

## 3.1. Performance art in Portugal in the mid-1980s? A drift towards music?

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### Abstract

The creation of an art market in Portugal in the 1980s had an impact on the field of Portuguese performance art. In the 1960s and 1970s, some of the precursors of performance art in Portugal no longer followed this option and devoted themselves to other professional fields or a more object-based art, such as painting, sculpture etc. – and even talked of a kind of "death of performance art". Yet, at the same time, new agents and groups emerged that still had a connection with performance art, including Homeostética and Happy the Faith. Some of them moved in the direction of alternative music with a strong satirical base. This article will seek to examine the specificities and the intergenerational points of contact, continuity and difference among these groups in relation not only to their predecessors but also to the positions held by some of their members in the field of contemporary art and to the "social places" that performance art occupies today in the national and international scene.

**Keywords:** performance art, performance art and alternative music.

### We have heard that Portuguese performance art died in the mid-1980s...

This article aims to question this announcement. This idea has often been linked to the establishment of an art market in mid-1980s in Portugal which would have led to artists replacing performance with other professional fields, or focusing on a more objective aesthetic art, like painting, sculpture, etc. There was, then, a change from a "non-market" — where the art world of performance took place through setting up informal networks, not aimed at profit — to an "art market" — based on objective aesthetic production and commercial value. This change led to the genre becoming invisible in Portugal for the later generations who joined the performative area, as in the case of what was called "new dance". It also affected the other generations in the area of fine arts, with some Performance festivals appearing at the end of the Millennium. The Brrr, for example, in Oporto, with the goal of creating a space for Performance by importing international examples, as if this genre had never existed in Portugal. Only recently have these generations come to rediscover these performers, and to integrate their agents or their practices in their own artistic projects. This process has been intensified, with the emergence of a new cycle of performance art, now more Transartistic, i.e., disseminated by different artistic or even non artistic fields, such as social protests and demonstrations, among other areas. This has also been complemented both by a renewed interest in the repertoire of artistic precursors through their re-presentation, as well as an admittedly dispersed academic interest on the part of young researchers into the history of Portuguese artistic performativity.

What I'm looking to emphasize in this paper is that the process of progressive "unveiling" of this generation, has not been enough to show the most diachronic dynamics and traces of performativity over time. If this "unveiling" legitimates a temporal cyclical analysis, where performance art appears to be reactivated in the social contexts of crisis, namely, in this case the pre-and post-revolution period and the current period of severe social and political crisis; on the other hand, this cyclical logic ends up reviewing other dynamics. These dynamics include the confluence in the same period, namely in the mid-1980s, of the emergence of new agents and groups who not only had an approach to performance art, knowing and/or sharing experiences with the performance art generation from the 1960s to the 1980s, as is the case of Homeostética, the Felizes da Fé (Happy in the Faith), the Objectos Perdidos (Lost Objects) or even, through António Olaio, The Repórteres Estrábicos (The Cross-eyed reporters).

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## A chronology of Portuguese performance art

I started, then, by looking at the *Essential Chronology of Portuguese performance art* presented by Manoel Barbosa, in 1985, in the *Performarte* catalogue. For those who don't know, this catalogue records the first national meeting of Performance held in Torres Vedras. Through this chronology, we see that if we present the period between the 1960's and the year 1985 graphically, we see an intensification of activity by Portuguese performance art between 1980 and 1985. Although there are performances that may not be recorded in this Chronology (and the cases I will analyze in this article are not), not only numerous individual performances but also biennials, festivals, and cycles of collective performance sprang up during this period. For example, the Bienal de Cerveira, various editions of the International Festival of Living Art, in Almada, various modern art cycles, organized in the IADE, by Egídio Álvaro, the Artitude cycle, among many other initiatives. It was also in this period that internationalization was reinforced, not only with the participation of Portuguese performers in various international festivals but also through a cycle of Portuguese performance organized also by Egidio Álvaro, at the Centre Georges Pompidou, in 1984. In this catalogue for this show, Egidio Álvaro argued that despite the absence of any support for the development and exhibition of performance in Portugal, Performance was not just "terribly alive" but would also be "the biggest event in Portugal in this first decade that passed under the sign of the revolution" (1984:20).

In fact, two years after, in November 1986, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which did not support Egidio Álvaro's Paris initiative, hosted the Performance Art Festival. However, as we can see from the opening speech of Madalena Perdigão<sup>2</sup> reproduced in the festival catalogue, it is also true, that at the very moment in which this platform of visibility was created, the "harbingers of death" for that kind of performance were also making themselves heard. It was presented as "an endangered species" or "total art", i.e., a kind of dying or mutating genre that, in the words of the Director of the Acarte, should be restructured into "multimedia forms, to the dance-theatre and musical theatre".

After this festival, it was found that while the Acarte became a privileged stage for these new evolutionary genres of performance art and not for performance art *per se*, in the area of fine arts an art market began to take hold, with a "return to painting" and to "the object," quoting Alexandre Melo, on artistic production in the 1980s (1998: 23-43). Perhaps that is the reason for the absence of performance art in the exhibition "The 80s", presented at Culturgest in 1998 and their respective catalogue. It may also be why in December 1998, a few months after this exhibition, when an issue of *Theaterschrift* was dedicated to *intensification: Portuguese contemporary performance*, it did not include any main figure from Portuguese Performance Art of the 1960s to the 1980s. Instead, it highlighted dance-theatre (Francisco Camacho, John Fiadeiro, Paulo Henrique André Lepecki, Vera Mantero), experimental theatre (João Garcia Miguel, Lucia Sigalho and Jorge Silva Melo), and experimental music (Sergio Pelagius, Carlos Zingaro, Rui Eduardo Paes). Incidentally, in this magazine, there was also a text by Alexandre Melo conceptualizing the subject of Portuguese performance, but without any reference to the previous generation. It focused rather on the work of Helena Almeida (a contemporary of this generation and who could have served as a motto to unveil this hidden platform of Portuguese performance art from the 60s to the 80s years), Patricia Garrido and Francisco Tropa.

In this article, Alexandre Melo also describes how the concept of performance was expanded to cover events from new art forms to social demonstrations<sup>3</sup> and how performance of the plastic arts began to play a role that was (in the author's words), "anachronistic" or "useless", in which Portuguese performance art, in that

<sup>2</sup> Madalena Perdigão stated that: "The promises are made to be kept. In November 1985, we wrote in the programme of the Multimedia Fortnight that the Exhibition-dialogue on contemporary art - organized by the Council of Europe and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and held in Lisbon from 28th March to 16th June 1985 – had been an open door to the entry of performance at the Centre for Modern Art (...). 'Performance-Art' is a necessarily incomplete and limited sampling of the state of performance in Portugal. An 'endangered species', as many believe, the way to total art as many claim, the fact is that performance has marked contemporary art. Its evolution points to multimedia forms, to dance-theatre, to the musical-theatre. Reflecting on what is currently happening in the field of performance, sharing their achievement with the artists, it is an important event for all those who are interested in the art world."

<sup>3</sup> In Alexandre Melo's words: "The living experience of trans-disciplinarity in current creative practice leads us to conclude that there is no useful or relevant distinction between what may be considered a performance within the domain of the plastic arts, a certain type of choreography in dance, a certain type of staging practice in theatre or opera, a certain type of composition or performance in music, a certain type of work in film and video, or a certain type of social intervention in civil society or community work" (Melo, 1998: 125).

"anachronism", was not even mentioned<sup>4</sup>. And, in fact, neither in theoretical discourses, nor in the personal accounts of the generation called "new Portuguese dance", which began precisely at that time, through the work of Paula Massano and Margarida Bettencourt, which was followed by a whole new generation, including Vera Mantero, João Fiadeiro, Francisco Camacho, among others, there is no reference or even (ack)nowledge(ment) by this "new Portuguese dance" generation of the previous generation of Portuguese performance art<sup>5</sup>.

Returning to the "death of performance art" in the mid-1980s, this "rise" and "fall" is often justified by "specific demographics," a "life cycle", which is only possible in the context of pre-market art, as argued, for example, by Fernando Aguiar<sup>6</sup> a performer and organizer of several festivals.

João Torres, a spectator who has assiduously followed (and sometimes also participated in) these events, has also said that much of the performance activity is done on the margin of a commodity system of art and the "critic" and has thus had low visibility in the national press, which seems more interested in more objectual art. The art performance system has been essentially based on informal networks formed by the artists themselves<sup>7</sup>. And so, when there are new spaces to spread the concept, these are immediately occupied by the new generation as Manuel Barbosa has pointed out.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For Alexandre Melo: "at the same time as it imposes the need for its own enshrinement in the history of the plastic arts, the notion of performance paradoxically may also be considered anachronistic from the point of view of current artistic practice or even useless, if we want to be somewhat more provocative. By contributing to the end of the traditional notions of art and the plastic arts, the artistic practices of the radical avant-garde, among which performance art is normally included, have also contributed to the breaking down of barriers between the different artistic disciplines. When the plastic arts, namely through performance art, combine with sound, stage, corporal movement or film recording, when they include audience participation or random procedures, the most extreme physical violence or most sophisticated spiritual exercise, then what we see is not the already well known 'breaking down of barriers between art and life', but also a notable breaking down of barriers between the various artistic disciplines. In this domain, the plastic arts have been one of the disciplines which have taken openness in terms of form to its furthest limits, together with the abolition of any limits on what may be considered art." (Melo, 1998: 125).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, *Movimentos Presentes* (Fazenda, 1997) or my PhD thesis, "O hibridismo nas Artes em Portugal" (2008) where I analyze this process in depth.

<sup>6</sup> In the words of Fernando Aguiar: "Why have people left performance? Well, people grow up and marry and have children... They have jobs. And performance is something else. Except in my case, and others, like Miguel Yeco and Alberto Pimenta that continued to be asked to participate in performance initiatives and are doing so. I know perfectly well that if I wasn't invited I wouldn't continue to do performance. I don't wander around looking for a space to do it. Then there was another, more important aspect: what happened to almost everyone else, for example, Albuquerque Mendes, António Olaio, Gerardo Burmester, and also João Vieira. They began selling their works and, there you are, they left performance. (...) This also happened because there was never a market for performance itself. If we think about this in terms of decades, in the 70's a few things began to appear, it was a very experimental time. The 80's were very strong in performance, there were a lot of people organizing events but, then, it gradually began to decline and has now stagnated. I don't think that any new people are appearing. Now and again someone turns up and does some stuff, but then they drop it. It's very different to what is happening in Spain and Italy, where there are many young people doing visual poetry, but in Portugal I don't think that's so. I think that in Portugal it has to do with the fact there's no support, performers haven't been sought out by organizations. They're the ones who have to look for space, support, material: all of which is extremely tiring. The galleries push us more for works, more for objects than interventions, and this is what happened to all those people during the 80s. If we look at their catalogues today, almost all of them have stopped doing performance. They've started painting, and it comes easily to them, without any big problem. On top of that, this is what sells in the gallery and so they end up staying there. You can't criticize them, that's life, especially when you start getting to 30 or so, at 40 or so and you have to make choices (Interview with Fernando Aguiar, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> As João Torres has said: "I think that a lot of people that were in these events, later dedicated themselves to other, more profitable activities. Most of them went into a related activity, although not necessarily in that form. They did things when they could, when there were meetings. There were even some international festivals at the Centre Georges Pompidou, at the Bial de São Paulo, but they were events where most people spent more money than they received, for sure. It has always been done on the margin of art itself. There has never been the support there was for the classic forms, the support was nonexistent. At the same time that performance was happening, those painters who were much promoted by Alexandre Melo and Pinharanda were appearing and were lucky enough to have someone who could verbalize relatively well what they were doing. And it turned out to be the group that was put in the spotlight. This sort of thing never attracted great media coverage. Some are now being reassessed, such as Helena Almeida through her exhibition at the CCB. I haven't seen a Helena Almeida exhibition in I don't know how many years ... Alberto Carneiro is still giving architecture classes. (Interview with João Torres, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Manoel Barbosa has said that: "In the 90s, there was a hiatus due to the fact that we had no space to work in. Now there is a very curious detail: from 2000 and just after, and then from 2006, the dance guys found some bloke who had done performance in the 80s: me. I got to have evenings at Jorge Lima Barreto's house (...). Since then, interest has been growing. And, in fact, they always had cachets, which we never had. They occupied all the spaces, so there was no room for us in the 90s (Interview with Manuel Barbosa, 2015).

## The “Heirs” of Portuguese performance art

What I want to emphasize here is that this invisibility of performance art had other repercussions. In particular, the fact that other groups and agents emerged in the same period of the 80s, and could have been considered legitimate “heirs”, or taken the genre further. This did happen internationally: in New York, for example, as Roselee Goldberg describes so well in her book *Performance Art*. In Portugal, however, these new artists have been simply presented or argued as being outside art performance history. This is the case of, for instance, Felizes da Fé, Objectos Perdidos, Homeostética and Repórteres Estrábicos.

These groups and agents emerge with different features from previous performers: organized in groups and led by more mediatic figures, such as Manuel João Vieira, son of João Vieira, painter and performer; Rui Zink, taken under Alberto Pimenta’s wing, with whom he created several performances; António Olaio a participant from the early 80s in various performance festivals and who went on to develop his performer/singer side in Repórteres Estrábicos, before returning to a solo career; Paul Eno, who shared projects with Victor Rua, one of the figures present in many 80s performances.

This was a time when Portugal was opening up to Europe, joining the European Union in 1986. There was also mass society consolidation reinforced by the widespread use of new mass technologies and information and dissemination media, especially television and video. These extended the audience of the artistic community whether as a model to be used or to be criticized, being used to confuse and challenge the undifferentiated audience, subverting cognitively and emotionally conventional expectations (Caroll, 1998: 187-188). Despite this context, some Portuguese critics have considered these groups chance occurrences, without affiliations: “The *Felizes da Fé* are a UFO, but a UFO precursor of a new wave of Portuguese performance, which has as its corollary the end of the history of performance” (Miguel Wandschneider 2000).

This statement led to a heated discussion at the First Congress Permanent Hiperdada in 2000 between this critic and some of the performers, such as Fernando Aguiar and Alberto Pimenta, who had experienced the previous period and that said performance had never died and had always been done<sup>9</sup>.

In fact, the panorama described by Roselee Goldberg in New York confirms the continuity of performance, with some mutations. She states that:

By 1979, the move of performance towards popular culture was reflected in the art world in general, so that by the beginning of the new decade the proverbial swing of the pendulum was complete, in other words, the anti-establishment idealism of the sixties and early seventies had been categorically rejected. A quite different mood of pragmatism, entrepreneurship and professionalism, utterly foreign to the history of the Avant-garde, began to make itself apparent. Interestingly enough, the generation that created this about-turn mostly comprised students of conceptual artists who understood their mentors’ analysis of consumerism and the media but broke conceptual art’s cardinal rule, of concept over product, by turning from performance and conceptual art to painting (Golberg 2001: 190).

But Golberg does not stop there. She goes on to stress that this consolidation of the art market, the strong media and television exposure, the rise of the number of B movies and rock culture, had an impact on the emergence of a new kind of performance, and performers, whose model was the artist-celebrity, the '70s rock star. So, the new artists reinterpreted “the old cry to break down barriers between life and art to be a matter of breaking down barriers between art and the media, also expressed as a conflict between high and low art” (ibid 190). The author explains this dynamic within the more conservative social and political context of 1980s which led to a shift from performance, predominantly in the area of music. One of the emblematic works of that period was the mega-performance *United States* produced by Laurie Anderson in 1983, an eight hour long musical composition with a

<sup>9</sup> Fernando Aguiar - Well, performance has had ups and downs here in Portugal, over these thirty-odd years. And, okay, when it is at a low point, so to speak, people tend to say that performance is finished. But no, performance art isn’t finished. There is performance every year.

Miguel Wandschneider - Today we talk of performing arts, but one cannot speak of performance. Even if someone does it every now and then, I believe performance in Portugal is over.

Alberto Pimenta - No, performance has not died at all. There may be less surprise or less expectation regarding performance. There may be less interesting performers, but performance has no more died than theatre has. The theatre, which began 2500 years ago or something, has not died either. It has simply gone through very different stages.

Miguel Wandschneider - Performance is over. It is a phenomenon that might return, but it is over.

strong media influence.<sup>10</sup> The resources of both the visual arts and the theatre flowed into this new "hybrid" performance, blurring the boundary between traditional theatre and performance.

And therefore, whether in large or small productions, one of the models for the new performance was not only transdisciplinarity, but a willingness to reach a new and more popular audience, using the street and the new concert venues, the POP art model, although in a more alternative process, mixing sex and politics, music and protest. In the mid-1980s, Robert Wilson himself stated that "performance must be the way rock concerts are. They are the great operas of our time" (Goldberg 2007: 253). In Spain, La Fura dels Baús sprang up having a clear impact through this dynamic associated with the simulation of violence and sex as provoking the current system.

These features of the international scene mentioned by Goldberg are perfectly correlated with the change in Portuguese performance. This period of mixtures and the failure of the great ideologies, the value of universality and of a diachronic temporal reading, together with the intensification of mass culture, speed and globalization, framed a generational change in the Portuguese performance art.

Homeostética appeared in 1983, made up of fine art students and with work ranging from performance to music, due to its association with the band Ena pá 2000, the candidacy of Manuel João Vieira for President of Portugal and, later, with the creation of Cabaré Maxime, and Manuel Vieira appearing on several television programs ("Um mundo catita", etc). Thus, some of the particularities of this group, whose work was essentially *phantasmagoric*, in the sense that many of the actions reported in their book had happened to them, can be measured on the one hand, for its artistic cannibalism, as becomes clear from their "Manifesto Homeostético" (Ramos, 2004): "fake, mime, make absurd, devalue (the big cheat), de-legitimize, parody" (ibid, p. 50), through which they went on to "blend and fit: Style (history) seen as sequence (Kubler and Bateson). Installation of in-sequences (Egyptian style: Chinese style, Indian + abstract expressionism art, rock painting + naive painting, pop art + mannerism" (*Ó idem*, p 50). On the other hand, however, there was also its reactive attitude to an art market which was becoming institutionalized through exhibitions like "After Modernism" and "New News" or, more specifically, the exhibition "Archipelagos" (Ana Leon, José Pedro Croft, Pedro Cabrita Reis, Rosa Carvalho, Pedro Calapez and Rui Sanches, which Homeostética responded to this by conceiving the "Continents" exhibition in 1987, which was intended as a "painting show" with the "greatest paintings produced in Portugal" and was followed by a concert by "Ena pá 2000".

1985 saw the advent of Felizes da Fé. The group were not so linked to music, except for a few chants with slogans that they used in the semi-spontaneous happenings created in the streets looking to question the ordinary citizen. In the words of Rui Zink, they aimed at "the uninitiated in performance", "the audience that does not know it is an audience", which implies a "physical and moral risk on the part of poet-actors, which is not to be understood". It also led, for example, to some of the members of Felizes da Fé being arrested in the middle of Rua Augusta in downtown Lisbon and being held in a police station for a weekend<sup>11</sup>. Their actions were based on satirical political protest, which brought him great exposure in the newspapers at the time and, in the specific case

<sup>10</sup>The performance was made up of "projected hand-drawn images, blown-up photographs taken from TV screens and truncated films which formed operational backdrops to Anderson's songs comparing life to a 'closed circuit'. She half-sang and half-spoke a love song "let x be y", through a vocalizer that made her voice sound like a robot's, suggesting a melancholy splicing of emotions with technological know-how. "O Superman", the song at the heart of the show, was an appeal for help against the manipulation of the controlling media culture; it was the cry of a generation exhausted by media artifice. (Goldberg 2001:190).

<sup>11</sup>As Rui Zink has observed: "At the happening, people know in advance that they will not be understood. Because if they wanted to be understood they would announce beforehand: 'Hello, this is theatre. Hello, this is a joke'. And, for example, when in 1990, already five years after we had done our stuff, we were arrested in Rua Augusta, I was arrested in Rua Augusta it was a typical classic misunderstanding. I said, I had already taken off half of the head and I said, 'Officer, this is theatre', and the officer said, 'No, it isn't! It's a political demonstration.' And politicians are always right. And the problem is that if we had announced more clearly that it was theatre, we wouldn't have had the hassle of spending a weekend in jail and being presented to a judge and having the case going on for months which annoyed us just a little. This to me is morally superior to a certain precious, bloated and spoilt futility of a certain kind of artist who only do things with a protective barrier. It is performance without a net, the happening is a circus without a net. And this is another issue, we have always been circus people, circus is total art. Before there was multimedia, we had the circus and opera, and you can't get more multimedia than that, and we had a sense of humour. That's what stops us today from having a street named after us, or a 30 year career retrospective at Serralves or some little bit of art... It's just that I destroyed my first pieces, not on purpose but because I didn't have room at home, but I can go back and redo them. The first piece was the Pornex 84. This, for me, was the first happening I planned, although I had already seen many works that I came to know later and make friends with: Ana Hatherly's at SNBA. I had already seen things by Alberto Pimenta and Melo e Castro and they were, therefore, people I knew and saw as a young and attentive fan ... (Interview with Rui Zink, 27/03/2015).

of Rui Zink, also on television. Felizes da Fé had a (hyper)Dadaist lineage, and their material had a strong accent on political and sexual provocation. When still students, they produced *Pornex*, a week made up of a fine arts' exhibition, video and film cycles, debates and performances at New University of Lisbon. This was recorded in a book of the same name published by *& etc e tal*, and which had an introductory text by Rui Zink alluding to Portugal joining the European Community, stating that "our future is in porn. With shouts of 'Amsterdam has been, now Lisbon rules', move forward across Europe, to the conquest of our place in the EEC. We promote pornographization"<sup>12</sup>.

There was also a porno story analyzed by its author, a text on the performance of Alberto Pimenta, imitating as Professor Iracema Pinto de Andrade, another text by Miguel Vale de Almeida called "My life with Madame Porno", and a text by Leonor Areal discussing the atmosphere and reactions, etc.

The *Objectos Perdidos*, led by Paul Eno, appeared in Coimbra in 1985, picking up on the same parodic / satirical and even "pornographic" line. There is a light version of their famous song "I want to see Portugal in the EEC"<sup>13</sup> as well as a harder version created with Victor Rua. In *Eno Words*, that is now "internationally" known as the *Superman of Ebiza dance tracks*:

There was a show we did, as part of the 1987 Arts and Ideas contest, where we reached the final, that was reported as follows in the *Diário de Lisboa*, a openly left-wing newspaper: 'The *Objectos Perdidos* did a show which offended the manliness, morality and patriotism of the Portuguese'. In this show, what did we do? ... For eight minutes, we played the national anthem continuously and repeatedly, while we were on stage all naked and painted in green and red. Then, on stage, "fellatio" was simulated while, on the giant video screen, during these eight minutes, we showed full scale hard-core images, where numerous objects were used in sexual acts (Paul Eno)<sup>14</sup>.

António Olaio participated in various 80s performances and was also connected to music through his work with *Repórteres Estrábicos*. Olaio later left the group to go solo, with his work leaving its mark as alternative POP. In an interview with Victor Diniz<sup>15</sup>, transcribed in the book *I Think Differently Now That I Can Paint* (2007), he acknowledges that what has given unity to his work, since the 1980s, is performance<sup>16</sup>, imbued with alternative POP culture.

<sup>12</sup> "Portugal is a country that today is at the crossroads. If we want to be Europe, if we want to raise our good name and our economy out of the mud, if we want to have luxury jackboot tourism, we can't hang around: our future is in porn. With shouts of 'Amsterdam has been, now Lisbon reigns' move forward across Europe, to the conquest of our place in the EEC. We promote pornographization. Forward, forward, the seeds are already sown. If pornography saves the old cinemas from bankruptcy, it can also be so for our homeland of eight centuries. We send kids just out of school and conscientious objectors on civic service around the country and beyond, bringing light to the Sorians, Bracarence, Lusitanians and Algarvians. All Lisbon will be a brothel, a huge brothel. Belém will be the first presidential pornopalace in Europe and the world. Penthouse will declare bankruptcy and the pseudo-erotic Playboy will be turned into a home for the recovery of dyslexic children. In Africa, we will fulfil a fundamentally evangelizing function with the most savage tribes. We will not only export weapons, but also sex-shops to Iran and Iraq." (Zink, 1984)

<sup>13</sup> See <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=0qaZbkwgU-U>, accessed on 12/04/15. The song's chorus was: "I want to see Portugal in the EEC, I want to see... Portugal in the EEC, And now we're in, we're going to be everything we've wished to be. Oh Granny, it's so good to be in the EEC ..."

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Pedro Vieira and Susana Serigado for *NÚ* magazine (2005). Victor Rua talks about one of their performances in his text, "Broches and Cavalos" ("Brooches and Horses" - 'broche' is Portuguese slang for fellatio.): "The Franco-Portuguese Institute organized a Portuguese "modern" music contest (I had never realized how ridiculous this name is!) and the jury was João Lisboa, Luís Maio and Villas Boas. The *Objectos Perdidos* decided to compete and asked for my help. I organized and produced their show, making a tape with the beginning of the National Anthem on a loop, but with comic sounds. I also produced a video with scenes from porno films (chicks sucking horse dick and putting eels in their pussies). The group came on naked with metre long wooden cocks and, at some point, one of the performers, performed live fellatio on Paul Eno. The show had barely finished, there was booing everywhere, and into the dressing room comes the Director of the Institute, who was French and spoke Portuguese badly, crying and saying: "You spoiled de night!!!". He wanted to throw us out but Paul Eno said he would only leave after the jury vote was in because, as expected, Maio e Lisboa, did not vote for them, but Villas Boas did and said, "I vote for these, who at least are different." (Victor Rua, September 13, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Director of CAPC (Centre of Fine Arts Coimbra) in 2007.

<sup>16</sup> António Olaio has said that: "I think it's really performance, which is something that, fortunately, I started very early, in the early 80s, although it's mostly hidden, but hidden behind everything I do. The songs, my concerts with João Taborda, are the most obvious consequence of performance. But the place that performance has in my work is, more than in the performances themselves, in what performance means as an attitude toward things".

## The death of... performance art ontology

In sum, it seems possible to say that performance art has not died and I quote the answer Manoel Barbosa gave me a few months ago in a new interview on the subject of "the death of performance": "Performance did not die ... never ... it is very much alive, never say that performance has died. While here the death of performance has been decreed, out there I have seen more and more performance, I have participated in many".

So it seems possible to say that performance continues to play a role, albeit with different characteristics as the groups presented clearly show. Maybe what all this leads to is that, rather than analyze the supposed ontology of performance art, or the death of the performance, it is perhaps more important to analyze the social dynamics of artistic performances and their historical context.

Today, these various performative processes have spread, a little, into all the social and artistic spheres, whether taking on more marginal characteristics or more media features. In this context, *Os Homens da Luta*, with their presence at various social demonstrations and events, have recently had this very role. One wonders: should we integrate them in the history of Portuguese performance art? Or should we expect authors and international critics to do it for us, so as to legitimize these performances as artistic performances, affiliated in a story whose changes are part and parcel of social dynamics?

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