Infection, Participation and Informality in higher arts education: the case of the School of Arts (Porto)

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ABSTRACT

Higher arts education poses several specific challenges. The specificity of art in the contemporary age demands the development of unique strategies. Following a conceptual framework defined by Infection, Participation and Informality the School of Arts at Universidade Católica Portuguesa adopted since 2018 a strategy comprising a project-based methodology, informal tutoring sessions with artists, a Cultural Programme and an artistic residencies programme. This paper presents the early results of this strategy, and analyses how it could foster the critical artistic practice of the students.

Keywords:

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Artistic Residencies

Aesthetic infection

Participation

Informality

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Introduction

Artistic education poses several specific questions. The fusion of art academies with the university system brought the latter's pedagogic models to the former. Such models of transmission of knowledge are conservative and do not overcome many of the challenges of the contemporary world, let alone the specific challenges of art. After Duchamp (for some, the start of art as we know it today), art can be anything and so can art education. That is, "art education has no definite goal, no method, no particular content that can be taught, no tradition that can be transmitted to a new generation — which is to say, it has too many" (Groys, 2009: 27). In the Art World, art schools and universities are secondary players. Any museum, art centre or gallery plays a more fundamental role than the academy. Art institutionalization within the academic world implicates the reification of paradigmatic practices and models, watering down the critical dimension of art.

To face these challenges, the School of Arts (SoA) at Universidade Católica Portuguesa developed a strategy based on the principles of Education by Infection, Participation and Informality. The SoA offers a Cultural Programme that articulates exhibitions and events, open to the broader artistic community, with tutoring sessions, workshops and activities developed by guest artists with the students. The model proposed by the SoA privileges artistic creation as a means of informing both education and research in the specific field of art.

This paper aims to report and discuss the early results of this strategy. We will describe how it provides students with an understanding of a diversity of artistic methodologies, practices and concerns. On a second moment, we will take the specific Conference Programme organized by the SoA in 2019 under the topic of Art & Ecology, to propose how an art university can engage its students with criticality towards the fundamental issues of contemporaneity.

The School of Arts

In 1996, the School of Arts (SoA) was founded in Porto, the second largest city of Portugal. Porto is home to a very active cultural scene driven by different actors and institutions. The SoA is well connected with many of the independent and institutional agents. Namely it established partnerships with Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art and Porto/Post/Doc International Film Festival, among many others.

The SoA is a community of students, teachers and qualified professionals, whose mission is to proclaim the presence of art in the various fields of activity and serves as a key element of Portugal's cultural, social and economic development. The SoA is divided into the following areas: Sound and Image, Arts and Restoration, a Research Centre for Science and Technology of the Arts (CITAR) and two service centres (CCD and CCR_ Centre of Conservation and Restoration). Its main tasks are the artistic dissemination of knowledge and culture through quality processes and accredited teaching, as well as research and knowledge transfer to the community.

The CCD (Digital Creativity Centre), acknowledged as one of the anchor projects from the Creative Industry Cluster in Northern Portugal, is a centre of competence and creative excellence with an infrastructure equipped with cutting edge technology in the areas of Digital and Interactive Arts, Computer Music, Sound Design, Audio-visual and Cinematic Arts, Computer Animation. It offers a broad range of studios and equipment to create audio-visual artworks, besides offering a Fabrication Lab where material artworks can be created through digital fabrication. The facilities are prepared to host public presentations: CCD has an auditorium appropriate for high-quality film screenings, music concerts and performances; and an exhibition room equipped to support almost every media used in contemporary artistic practices. CCD also promotes a Cultural Programme with guest artists and scholars. The programme aims to articulate the several dimensions of SoA's mission: education, research and artistic creation.

Infection, Participation and Informality

The university is a specific environment that "isolates" the student, "to be exclusively a site of learning and analysis, of experimentation exempted from the urgencies of the outside world" while "paradoxically" proposing exactly to "prepare students for life outside the school, for 'real life'" (ibid.). As 'real life' is "ever changing" so should be education. In the specific case of art, since Duchamp introduced the ready-made and the following avant-gardes proposed an increasing relevance of 'real life', artists got themselves "infected with exteriority" (ibid.). Following Malevich's idea that artists should be subjected to "aesthetic infections" triggered by "new visual forms and impressions produced by modern life" (ibid.: 28), Boris Groys proposes infection as a way

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of constantly updating the artistic practices. Under this perspective, the students would be presented to new aesthetic elements, partially deriving from artistic, technological and societal development, in a safe environment. Such principle owes to the idea of vaccination, as the infection is promoted within a controlled setting. The context of higher education institutions guarantees that the contact of students with new aesthetic elements is driven by criticality and debate. They would then develop their own original practice, responding to aesthetic novelty and politically urgent issues.

The art school exists under a "state of exception", given the specificity of artistic creation because it "safeguards by force of its own, its own rules of production" (Madoff, 2009: 275). It is nevertheless a very narrow one – given the constraints of the art market and bureaucratization on what a university should be. As museums, galleries and art events hold the power, budgets and media influence to "rewrite art history" (Bauer, 2009: 224), art schools and universities should invite its surrounding communities (societal, artistic, alumni) to participate actively in the discussion and "assimilate the parameters of the aesthetic experience" they provide (Madoff, 2009: 275), in order to affirm themselves as socially relevant agents within the Art World. Art schools should develop "alternative cultural stances to the predilections and short-term memory of the market" (Bauer, 2009: 225), therefore transmitting a "critical artistic and cultural practice" (Deliss, 2009: 131). Such participation is two-sided: to bring the community to take part in the aesthetic debate; for the students to engage with the issues of the community. Certainly, this is fundamental for the art school to create its own discourse.

The third principle is one that leads to intellectual emancipation. Informality allows "both students and teachers [to] reformulate their hierarchical relationship and enter a flat zone where each party recogniz[es] the value of their respective input and could then pitch and barter their way forward from ignorance to knowledge" (ibid.: 131). This would favour a symbiotic relationship between students, professors and young practitioners. This implies the rupture of the traditional cause-effect relation between teaching and learning. Emancipation stands here for "reappropriation of a relationship of the subject to itself" (Rancière, 2010: 23-25), that allows it to overcome a distance between what it already knows and what it still doesn't, through the adventures of his own and those of the others (ibid.: 19). Through an experimental approach on their own work, and by acknowledging the experiences of older artists, art students will acquire more relevant skills. Informal education "can provide young people with the cognitive and affective skills they need to cope with a rapidly changing society" (Cohen, 2007: 12).

These three principles define the Pedagogical Programme at the core of the SoA's strategy for Art Education. The SoA proposes a Cultural Programme of exhibitions and other events, a programme of artistic residencies, informal tutoring sessions with artists and promotes problem-based/project-based methodologies in its curriculum. Students, in their contact with artists, are "infected" with aesthetic and societal forms, therefore they're stimulated to update themselves, developing new structures of thought. Much of this contact is done in an informal way, through "the use of observation, experiential approach to developing ideas, and encoding of new forms and representations" (Deliss, 2009: 126). In these processes, the surrounding communities are invited to participate in the aesthetic discussions of the SoA, further valuing the SoA's work as well as the work of its students.

Art school understood under these premises is inherently political, "infecting the world as much as the world infects it" (Groys, 2009: 30). As "every art activity consists primarily in policing the public" (ibid.), art is engaged in community discussions and solving political issues. Art and politics are both connected "as forms of dissent, as operations of reconfiguration of common experience of the sensitive" that create a new "configuration of the possible" (Rancière, 2010: 95-96).

Merleau-Ponty described great prose as the "art of capturing a meaning which until then had never been

objectified and of rendering it accessible to everyone who speaks the same language" (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: 373). Art goes even further, beyond language, encompassing a multitude of sensitive information – sound, image, touch, smell, word, etc. By capturing meanings not yet grasped and rewriting the possible, art can indeed be, not merely a tool, but the platform to question and transform reality.

The Cultural Programme

The Cultural Programme is comprised of exhibitions, conferences, film screenings and workshops. This programme is part of a pedagogic strategy that SoA has been implementing since the semester between February and July 2018, complementing the graduate and postgraduate programmes. The programme follows the premise that a diversity of critical approaches and artistic practice fosters artistic innovation. The exchange of knowledge and (soft/hard) skills that arise is believed to put quality contemporary artistic creation at the centre, and therefore to embolden the quality of the education. In short, academic institutions that focus on art should sustain a close dialogue with the most relevant contemporary creators and the artistic community.

1.   Artistic Residencies

At the core of this strategy, a programme of artistic residencies organizes a significant part of the activities. The resident artists often develop an exhibition programme and participate in tutoring sessions with the students. One artist was selected in the first academic year and three in the second and third years. Each artist starts by proposing an artistic project to be developed and presented within the residency in premiere in the SoA. The works should enter national and international circulation. The residencies are adapted to the specific needs of each project. Usually, they last three months in their research and development phases. The work can take the shape of any audio-visual art form and can be presented in any of the exhibition spaces of the CCD.

All throughout the process the artists are required to involve the undergraduate students, the professors and researchers of SoA. This brings new artistic perspectives to the SoA community and grants the invited artist the possibility to work with concepts and expertise that they don't master. On the other hand, the artists are required to present artist talks, organize workshops and mentor the (final) artistic projects of the undergraduate and graduate students.

These residencies are also an opportunity to strengthen the cooperation with the artistic community, fostering collaborative work and the meeting and discussion between artists from different disciplines. It is an opportunity to build partnerships with institutions, through presentation of the projects developed in the SOA, funding or collaboration in the development of joint projects.

2.   Exhibitions

Each academic year, the SoA presents 4 exhibitions – some of which developed by resident artists. Every project is developed specifically for the exhibition space and presented in premiere, involving a variety of media from cinematic art to photography and new media. With the gallery open four days per week, the students and researchers have the opportunity to contact directly with some of the most relevant artists working in the Portuguese and international art scene. The artists engage in the tutoring of students from different areas and participate in a session of the conference programme, by presenting their artistic methods, processes and conceptual framework. In some situations, students and professors engage in the setting up of the exhibition, acquiring technical skills fundamental to the understanding of the presentation of contemporary art; in some rare situations, students, professors and researchers participate in the development of the artworks with different degrees of complexity; more recently, professors and researchers developed part of the side programme of the exhibition, directly engaging with the practice of the artist.

3.   Conference Programme

The Conference Programme happens yearly, on the second semester with weekly sessions. It's part of the curriculum of graduate and undergraduate students and, like the other activities on the Cultural Programme, it's open to outside public. Artists, curators, scientists and researchers are invited to present their work or research in the most suitable format – from a keynote presentation to a debate, concert or performance. Since 2019 the Conference has an annual theme that sets the broad topic for students to develop their artistic projects.

4.   Other events and activities

Besides the core projects aforementioned, the SoA with CITAR organize a series of academic and research events. It's relevant to mention the Summer School on Art & Cinema. This yearly event launched

in 2018 is an intensive programme that follows the major principles of the SoA's strategy. During a week, about 20 participants contact with some of the most important international artists and filmmakers (Palme d'Or 2010 Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Atom Egoyan and Todd Solondz, among others) in a series of workshops and masterclasses. Participants learn about other artists' methods and practices (Infection), actively employ them in short exercises (Participation) and at the end of the night attend a public screening (or opening) of the artists' work (Informality). However, given the small sample of participants and the short duration of the programme, to assess its results is not helpful for this paper.

Early Results

Artistic Residencies

In the first semester of 2018 the SoA hosted one resident artist, the Portuguese filmmaker and artist Salomé Lamas. In 2018/2019 three artists were enrolled in the residency program, two of them Portuguese, the artists Nuno da Luz and Jonathan Uliel Saldanha, and one Brazilian, the filmmaker Ana Vaz. In 2019/2020 the filmmakers Yohei Yamakado (Japan, based in France) and Vasco Araújo were the resident artists. A third residency by the American artist Ben Russell had to be postponed to 2020/2021 due to the impact of COVID-19. The trend evinces an aim of the SoA towards internationalization, with the goal of fostering knowledge and skills exchange between different cultural backgrounds.

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1. **Salomé Lamas (February – June 2018)**

The pilot year was important to test the program's articulation with the SoA's research and teaching activities. The residency was funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Established in 1956 in Lisboa under the testament of Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, the Foundation's "original purpose is focused on fostering knowledge and raising the quality of life of persons

throughout the fields of the arts, charity, science and education"[1]. In the specific field of art, the Foundation has been historically responsible for the presentation of Portuguese art abroad, by supporting the development of artistic projects and funding of residencies and study periods of artists abroad. Currently the Gulbenkian Foundation has delegations in Paris and London.

Salomé Lamas works with film and film installations, and her works have been featured in many relevant museums and film festivals. Her approach on the moving image often questions the perception of truth and fiction, critically reflecting on the cinematic media.

During this time she developed an exhibition project out of the film Extinção, premiered earlier in 2018 in the CPH:DOX film festival in Copenhagen. This film dealt with the issue of legal and immaterial borders, by approaching the non-recognized country of Transnistria, internationally recognised has being part of Moldova. One scene of the film was shown in a large projection in the exhibition room, with photograms of other scenes being exhibited in a photographic composition. The opening of the exhibition was on June 18th as part of the first edition of Summer School on Art & Cinema. As part of her residency, she also gave two artist talks and mentored projects of the undergraduate students in cinema.

2. **Nuno da Luz (October-December 2018)**

The residency of Nuno da Luz was funded by InResidence, a programme promoted by Porto Municipality to fund artistic residencies as well as promoting the visibility of the network of spaces run in Porto. Its goal is "to bridge national and international artists with the opportunities and resources which can be found in Porto to develop residency projects across different art forms" (School of Arts website).

Nuno da Luz has a master's degree on Experimentation in Art and Politics at Sciences Po,

Paris. His work often takes the form of events, concerts, installations and printed editions. He showed his work in several museums and galleries and was a resident artist in some of the most prestigious residency programs in Europe, such as: Bethanien Künstlerhaus (2017), Cité internationale des arts (2015), Residency Unlimited (2014), and Sound Art Braunschweig Projects (2013). The artist is represented by Vera Cortês gallery.

Nuno da Luz developed an immersive installation representing the surrounding environment of the SoA – the intersection of the Douro river with the Atlantic Ocean. The installation was comprised of the sounds recorded on location, the sonification of a signal of processed data – provided by the Hydrographic Institute of the Portuguese Navy (HI) – through two cymbals, among other elements. The HI has the mission of supporting all the activities related to the sciences of the sea, and it is under direct supervision of the Ministries of Defence and Science. The data referred to measurements of the length and height of the waves and tidal agitation on the bay facing the selected environment.

The exhibition, titled Poetry as an echological survival [sic.], was inaugurated on March 7th, 2019 in SoA's exhibition room and was preceded by an artist talk where the artist exposed his process and the collaboration with the HI, represented by the Commander Pires Barroqueiro. The exhibition had a second moment, from 21st to 29th of June, in Vera Cortês Gallery, in Lisbon. For this second moment the artist recorded sounds from the surroundings of the gallery and worked with new data from the HI, related to the equivalent measurements of Lisbon coastal area.

Nuno da Luz mentored the artistic projects of ten undergraduate students, that were working with sound and music. The concerns with field recordings, and the understanding of sound environments were very present in the students' projects, revealing a positive influence of the artist on their work. The artistic projects took diverse shapes: from musical compositions presented live, to musical performances involving video-mapping, to sound installations. Besides, he conducted a performance of the composition Crude (Music for Walls), a piece written by Guilherme Vaz in 1973, with the students. The piece was performed twice, once on the 2nd of April and again on the 15th of June 2019.

3. Jonathan Uliel Saldanha (January-March 2019)

Jonathan Uliel Saldanha is a musician and visual artist who describes himself as a "sonic and scenic constructor". He "operates elements of pre-language,

FIGURE 1. EXHIBITION VIEW OF POETRY AS AN ECHOLOGICAL SURVIVAL
Source: School of Arts at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

generative choirs, acoustic animism, echo, mimicry and intra-cranial-dub"[2]. He presented his works in the most significative art venues in Portugal and in several international venues and festivals such as the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and the Festival Accès(s).

The residency of Jonathan Uliel Saldanha was developed in partnership with BoCA biennale, in its second edition. This biennale occurs in Porto and Lisbon since 2017, with satellite events in other Portuguese and European cities. Part of the biennale program, the artist premiered his performance-concert *Scotoma Cintilante*, with the choir based in Lisbon Ver pela Arte, a choir exclusively composed by blind people, on April 9th 2019 in the SoA's auditorium. It was later presented in the National Theatre of São Carlos, in Lisbon, the only venue in Portugal with a regular Opera program. The project was fully developed during his three-months residency.

This was a project prone in collaboration with SoA researchers. To face this challenge, he designed a haptic score/sculpture in collaboration with André Perrotta, based on the 3D animation studies developed by Ricardo Megre and two undergraduate students of animation. The composition of the musical piece revolved around a refractory vocal mechanism he developed with Pedro Monteiro. Pedro Monteiro was also the maestro of the choir, having for that purpose, developed a novel not visual method of conducting. Following the performance, the exhibition Dismorfia was inaugurated in SoA's exhibition room, documenting the rehearsals with the choir and featuring the score-sculpture and the aforementioned 3D animations of the process. On April 11th, the artist and Pedro Monteiro joined Álvaro Balsas, PhD in Philosophy of Science, in a public talk about the development of the project and its conceptual implications.

Unlike other artists, Jonathan Uliel Saldanha was not responsible for mentoring undergraduate students. The interaction of the artist with the university's community is limited to the aforementioned activities.

4. Ana Vaz (April-June 2019)

During her residency – also funded by the InResidence programme, Ana Vaz worked on the post-production of her first feature-film. With a bachelor's degree in philosophy and having studied film in Le Fresnoy, one of the most prestigious artistic film schools in Europe, the Brazilian artist produced almost a dozen

FIGURE 2. PREMIERE OF *SCOTOMA CINTILANTE*
Source: School of Arts at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

[2] For more information, see https://jonathanulielsaldanha.com/ (accessed: March 9th, 2020).

of short-films, and a couple of installations. Her films often push forward an experimental research of the potential of moving images, engaging political topics, decolonial thought and a critique of western civilization. The film she worked on during this residency reflects upon the Japanese landscape, following the impact of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident.

As she continued to work on the project, the presentation in the SoA was postponed. Her residency was proficient in interaction with the undergraduate students. She conducted an artist talk with SoA community, a workshop and a public screening in the Summer School on Art & Cinema 2019. In these moments, she shared concepts and techniques important to her practice. She mentored ten final cinema projects. Of those, two were selected for very relevant international film festivals. *Auspício* in Curtas Vila do Conde, *Casa na Praia* in FIDMarseille Campus and Doclisboa; and also in Doclisboa *Simulacro*. Such circulation of SoA's final projects in respected festivals is unusual and suggests a successful combination of students with mentoring artists.

5. Yohei Yamakado (September – December 2019)

Yohei Yamakado's residency was funded by Gulbenkian Foundation, in a residency programme that started with an Open Call. The jury was comprised of Nuno Crespo, dean of the SoA, Cristina Grande, curator in the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, and Guilherme Blanc, curator and cultural advisor for Porto City Hall, and it reviewed 251 applications. The decision was based in the recognition of the quality of his body of work, the artistic relevance of his project, and more significatively, the impact this residency would have in his artistic career, still at an early stage.

Born in Kobe, Yamakado studied in University of Doshisha in Kyoto, University of Paris 8, IRCAM and Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains, in Tourcoing. After an early career in music composition and founding the music label RÉCIT, he directed two films *La lyre à jamais illustra le taudis* (2018) and *Amor Omnia* (2019). In both films the artist evinces a unique way of approaching film. He presented his work in venues such as L´Onde (2018), Nuit Blanche Kyoto (2015, 2016, 2017), Towada Art Centre (2016), Institut Goethe-Paris (2014) or IRCAM (2014).

During his residency, despite not engaging in tutoring sessions, the artist presented his films and his residency project on November 18th and invited his usual collaborator, filmmaker Riccardo Giacconi to do the same on December 20th. Both occasions were an opportunity to the academic community of the SoA to access specific artistic discourses and practices.

6. Vasco Araújo (September 2019 – September 2020)

Vasco Araújo is a well-established artist that won EDP young artists in 2003, one of the most significative awards in Portugal. He has exhibited his work in venues such as Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Gasworks, Jeu de Paume, Venice Biennale or Palais de Tokyo. Araújo was awarded funding by dgartes (public support programme in arts) to develop a film and an exhibition, in a project fully produced by the SoA. Besides the support of SoA's technical staff (Photography Director, Sound Director, Producer, among others), CITAR researchers and SoA students participated in the production. Shot in February, *Pathosformel* was presented in Avant première on the 16th of October 2020, the same day the exhibition inaugurated.

Throughout the academic year of 2019/2020 the artist tutored one of the two classes of undergraduate students working with cinema. This year the students' productions were finished in September, which doesn't allow us to follow their track on the film festival circuit.

Exhibitions by other artists

Each exhibition has specific dynamics. Most of them depart from projects not developed purposely for the exhibition space, but either presented in premiere or presented for the first time in a specific setting. The former is the case of Shadow Hunter, an exhibition developed by one of the most important living photographers of architecture, Guido Guidi, and A Invenção da Memória, by the photographer João Paulo Serafim. In the second group we have Sombra Luminosa by Mariana Caló and Francisco Queimadela, an exhibition adaptation of their film with the same title, and Julião Sarmento. Filmworks, the first retrospective of the artist's moving image works. In 2020 all exhibitions (by the artists Diogo Evangelista and Vasco Araújo) are original projects developed for SoA's exhibition room. Two other exhibitions were planned, by Pedro Tudela and Filipa César, but were postponed to 2021.

The level of involvement of the artists with the SoA's community varies significantly. Some of these artists were supervisors of artistic projects (Diogo Evangelista, Pedro Tudela, Filipa César). In every exhibition there is a public presentation. Since the academic year of 2019/2020, the SoA proposes a

side programme of workshops, film screenings, talks and guided tours to the exhibition. Therefore, these exhibitions, despite the lack of direct participation of the students, propose plenty of opportunities for the academic community to engage with contemporary artistic practices in an informal way.

Tutoring Sessions

The mentoring provided by the artists diversifies the set of knowledge and perspectives the students contact with during their studies. These sessions are set in an informal environment of discussion of the projects. As

Exhibition / Artist(s)	Arenário/ Francisco Tropa	A Invenção da Memória / João Paulo Serafim	Sombra Luminosa / Mariana Caló e Francisco Queimadela	Filmworks/ Julião Sarmento	Shadow Hunter / Guido Guidi	Blind Faith/ Diogo Evangelista
Running Dates	28/02/2018 - 12/04/2018	16/04/2018 - 22/05/2018	11/10/2018 - 14/12/2018	02/07/2019 - 11/10/2019	15/10/2019 - 13/12/2019	13/02/2020 - 30/04/2020

TABLE 1. LIST OF EXHIBITIONS IN THE SCHOOL OF ARTS
Source: http://artes.ucp.pt

Academic Year	Media of the artistic project	Guest artist
Academic Year 2017/2018 (February – May 2018)	Cinema	Salomé Lamas
2018/2019	Cinema (MA and PG)	Filipa César Salomé Lamas
	Cinema (BA)	João Salaviza Ana Vaz
	Photography (MA)	José Pedro Cortes David Campany André Cepeda Márcio Vilela Paulo Catrica Tatiana Macedo
	Animation (BA)	Ed Hooks
	Sound (BA and MA)	Nuno da Luz
2019/2020	Cinema (MA and PG)	Filipa César João Canijo
	Cinema (BA)	Vasco Araújo Cláudia Varejão
	Photography (MA)	Emília Tavares Márcio Vilela Paulo Catrica Duarte Amaral Neto Rui Xavier Sérgio Mah Carlos Noronha Feio
	Animation (BA)	Ed Hooks
	Sound (BA and MA)	Pedro Tudela
	New Media Art (BA)	Diogo Evangelista

TABLE 2. LIST OF GUEST ARTISTS ENROLLED IN TUTORING SESSIONS
Source: School of Arts at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

Year	Nº of Films Selected in Film Festivals	Nº of Films Awarded in Film Festivals	Nº of Selections	Nº of Awards	Selections and Awards in Relevant Film Festivals
2016	6	4	10	7	1 selection and 1 award in Porto/Post/Doc 1 selection in Lisbon/Estoril Film Festival
2017	8	2	47	4	1 selection in Lisbon/Estoril Film Festival
2018	13	8	85	12	0
2019	23	7	80	10	1 selection in FIDMarseille Campus 2 selections in Curtas do Vila do Conde 2 selections and 1 award in doclisboa

TABLE 3. SELECTIONS AND AWARDS OF THE SOA'S STUDENTS FILMS IN FILM FESTIVALS
Source: School of Arts at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

previously seen, many of the guest artists engage in presentations of their own work in the SoA. The set of tutors change every year (except for some exceptions) to guarantee the pedagogic experience is unique every year.

After a first experience with Salomé Lamas in 2018, the tutoring plan was structured around one visiting artist for each class in the artistic field. The artist would present his work and the conceptual framework and methodologies they considered the most relevant for their practice. Afterwards, they would supervise the artistic projects of each student, bringing new feedback and insights to their production. They meet, individually or with the full class, on a biweekly basis.

It is not possible within the range of this article to implement methodologies that could thoroughly analyse the impact these tutoring sessions had on the quality of the artistic projects. However, if we take the case of cinema productions, we can have a glimpse of it. Cinema is the field where this strategy first took place and where it is better structured. Besides, the film festival circuit provides a trustworthy and structured selection process that allows for further analysis. It is possible to analyse how the reception of SoA's films has evolved, and to measure the artistic relevance of the filmic projects within the broader film community. Other variables are involved in the results: the quality of the students that enrolled, the public notoriety around

the SoA and a distribution strategy. But ultimately, film festivals are nowadays the most relevant part of the system of recognition in contemporary artistic cinema.

It's clear there was a general increase in selections and awards in 2018, and it's visible that the number of films selected and awarded grew substantially, specially in 2019. While variation in number of awards might be dependent on the intrinsic talent of the students, the number of selected films and number of selections gives us a better impression of the general impact of tutoring sessions. It doesn't exclusively mean that the quality of the films improved. A complementary explanation is that the contact with artists demystified the distribution processes and increased their access and participation, and allowed them to engage more directly with the most relevant issues of contemporary cinema.

Therefore, the data suggests that the impact of tutoring sessions was significantly positive. It's important to note that 2019 saw one film – *Casa na Praia*, by Teresa Folhadela – being selected for the FIDCampus section of FIDMarseille, one of the most important documentary film festivals in the world. This achievement is unique in a very long time in the SoA. Likewise, several other films were present in the most important student competitions in the Portuguese festival circuit with *Simulacro* being awarded with a notable mention in doclisboa 2019. At the moment of

"HIGHER ARTS EDUCATION FACES SPECIFIC CHALLENGES RELATED WITH THE SUBJECTIVE DIMENSION OF ART, CONCERNS WITH ORIGINALITY AND INNOVATION AND ART'S NATURAL TENDENCY TOWARDS TRANSDISCIPLINARITY. FOR THAT REASON, IT'S IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE THE STUDENTS WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF APPROACHES, AND TO FOSTER ENGAGEMENT WITH IMPORTANT SOCIAL DISCUSSIONS"

writing this paper, we could not get comprehensive numbers for the selections of SoA's films in 2020, however, the trend seems to be positive. The highlight goes to two awards in some of the most relevant student film competitions in Portugal: *I don't like 5 PM*, by Francisco Dias (2019/2020), won the *Take One!* Competition at the International Film Festival Curtas de Vila do Conde – where SoA was represented with three films; and *Há Alguém na Terra*, by Francisca Magalhães, Joana Tato Borges and Maria Canela (2018/2019), won the Cinema Novo Competition at Porto/Post/Doc 2020 – SoA was also represented with three films.

Conference Programme 2019 – Art & Ecology (February-May)

In 2018 the programme consisted of 12 sessions. It was mostly dedicated to cinema and featured the filmmakers Lucrecia Martel (her last film *Zama* was included in several lists of the best films of decade)[3], Diogo Costa Amarante (Best Short film in Berlinale 2017), Salomé Lamas (in the context of her residency) and the photographer David Bate, among others. Given that in its first year the Conference Programme was not thematic, we will not analyse it in detail.

In 2019, under the premise of Art & Ecology, the programme was dedicated to "debate the way art has problematized urgent ecological and biodiversity issues"[4]. Departing from the "unquestionable observation that our planet lives a critical moment of threatened ecosystems" (ibid.), the Programme focused on artistic practices, discourses and investigations that evince "a critical consciousness" (ibid.) on the current transformations of the planet, provoked by human action. Curated by professors Nuno Crespo and Daniel Ribas, the programme consisted of 13 sessions. Unlike its first edition, Art & Ecology gathered a broader range of artistic practices – besides cinema,

some of the guests worked on the fields of curatorial research, sound art, performance, computer music – and two guests coming from a scientific background – Molecular Biology and Geography.

The programme opened with a presentation of Nuno Crespo, where he presented a paper on the relation of art and nature throughout History. Providing context to the contemporary situation, where scientific disciplines grant artists a deeper understanding of natural processes, he stressed how the artistic field is prepared to question the place of the humankind within the ecosystems it inhabits. In the same session the filmmaker Ana Vaz joined Professor Crespo in a conversation, after screening three of her films. The talk further developed some of the key aspects of her films. Inspired by the construction of Brasilia, *Idade da Pedra* [Stone Age] (2013) imagines the construction of a dystopic and out of proportion city (or is it a ruin?) in the middle of the savannah, proposing a representation of the civilization's eagerness to disrupt ecosystems and dominate nature. The other two films – *Occidente* [West] (2015), and *Há Terra!* [There is land!] (2016) – take the shape of ethnofiction to, respectively, portray the arrival of Portuguese colonialism in Brazil and imagine the reverse migration, a sort of inverted colonialism. In both of the later, the intricate connection between colonialism and ecosystemic disruption is laid bare. Another filmmaker, Susana de Sousa Dias, proposed a similar scenario. She presented excerpts of *Fordlandia Malaise* (2018), a film that revisits Henry Ford's model city in the Amazon jungle. The establishment of a city in the middle of a jungle represents here the industrial phantasy of Henry Ford. It would be defeated by the strength of amazonic nature, leaving behind the ruin of an industrial ruin.

On the same track, Sandro Aguilar's conference was centred around two of his films that reflect on the dominance humans have over other species. False

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[3] Notably Toronto International Film Festival and the magazine Film Comment placed it on the top of their lists.
[4] For more information, see https://www.porto.ucp.pt/pt/central-noticias/lancamento-programa-arte-ecologia-aulas-abertas-na-escola-das-artes (accessed: March 8th, 2020).

Twins (2014) is shot in a zoo and in a lab, under a post-apocalyptic mood. Here the curiosity to study and collect animals portray them as jailed and oppressed beings. Similar feelings come from Jewels (2013), where a collection of bugs conserved in amber is minutiously examined under a strong light.

On the other hand, we can draw a parallel between the artistic practice of Nuno da Luz, who made a conference in March, with Jorge Gaspar's in May. The geographer presented his research on the moor landscape and how it is deeply connected with human activity. What both presentations showed is that art and science are complementary but autonomous. Whereas science describes rationally determined phenomena, through immersion art brings an irrational understanding of ecosystems with a complexity broader than the capacity of our reason.

Likewise, the debate between the artist Carla Filipe and the molecular biologist Margarida Silva, despite their common interest on urban gardens, evinced their different perspectives. Margarida Silva has become a well-known eco-activist that sees in urban gardens a tool to pursue sustainability. Carla Filipe appropriated this practice to create several artworks. One in particular, *Migration, Exclusion and Resistance* (developed for the São Paulo Biennale 2018), is an installation comprised of industrial concrete structures and truck wheels that the artist repurposed to host unconventional edible plants.

Other conferences were more abstractly connected to the theme. The curator Luiz Camillo Osorio presented a study-case of an exhibition curated by himself, to discuss censorship and participation in art: in 2018, after misunderstanding one performance, the audience actively rallied for its cancelation. The artist Jonathan Uliel Saldanha described the process to create his exhibition with SoA professor Pedro Monteiro and science philosopher Álvaro Balsas – a work rooted in physics, the cosmos and the formation (and deformation) of bodies. Filmmaker Leonor Teles presented her film *Terra Franca* (2017), a documentary that follows the life of a fisherman while waiting ashore for the renewal of his fishing licence, to portray the place of community and family, as human ecosystems.

Panorama 2019

Following the Art & Ecology Conference Programme the finalists of all courses were invited to develop their artistic projects around this theme. Many didn't follow this path, but many others did. All the works were presented on 14th and 15th of June in the event Panorama. It included 26 films (5 animation films), 13 installations, 13 concerts and the piece Crude (Music for

FIGURE 3. VIEW OF PANORAMA
Source: School of Arts at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

Walls), performed by sound students guided by Nuno da Luz.

This was the moment of activating the knowledge they acquired throughout a year of tutoring sessions, visiting exhibitions and assisting to conferences. While in cinema most students chose other issues, the students working with sound, music and animation were very engaged with the topic. A series of concerts and sound installations featured the representation of ecosystems and soundscapes, evincing a strong understanding of the topic. The event was open to the community that participated in great numbers – about 500 people participated each day.

Discussion

Higher Arts Education faces specific challenges related with the subjective dimension of art, concerns with originality and innovation and art's natural tendency towards transdisciplinarity. For that reason, it's important to provide the students with a wide variety of approaches, and to foster engagement with important social discussions. The model proposed by the SoA aims at promoting a methodology characterized by positive aesthetic infection, participation and informality. By presenting some of the activities that took place within the SoA between 2018 and 2020, this article provides a set of examples that evince the diversity of artistic approaches and discussions that can coexist within this model, and the diversity of activities that complement each other. The environment proposed by the SoA is one where symbiotic collaboration and critical dialogue foster artistic development. The model follows other developments felt at large within academic institutions towards project-based learning methods, in which theoretical knowledge and technical skills are taught in dialogue with the resolution of 'real life' situations and problems.

The three fundamental concepts of this model complement each other. The idea of aesthetic infection guarantees that the students contact with new aesthetic approaches and artistic methodologies, that will be beneficial to the development of new forms and languages. Through participation, such development is contextualized within the reality of the communities that surround the SoA, overcoming the risk of the production of 'academic art' – art produced within the 'bubble' of particular concerns of academies of fine arts. Finally, the reconfiguration of teaching hierarchies through informality can foster the emancipation of the students' thought – and while this is important across most disciplines, it is essential to the development of relevant artistic practices. Art is not only a discipline of depiction and description, but it can create new forms of critically thinking the world and its possibilities. Radical transformation demands a deep understanding of the tissue of reality – that goes beyond the recognition of discreet data. Critical artistic practices can provide a platform to redefine the configuration of the possible.

This model is implemented through the articulation of different activities. At its core, the artistic residencies provide a platform for a strong presence of the artist throughout some months. During this period, the artist develops his project working with the students, they present it publicly in an exhibition and a conference, and they mentor the students in their project. This means that not only the students are stimulated by contacting with the artist's work, they develop an informal relationship with them, by working side by side, and finally they participate in the life of the cultural community by taking part in the public activities of the SoA. Regarding participation, it's important to mention that the effort taken in organizing a yearly Conference Programme is directed at fostering the students' engagement with the issues that occupy the wider communities (artistic, social, alumni).

The increase in the distribution of the students' films, in particular in relevant film festivals, suggests the strategy has been positive. It is unclear and debatable whether that is due to an improvement of the artistic quality of the films, to a higher visibility of the SoA or to a more complete education around networking and application preparation skills. Parallel to the wider visibility and acknowledgement of the students' work, the SoA saw an increase in its social visibility and relevance, within Porto's and Portugal's artistic communities. The exhibitions presented are visited by members of the broader community and are often presented in other venues. The SoA is playing an important role in defining a framework of relevance and quality of artistic works. The SoA guarantees its students privileged access to relevant artistic practices and a platform that acknowledges the relevance of their own work.

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