of madness as a socio-historical product and from the place of the “madman” as a deviant and a-social element⁽¹⁶⁻²⁰⁾.

The third part of the interview, which dealt with the experiment carried out during the collective process of creating *Projeto Bispo*, proved to be relevant in the sense of understanding the movement that led the group from the preliminary study on the biography of Bispo do Rosário to the setting up of a show that debated, among other themes, “madness”, internment and the social context of the city Santos with regard to mental health and the marginalized population.

The director of *O Coletivo* declared that the choice for representing the figure of Arthur Bispo do Rosário was due to the observation of his life trajectory between indigence, psychic suffering and internment in asylum institutions⁽³¹⁾, themes that the artist wanted to expose in the artistic proposal. In the director’s words: *At first, we*

had to discover each one’s Bispo: what bothered us, choked us, what was our cry, and in parallel we researched real stories that crossed us [...]. And then we started to go to the street and then we started to have total contact with people on the street. That was remarkable for the show itself, right? Because we started to recognize Bispo in those people too (Interviewee 1).

According to the director, it was about finding aspects of the actors-creators⁽⁹⁾, as well as the population in a situation of vulnerability and psychosocial risk confluent with the construction of the characters that went back to the condition experienced by Bispo and so many other artists considered “insane”. The artist also emphasized that, in the stage of the show that took place inside *Casa da Frontaria Azulejada*, institutionalized “madness” went back to the psychiatric hospitals of yore, notably *Casa de Saúde Anchieta*, an institution that underwent municipal intervention in 1989⁽²⁴⁻²⁵⁾. In fact, the experience in Santos was the most radical project for the decline of an asylum as a place of violence and social exclusion in Brazil, notorious mainly for having inaugurated a new type of community care in mental health articulated in a wide psychosocial support network⁽²⁶⁻²⁷⁾. As approached by the literature, psychiatric institutions inflicted on their inmates strict rules of behavior and their way of operating was mainly due to the impediment of social relationship with the external world⁽²¹⁾. The asylum, as a total institution, was represented as a place where violence, mistreatment, torture and the annihilation of individuality and freedom prevailed⁽²¹⁻²³⁾.

When talking about the creation of his character, interviewee 2 remembered how he developed some characteristics considered peculiar to mental disorder. His narrative referred to the moral repression suffered by the “insane people” who, trapped in psychiatric hospitals, ended up losing their autonomy and identity. Certainly, the inmate’s loss of freedom acted as a device that sustained his annihilation and mortification⁽²¹⁾. In this perspective, when dealing with the condition of the inmate, his character returned to the issues of apprehension and life in the closed space of asylums to denounce authoritarianism and the limits imposed on inmates by psychiatric knowledge⁽²¹⁻²³⁾.

Interviewee 3, in turn, spoke about the collaborative process of creation that problematized ways of being in the social space and mirrored some contradictions of the Brazilian society⁽¹³⁾. The artist highlighted certain aspects of the artistic production, as verified in his statement: *The process was as follows: how to create first? [...] Our research was this: take, present during the process performances about a process of madness, of someone who went insane and what that person would bring as content to collaborate in the story of the show that we wanted to tell. What bias in Bispo’s life we could tell, right? [...] So I opted not for a madness, but for a person who is forgetting who they are. In the middle of that*

street situation process, it is unknown how they got there. [...] He starts saying things that are in his head; Those are memories, disconnected phrases. [...] But within that, there is also a lot of wisdom (Interviewee 3).

When characterizing his character, the actor sought to represent aspects related to a hidden knowledge belonging to madness, which appears in opposition to his face considered obscure and frightening. As seen in the literature, such an approach has historically been spread by the arts, which often portrayed madness as an experience associated with animalism and chimeric, exerting fascination for representing its hidden nature⁽¹⁶⁻¹⁸⁾.

Interviewee 4, on the other hand, emphasized that the research done by the actors regarding the biographies of artists considered insane, as well as the observations and interaction with people on the street, were essential to the construction of the characters. The actress reported: *[...] I was creating with what I saw on the street, right? Much of my speeches were also based on Stela do Patrocínio. [...] The elaboration of the costume too, it was on the street that I got it. I exchanged clothes on the street with people, I took off my clothes and they gave me theirs, anyway. I found it on the street, washed it... and I was composing anyway (Interviewee 4).*

The artist emphasized that many elements observed in the social relations and picturesque images of the territory made up the representation of her character⁽¹³⁾. Thus, her testimony was in line with the literature when she stated that the homeless population suffers prejudice for not having access to cleanliness and other basic needs and, particularly, for living in the midst of violence⁽³⁰⁾.

The character created by interviewee 5 demonstrated as a main characteristic the behavior similar to that of a dog. The artist intended to represent the animalism that is sometimes mistakenly attributed to the demonstrations of anger presented by the insane. In this sense, the analogy between "madness" and brutality exalted by the actor portrayed the moral appreciation that presupposes monstrosity and aggression as conditions for the internment of these subjects⁽¹⁶⁻¹⁹⁾. Among other constructions, the artist addressed the issue of the plasticity generated by the artistic intervention, which would have been caused by the group's research on severe psychic distress and psychosocial exclusion.

When composing his role, interviewee 6 represented the ailments produced by people with severe psychic distress. His interpretation was mainly based on aspects related to the institutionalization of "madness" and the standardization of common behaviors in the face of isolation and abandonment within psychiatric hospitals⁽²¹⁻²³⁾. In the actor's words: *I was inspired by some things that I saw to compose the character. [...] some gestures, I tried to copy, take them to the character, so that it was more believable, and, in parallel, studying the biography of Bispo do Rosário also helped me to balance [...] those things. (Interviewee 6)*

Interviewee 7, on the other hand, described the character of his authorship as being a young man who abuses psychoactive substances. The artist revealed that, in some performances, the audience avoided approaching the scenic station where he was when they saw him with a crack pipe in his hand. The fact that he was not recognized as part of the show led the actor to perceive the marginalization and discrimination suffered by people in a situation of psychosocial vulnerability and by young individuals vulnerable to risky behaviors, especially those with problems related to excessive consumption of alcohol and other drugs^(30,32-33). His comments were consistent with the literature by emphasizing that there is social stigma attributed to this population and a difficult understanding of the phenomenon of drugs⁽³⁴⁾. In the director's words: *[...] the show spoke directly about those people. Those people who live on the streets, on the hidden banks of the city: the drag-queen, the drunkard, the insane, the crack user... and they all live there, in that setting, in that place. (Interviewee 7)*

According to the actor, in the daily lives of large cities, different types of people are destined for social exclusion, and not only those considered as "insane". There are important difficulties in contemporary society in recognizing the different from the conventional, or normal, favoring discrimination and social exclusion⁽²⁸⁾.

It was observed that, in the collaborative creation process developed by *O Coletivo*, the works were organized through theoretical studies and field research that led to the approximation with people on the street and excluded from society⁽¹²⁾. The inclusion of the theme related to this population in the show was due to the perception of the existing analogy between social exclusion of the "insane" and the marginalization of people in a situation of psychosocial vulnerability. In this regard, the artists understood that severe psychic suffering is the result of the process of marginalization and social exclusion, as elucidated by the literature⁽²⁸⁾.

To contextualize the public interventions, the procedures adopted by *O Coletivo* included exploration of the urban space as a field for artistic experimentation⁽¹⁰⁻¹¹⁾. It was verified that the theater group used as a scenic device the observations of images and social relations that sensitized the members in the phase of elaborating scenes in the territory. For elaborating the costumes and the characterization of the characters, there was an effort on the part of the artists in order to understand the gestures, the garments and the behavior socially attributed to the "insane" and to marginalized people. The experiences and memories of the stage directors also constituted material for the construction of the show, as recommended by the collaborative creation process⁽¹⁰⁾.

In the final work of *O Coletivo*, the issue of psychic suffering and its consequences – internment, exclusion and marginality – were found in the texts, costumes and

scenic spaces. In this way, the show processed a series of small interventions that transported the spectators and the artists themselves to a dynamic of reflection, not only on the whole set of the montage, but on their personal experiences and psychic suffering.

At the end of the interviews, the artists discussed the transformation of their perspectives through the practice of creating and staging *Projeto Bispo*. Interviewee 4 considered the refinement of her perception of severe psychic suffering and hospitalization during the collaborative process of creation to be significant. In the artist's words: [...] *knowing the reality in depth through this show, [...] I saw that, really, it is violence, right? Violence against people and against madness itself. Sure... treating people like animals, and there is another possibility than to isolate, to arrest, to mistreat, anyway. [...] There are other methods that I think would be more effective, such as the interaction of these people with nature... the freer they could be, you know? The treatment would be better. To arrest madness is to kill the human being. [...] I find it crazier even people who try to be normal all the time* (Interviewee 4).

The actress concluded her testimony by reporting that she expanded her perceptions about hospitalization and the practices of abuse and segregation towards the homeless population and the use of psychoactive substances; likewise, she considered that a possible way of caring for these individuals should evaluate the possibilities of training people who recognize themselves as subjects of rights and citizens with full social value⁽²²⁻²³⁾. As recommended by the literature, this recognition would derive from a practice against objectification and stigmatization, indicating the importance of its relationship with the social environment⁽²³⁾.

In his passage through *O Coletivo*, interviewee 7 knew the atrocities committed against psychiatric patients, as well as the reality experienced by people who abuse psychotropic substances. The actor said he realized that madness is caused by the imperative of moral rules and standards by society⁽¹⁸⁾.

After reporting his personal and family experiences with regard to severe psychic distress, interviewee 6 exposed his current point of view on hospitalization and madness: [...] *it is logical that on this confinement issue in the asylums, I do not agree in any way. Because, in fact, I think it gets in the way of more than helping the patient, right? For those who have a family member in this situation... it is difficult. So the Projeto Bispo process brought a lot of personal experience, right?* (Interviewee 6)

The artist referred to the treatment given to patients in psychiatric hospitals and the creation of alternative therapies to hospitalization. The artist also highlighted the need to re-socialize people in psychic distress. In fact, the social inclusion of these subjects makes it possible to guarantee citizenship rights, enabling deinstitutionalization

and allowing these users to access services in the mental health care network⁽²⁸⁾.

At the end of his reflection on people in situations of psychosocial vulnerability, interviewee 5 explained: *As much as before the show, for example, I was very likely to be a collaborator in the causes of fragile people, of the intellectually disabled, [...] after the show this is enhanced.* (Interviewee 5)

His testimony illustrates the negative connotation given to "madness" and difference, pointing out that it is a cultural issue that refers only to those who are considered different, as evidenced by the literature⁽¹⁷⁻¹⁸⁾.

Interviewee 2 concluded his statement by pointing out that his interest in mental disorder came from the end of his adolescence, a period in which he was able to overcome his fear of people in psychic distress. The artist commented: [...] *when I started to break these fears, the pattern of being insane, I started to get interested. I think that the theater had an importance there, in this curiosity to know what "insane" was, right?* (Interviewee 2)

The director of the show, in turn, understood that "madness" is a process of illness characteristic of our society, that is, a society based on principles and rules that guide to an anonymous, impersonal and conformist type of life⁽²⁸⁾. The director said: [...] *if one does not freak out, the person depresses. Gets sick! We live in a sick society* (Interviewee 1).

In his testimony, he highlighted the advance in the amount of diagnoses related to psychic suffering, which indicate the problem experienced mainly in large cities. He also mentioned his perceptions regarding the reactions provoked in the audience by the artistic intervention. According to the director, [...] *the work touches those people in some way [...] It is not that passive theater that you arrive at, turn off the light and you are protected with that fourth wall. [...] No, you're there living together, you're in the process, you're in the same emotions. [...] You are part of that, right? [...] It's a theater that provokes you, [...] anyway. So it's a piece that is there, urgent!* (Interviewee 1)

According to the theater director, the emergence of the artistic intervention occurred due to the desire to affect and be affected by the social reality of the different and the excluded⁽¹²⁾.

Finally, interviewee 3 expressed his considerations about participating in the collaborative process of the staging: [...] *it takes an empathetic look, a real look at the other. It is not possible to exclude a human being from society because they were born with this or that characteristic. [...] We know that we live in an extremely hygienic society. So we're here to denounce. [...] This was something that this work process gave us: this opening of thought. Realizing that we need and can if we want - it's a matter of predisposition too - to do something beyond art* (Interviewee 3).

The actor's narrative met the literature when assuming perspectives external to the psychiatric

paradigm and the norms being imposed by society⁽¹⁹⁾. Thereby, the creative process enabled the artists and the audience to acquire a perception that provoked different ways of thinking and [inter]acting with other fields of human experience⁽³⁵⁾.

At the end of the interviews, the artists' findings were unanimous regarding changes in their conceptions related to madness, internment and exclusion after the collaborative process of creating the aforementioned artistic project. It was verified that the artistic practice converged to the exploration of what was external to it, seeking to operate at the limit of artistic language and exploring its analogy with "madness"⁽⁶⁾. In most of the statements, psychic distress was intrinsically related to the social context where they live.

Final Considerations

This study aimed to analyze the possible change in the perspective on psychic suffering and on issues related to the field of mental health by means of the theatrical intervention. The research showed that, in addition to the transformation of the perception, the collaborative process for creating the show *Projeto Bispo: treated like animals, behaving as one* brought the understanding to the artists that it is possible to provoke the elaboration of different conceptions and discourses on severe psychic suffering, internment and social exclusion by means of the artistic creation.

The results revealed that the theater group performed an experiment in which the actors-creators, before arriving at the staging, participated in the survey of the theoretical material that served as the basis for the aesthetic discussions, carried out exploration of the urban space to form the first representations based on observations of the images and social relations of the territory, prepared the costumes and scenic objects used in the montage and elaborated the narratives from the developed collective activities.

Furthermore, the field research carried out by the actors-creators made it possible to meet individuals on the street who lost their social place mainly due to the use of alcohol and other drugs. In this sense, the bond created between artists and homeless people allowed this theme to be appropriated in the show, considering the existing correspondence between the exclusion of the person in severe psychic distress and the marginalization of individuals in situations of psychosocial vulnerability.

In fact, we can assert that the dramaturgy undertaken by *O Coletivo* provoked a dynamic where the artists found themselves involved with the scenic work as a whole, thus promoting the transformation of their perspectives regarding mental disorder, internment and social exclusion that confronted the perspective of the hegemonic psychiatric paradigm.

We conclude by reiterating that this study intended to critically reflect on issues related to mental health, as advocated by the Psychiatric Reform. In this regard, when problematizing stigmas and aiming at social transformation, the show *Projeto Bispo: treated like animals, behaving as one* contributed to denounce and deconstruct prejudices by the actors and discrimination in the face of severe psychic distress and people in situations of psychosocial vulnerability.

It is important to note that the research sought to deepen the perspectives of the directors in their socio-historical context. Thus, it is understood that new research studies are needed regarding artistic interventions constituted at the interface with mental health that may come to cover the point of view of artists from other locations, as well as from other fields of the arts.

Acknowledgments

To the artists of *O Coletivo* for their collaboration in the data collection phase.

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All authors approved the final version of the text.

Conflict of interest: the authors have declared that there is no conflict of interest.


Received: May 23rd 2020

Accepted: Oct 7th 2020

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