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The Rumor project and the Beco do Pinto

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This presentation consists of a critical journey through the detail of the production process for the artistic project *Rumor* and its intrinsic connection with Beco do Pinto, Museum of the City of São Paulo, where it remained on display from August 2022 to July 2023. *Rumor* respected the conventional stages for large-scale artistic projects: pre-production, production and post-production. In terms of this text, our principal focus will be on the processes that took place during the production phase and on some of the elements of post-production - which include ongoing reflections and the documentation of the project. In terms of the pre-production stage, which lasted roughly two years, suffice to say that it generated a series of documents, presentations and sketches that led to the project’s final approval. This is a long term project with a broad scope involving a range of professionals from many segments, artistic or otherwise. Throughout this entire period the project received generous support from the curators of the Museu da Cidade de São Paulo [São Paulo City Museum] - in particular, Henrique Siqueira, Gabriela Rios and Monica Caldiron - and from NU Projetos de Arte - the invaluable productive energy of Nathalia Ungarelli and Heloisa Leite.

Rumor and the context of Beco do Pinto

In conceptual or material terms, the *Rumor* project adheres as much to the history as it does to the physical space of Beco do Pinto (Pinto Alleyway). The term “rumor” alludes to a confused and diffused noise, a murmur produced collectively, at times as a sign of indignation or revolt, or of some unofficial news. The latency present in the word “rumor” is an attempt to get closer to another virtuality, that of knowing the “history” of Beco do Pinto. In other words, the search is to get closer to “that-which-has-passed” (*daquilo-que-passou*), that produced the space that we know today, but that is also incessantly being updated in

the collective and individual everyday experience of the “now”.¹ This updating of elements and historical narratives in *the present time of the experience* was our main preoccupation for the project from the moment of its conception. Here, we might use other terms to refer to the idea of “actualisation”, such as return, excavation and phantasm. All of these terms correspond to the form adopted by the *Rumor* project, namely, the following stages: 1) historical research in collections - for example, the São Paulo Archaeology Center (Centro de Arqueologia de São Paulo), and autopsy reports from the collection of the Institute of Forensic Medicine (Instituto Médico Legal), preserved in the Public Archive of the State (Arquivo Público do Estado), in São Paulo, among others; 2) interest in narratives of horror and violence, be they real, fictional or a mixture of both; 3) use of sound, in particular the sound of the voice as the immaterial component that effectively occupies the physical space of Beco do Pinto during the exhibition period - the voice taken as a perceptive element that internalizes in its form the virtuality that is central to the project.

We require at this stage to provide a brief description of Beco do Pinto. This is an urban structure projected by public authorities responsible for preserving historical heritage, whose date of construction cannot be objectively defined.² Its documentary existence goes back to maps,³ minutes of public construction projects - most notably, litigation involving disputes over the land that Beco do Pinto occupies,⁴ of which the (sur)name "Pinto" is a patrimonial

¹ The terms in inverted commas are those of Walter Benjamin, who seeks to differentiate that-which-has-passed from the “past” and “now” from the “present”, in order to preserve their virtuality, the latency of a vestige. BENJAMIN, Walter. **The Arcades Project**. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 462 as cited in FERREIRA DA SILVA, Denise. “O evento racial ou aquilo que acontece sem o tempo” In CARNEIRO, Amanda (Org.) et al. **Histórias Afro-atlânticas**: anthology. São Paulo: MASP, 2022, p. 492.

² See SANT’ANNA, Nuto. “O Beco do Colégio” In **Revista do Arquivo Municipal**. Ano III, V. XXVI, São Paulo, August, 1936. According to the author: “ Antonio Egydio Martins says that “on Carmo Street since immemorial times, there has been an alleyway [*beco*], denominated by some as - *do Collegio*, and, by others as - *do Pinto*, which was opened to allow access to Carmo marshland, having 10 palm and a half in breadth.” (p. 24). At a certain point in the text, the possibility of the Beco do Pinto having existed since 1736 is observed (p. 34). But, at the same time, it seems to suggest that the Beco do Colégio [Colégio Alleyway] dated approximately to the construction of the Jesuit College, that is, 1554 (principally, p. 36 and p. 53, our italics). All the translations to English are ours, except when indicated otherwise.

³ Nuto Sant’Anna observes that the Beco do Colégio appears in the *Planta da Imperial Cidade de São Paulo* (Imperial Map of the City of São Paulo), in 1810. For a study of this map and the urban iconography of the 18th century see CAVENAGHI, Ailton José. “O território paulista na iconografia oitocentista: mapas, desenhos e fotografias. Análise de uma herança cotidiana” In **Anais do Museu do Ipiranga**, V. 14, n. 1, Jan-Jun, 2006, p. 217.

⁴ Nuto Sant’Anna, 1936, p. 24-29. The litigation took place in 1821 and 1826, between the owners of the houses that flank Beco do Pinto, the protagonists being Brigadier Joaquim José Pinto de Moraes Leme, and his neighbors Maria Clara Gomes (who presents a letter to the city authority in 1821) and João José Vieira Ramalho (whose claim takes place in 1826). Both sought to impede the closure of Beco do Pinto imposed by the brigadier and the expansion of the territory of his property. New litigation and attempts at closure occurred in subsequent decades, one of which involved the Marchioness of Santos. In this case (1834-1835), a defined contour of the alleyway was solicited to make the passage straighter. Later, between 1849 and 1855, came the discussion of the closure of

survivor - another of its names was Beco do Colégio, according to Nuto Sant'Anna a reference to the local Jesuit College. It was used as a public passageway, waste deposit and for water drainage, as it allowed access to the banks of the Rio Tamanduateí, located in the region now occupied by Rua Vinte e Cinco de Março, before the redevelopment that would begin at the end of the 18th century. Important iconographic references in this context are the photographs by Militão Augusto de Azevedo, but in particular one from 1862, where we see on the banks of the Tamanduateí, the daily and domestic work carried out by black men and women, before and after abolition.⁵ Other lesser-known references, but of enormous importance to the history of the African diaspora found in archaeological sites in São Paulo, are glass beads, pipes and ceramic artifacts with graphic incisions. In addition, pieces of ceramics also present motifs of indigenous cultures, attesting to their survival and modes of resistance.⁶ As we have stated, Beco do Pinto served as a site for waste disposal, which made it possible for archeology to rescue material in the form of bone fragments from animals, porcelain produced overseas, metal, shells, and glass, among other objects.⁷

the Beco by way of a gate, but Nuto Sant'Anna did not find documentation that supported this closure. Unless we are mistaken, the existing gate was installed by the police station that operated in Casa n.1.

⁵ Nuto Sant'Anna shows us that by 1821, the date of the first litigation that called for the reopening of Beco do Pinto, blocked by Brigadier Pinto, other means were used by the inhabitants to access the banks of the Tamanduateí, a consequence of a diversion in the course of the river, a modification implemented to avoid flooding. This had distanced the banks of the Tamanduateí River from Beco do Pinto. As such, the photo by Militão Augusto de Azevedo does not precisely document the use of this alleyway (*beco*), but offers an 18th century iconography that relates the place with the labour carried out by the black population. Of note too is the photograph taken by Vincenzo Pastore (*Lavadeiras no Tamanduateí*, 1910). See LIMA, Alessandro Luís Lopes de. **Uma arqueologia dos territórios negros: contas e miçangas no triângulo histórico de São Paulo (sécs. XIX-XX)**. Dissertação de Mestrado. Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2019, p. 60.

⁶ Note that, unless we are mistaken, only foreign ceramic were encountered in Beco do Pinto, analyzed in detail in CARVALHO, Marcos Rogério Ribeiro de. "Pratos, xícaras e tigelas: um estudo de arqueologia histórica em São Paulo, séculos XVIII e XIX: os sítios do Solar da Marquesa, Beco do Pinto e Casa n.1" In **Rev. do Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia**, São Paulo, n. 13, p. 75-99, 2003. In the Solar da Marquesa de Santos beads of glass were found, as in other archaeological sites in São Paulo, as shown by Alessandro Luís Lopes de Lima (Lima, 2019, in particular, from p. 120; see the complete bibliographic reference in the previous footnote). Ceramics with incisions and shapes that relate to Brazilian indigenous and African iconography, are analyzed in MANFRINI, Marcelo Rolim. **Cacos fragmentados em uma sociedade conectada: produção e distribuição de cerâmica utilitária na São Paulo colonial**. Dissertação de Mestrado. Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2020, in particular from p. 155 onwards; AGOSTINI, Camilla. "Resistência cultural e reconstrução de identidades: um olhar sobre a cultura material de escravos do século XIX" In **Revista de História Regional**, [S. l.], v. 3, n. 2, 2007. Available at: <https://revistas.uepg.br/index.php/rhr/article/view/2063>. Accessed on: 1st April, 2023; AGOSTINI, Camilla; SOUZA, Marcos André Torres. "Body Marks, Pots, and Pipes: Some Correlations between African Scarifications and Pottery Decoration in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Brazil" In **Historical Archaeology**, 2012, 46(3), p. 102–123. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03376873>. Accessed on: 1st April, 2023. We are immensely grateful to the generous bibliographic suggestions from Paula Nishida, the archaeologist responsible for the São Paulo Archaeology Center..

⁷ Highly detailed descriptions of the objects excavated can be conferred in the material relating to Beco do Pinto stored both at the Documentation Center (Centro de Documentação/ CEDOC) - , of the Department of Culture of the São Paulo City Hall (Secretaria de cultura da Prefeitura de São Paulo), as well as at the São Paulo Archaeology Center. For our research, we also analyzed materials

Buried discreetly among the metals found, were perhaps the blades and scalpels used in autopsies performed in the Forensic Medicine Office (Gabinete Médico Legal) located at Casa n.1 (1924-1970), during the time that it operated as a police station (1910-1970).⁸ This information, despite being found surreptitiously during the *Rumor* project, formed, however, the "heart" of the project, and also impacted the timeframe of the historical research. *Half real, half fictional*: an archaeology that was not revealed in the consultations made, even in the boxes of objects maintained by the São Paulo Archaeology Center), and which became visible discreetly among the reports of the Institute of Forensic Medicine that we consulted in the Public Archive of the State, in São Paulo. Evidence of a Forensic Medicine Office at that address was confirmed by our research through reports on "exam for age", "genital exam", "deflowering exam", and "pederasty"; procedures that largely concentrate on examining the genitals and provide clues to medical, social and sexual violence.⁹ Other reports that we researched were divided into "minor disaster", "serious disaster", "suicide attempt", "cadaveric examination", "autopsy", "necropsy", "exhumation", "poisoning", "homicide" and "infanticide". It is worth emphasizing that we never presumed innocence and simplicity regarding any of these exams and observed with suspicion all of the ways in which they were documented, from the language used, the professionals and authorities (medical and police) listed, the social markers of the people represented (gender, class, age, race), to details of layout, such as the visual hierarchy of textual information, the use of handwriting, typewriter, or stamps, and the use of black and red colors. The type of binding of the books, the documents, the stains, the texture of the paper, various scribbles and the state of conservation, also caught our attention. Such elements inevitably engage cognitive processes also connected to synaesthetic perception - that is, open to bombardment from, at times, contradictory stimuli. They speak of a relationship between eroticism and morbidity, at times tenuous, at others more pronounced; a relationship that would later be brought up to date in the formal operations of the *Rumor* project. How to balance elements in apparent contrast, such as the beautifully adorned handwriting - the erotic impulse contained in these

from the Solar da Marquesa de Santos and Casa n.1. We are grateful once again to the archaeologist Paula Nishida and also the CEDOC team for allowing us access to the records.

⁸ These dates were found in the documentation of the CEDOC collection.

⁹ In total, five in-person consultations were made at the Public Archive of the State. Analysis was undertaken of the material archived under the rubric "Corpus delicti report (1900-1985) - Subgroup 12SG4 - Institute of Forensic Medicine"

(<http://icaatom.arquivoestado.sp.gov.br/ica-atom/index.php/instituto-medico-legal:isad>). On the first visit, 16 books were verified, in this case, the 8 oldest (from 1900) and 8 from 1950, for comparisons with crime magazines and comic books from the same decade, subsequently consulted in the Historical São Paulo Archive (Arquivo São Paulo Antiga) and the Comic Book Archive of the Centro Cultural São Paulo. During the other visits, 2 books were analyzed from 1900, all the books from 1923, 1924 and 1925 (the first years of the that Forensic Medicine Office operated at Casa n.1), 3 books from 1930 (being, 1 book from January, 1 from May and 1 from September), 3 books corresponding to 1935 (the same division by month), and so on, until the 1970s.

gestures -, the subjects being dealt with - illnesses and violence suffered by individuals -, the positions of power and the supposed impartiality of such documents?

A beco and *the* Beco

Between the proven fact of the existence of a Forensic Medicine Office in Casa n. 1 and the lack of archaeological evidence of knives and scalpels throughout the investigation, it was also of interest for the project to consider a *beco* (alleyway) as a generic urban structure, a place of passage, a way of connection, and its resonances in narratives of horror, gore, ghosts, crime and mystery. The *Rumor* project therefore approached Beco do Pinto (specific space) and a *beco* (generic urban space). It should be noted that Beco do Pinto was historically designed as a place of passage and waste disposal, "nothing more [...] than waste dumped by passers-by, trampled and thrown to the sides of these paths, according to the patterns of pedestrian traffic", as Alessandro Lima reminds us.¹⁰ Thinking of Beco / *beco* as a connection route gave the project greater freedom to relate disparate disciplines and subjects, such as forensic medicine, archeology and fictional narratives, autopsy, excavation and archives, violence, morbidity, humor and eroticism, space, sound and body.

In *The Architectural Uncanny*, Anthony Vidler proposes that there is nothing truly uncanny about spaces and places - and with this, we can include objects. The uncanny, is a mental state of anxiety (or terror) projected onto a space or situation which, for some reason, has lost its character as familiar; it has become strange, enigmatic, sinister, threatening, macabre, etc.¹¹ A light that suddenly flickers, a reflection, a shadow, the wind, a door that bangs shut, a flash of lightning, thunder, a noise, a cockroach, an open drain, an opened body, blood, a hole, a dark corner, a long narrow corridor, penumbra, darkness, etc., added to by the appearance of monsters, ghosts, spirits, doubles, repeated and compulsive situations, coincidences, changes in the stream of time, in other words, a whole range of displaced animistic, magical, omnipotent and mysterious elements. Accidental or fabricated elements or a combination of both. For the project, *becos* always seemed to be appropriate scenarios for the staging of violence, often in openly sensationalist forms, somewhere between fiction and reality. To paraphrase Leandro Muniz in his critical text included in this catalog, 'we could say that *Rumor* is based on real facts'.

¹⁰ LIMA, op. cit., p. 116.

¹¹ VIDLER, Anthony. **The architectural uncanny**: essays in the modern unhome. Cambridge, USA: MIT Press, 1992.

As such, taking the real and fictional as inseparable realities; and also taking the close relationship between a specific space and its multiple narrative layers, another important conceptual reference for the project - and of general interest to Renato Pera within the world of cinematographic horror - is the essay by José de Souza Martins, *A aparição do demônio na fábrica, no meio da produção*.¹² In summary, the author seeks to analyze a supernatural event which he himself witnessed: the appearance of the devil before various workers in the same section of a ceramic tile factory in São Caetano do Sul, in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, in the mid-1950s. According to Martins, the devil “was seen smiling, well dressed, like the engineers, in a corner of the section”, and there was a smell of sulfur, “which popular culture associates with the figure of Satan”. These appearances soon stop happening when the problems of adapting to new technologies have been resolved, and, at the same time, a local priest is called to bless the factory installations. Martins seeks to think about the event as a reaction of the imagination of the workers to the specific pressures of the work they do in the factory and, accordingly, describes the modifications processed in the automation of the work and the reconfiguration of hierarchical relationships. The appearance of the devil had been, therefore, a supernatural form by which the workers symbolized the substitution of manual work for mechanical labor and the substitution of a hierarchy based on communitary ties, previously grounded in the empirical knowledge of self-taught masters, through anonymous relationships with the abstract knowledge of the engineers. Two symbolic systems in conflict, inhabiting the same space at the same time.

As the photographs in this book show, *Rumor* is made up of a set of seven identical horn-shaped objects, made of fiberglass with bright red automotive paint. These objects are set on concrete bases and are lightly suspended from the ground by metal rods. Each horn has a speaker inside. Electric wires come out of one of the ends of the horns and spread out visibly over the stairs of Beco do Pinto.¹³ The objects are distributed across the different levels of the space. At the steepest point, the space is a large flight of stairs. It is important to note that *Rumor* sometimes considered Beco do Pinto as a kind of public square. On many occasions it was common to find people sitting on these steps, listening to the audio amplified by the horns. Archaeological windows are also found at the site that reveal older pavements. Unfortunately, at the present time, its primary function as a passageway within the dynamics of the city is prohibited, as one of the gates remains permanently closed. The

¹² MARTINS, José de Souza. **A aparição do demônio na fábrica**: origens sociais do Eu dividido no subúrbio operário. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2008. Renato Pera is grateful to artist and professor Marco Buti for recommending this brilliant essay.

¹³ To prevent the wires from slipping, concrete bricks were adapted to act as wedges, as drilling holes and making structural interventions on the site is prohibited due the status of Beco do Pinto as protected heritage.

horns have a strategic size, color, brightness and positioning designed to relate to the architectural/urban scale of the site. They suggest organic metaphors, as if they were orifices of architecture itself - mouths, nostrils, ears, anus, canals, vagina, urethra, pores, navel - through which rumors, whispers, screams and ghosts escape.

“Historiographic impulse”¹⁴

Rumor was not the first project from the artist to involve extensive archival research. Other previous works such as *Mostruário São Paulo* (2013), *Caixilharia* (2015) and *Vão* (2017) demanded historical research in iconographic and bibliographic collections, and intensive field research. For these projects, models of tilted, projected and pivoted windows onto the city of São Paulo were investigated. The interest in these projects was to cut a particular cross section of history, looking for the survival of architectural mechanisms that produce openings, that make the mediation a subtle, at times ambiguous endeavor, between the interior and exterior, and that speak of historical and social processes.¹⁵ Or, as Walter Benjamin put it, “we have become very poor at liminal experiences [...] One has to carefully distinguish the threshold from the border. The threshold is a zone”.¹⁶ The interest in the virtualities of history and its intrinsic relationship with certain spatial configurations is fundamental to the artist's research and dates back to his first experiences with installations and urban interventions while studying for his degree at the School of Communication and Art of São Paulo University. Later, projects within the professional environment of the visual arts, such as *Somnus (Noite São Guálter)*, *Tlahuizcalli (Casa de la aurora)*, both from 2010, and *House of the rising sun (Para Max Ernst)*, from 2011, demonstrate an interest in the phantasmagorical dimension of spaces. These projects produced a superimposition of temporalities, the reorganization of objects, sculptures, archaeological artifacts, architectural elements, image, sound and video. Moreover, they were largely stimulated by the types of experiences that arose in architectural ruins, in which the linearity between *before*, *during* and *after* is unsettled, just as the difference/separation between reality, speculation and hallucination.¹⁷

¹⁴ BEIGUELMAN, Giselle. **Impulso historiográfico**. São Paulo: Peligro Edições, 2019.

¹⁵ See PERA, Luiz Renato Montone. **Mostruário São Paulo**. Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2016. MARINS, Paulo César Garcez. **Através da rótula: Sociedade e arquitetura no Brasil, séculos XVII a XX**. São Paulo: Humanitas; FFLCH-USP, 2001.

¹⁶ BENJAMIN, Walter, *Le livre des passages*, p. 512-513, as cited in DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges. **Diante do tempo**. Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG, 2015, p. 126.

¹⁷ “The ruins”, Olgária Matos notes, “contradict the abstract evolution of time, compensating for the systematic tripartition - before, during, after - via the dynamic *pas encore* (not yet) and *jamais plus* (never again) [...] time before which nothing was accomplished and after which all is lost.” MATOS, Olgária. **Vestígios**. São Paulo: Palas Athena, 1998, p. 83.

However, *Rumor* represents something new in the artist's production. From the beginning it demanded the formation of an interdisciplinary team to take account of the different work involved and the specialities implied in its production. In terms of historical research and the use of archives, the massive scale of the project brought the challenge of bringing together a large number of documents and creating a research methodology that would attend to such ramifications. It was essential that the project could engage disparate elements, such as autopsy, archaeology and ghosts, among many other sets of terms. Thus, it was also necessary to identify *what* and *where* to search, and in which online and physical archives, within a concise calendar. Finally, it was imperative that objective criteria were established that would focus the research, in terms of selection and dismissal. This organizational task fell to the historian Breno de Faria.

It is worth mentioning briefly that, in contemporary historiography, some pioneering authors have contributed to the development of methodological approaches that have significantly influenced the way historians understand the analysis of the past. Marc Bloch, one of the pioneers of the Annales School, advocated a multidisciplinary approach to historical research, emphasizing the need to integrate economic, social, and cultural history to gain a fuller understanding of the past.¹⁸ Bloch advocates the use of diverse primary sources, including official documents, economic records, personal letters and oral testimonies, for the reconstruction of the past. Fernand Braudel, another historian linked to the Annales School, highlights the importance of economic, social, and geographic structures in understanding long-term historical events. In addition to valuing primary sources, he generally argued that history, from a geographical point of view, "appears as the study of socioeconomic formations that persist, that last across generations".¹⁹ Michel Foucault, although best known for his contributions to philosophy and social theory, has also influenced the methodology of historical research. In works such as *Discipline and Punish*²⁰ and *The History of Sexuality*²¹ Foucault emphasizes the analysis of power and power relationships throughout history. To paraphrase Foucault's argument, 'the history of power must be written from below, from the place where it is exerted'. The importance of primary sources is also evident in this author's work. In his analyzes of power, he examines institutional documents, medical records, and

¹⁸ BLOCH, Marc Leopold Benjamin. **Os reis taumaturgos**: o caráter sobrenatural do poder régio: França e Inglaterra. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999. On the Annales School, see Peter BURKE. **A Revolução Francesa da historiografia**: a Escola dos Annales 1929-1989. Nilo Odália (Trad.). São Paulo: Edusp, 1991.

¹⁹ BRAUDEL, Fernand. **O Mediterrâneo e o mundo mediterrânico na época de Filipe II**. Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 1995.

²⁰ FOUCAULT, Michel. **Vigiar e punir**: nascimento da prisão. Raquel Ramallete (Trad.). Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2014.

²¹ FOUCAULT, Michel. **História da sexualidade**. Maria Thereza da Costa Albuquerque, J. A. Guilhon Albuquerque (Trad.). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Paz & Terra, 2015.

other sources to reveal practices of control and discipline in different times and social contexts. E. H. Carr, in *What is History?* discusses the influence of historians' views on past events. He affirms that "the facts don't speak for themselves" and that "the selection and organization of facts involves a judgment that is neither scientific nor objective".²² And Hayden White, in *Metahistory*, discusses the nature of a historical narrative, arguing that historians construct their narratives based on pre-existing narrative structures and that "history is a structure of textual meaning". For White, therefore, the writing of history is a form of literature and historians inevitably mold and interpret the past by way of their narratives.²³ Finally, in this brief set of references - some of which are disparate - it is also worth mentioning the critical interventions of authors such as Jota Mombaça and Denise Ferreira da Silva, who propose thinking about historical events through ruptures with linear space-time determinations and through their continuities or actualisations.²⁴

Returning to the history of urban spaces and life in cities - as mediated by violence - which is of interest to the reflection on the *Rumor* project, the different primary sources related to these themes can play a crucial role in the construction of the historical narrative of the past. Several sources have influenced the approach, such as official and administrative documents (that can provide information on the planning, expansion and transformation of urban spaces over time and reveal the political and social organization of cities, as well as the authorities' attempts to control violence and maintain public order); local newspapers and periodicals (reports of crimes, social conflicts, demonstrations, protests and other forms of urban violence); advertisements, social chronicles and reports on cultural events (which help to reconstruct the daily life and atmosphere of cities in different times). Finally, correspondence, personal diaries and private collections for their testimonial value; photographs and images; literary works. It is, therefore, a complex multi-faceted analysis which, on one hand, seeks to reconstitute events, and on the other, admits that the author's perspective also distorts and fictionalizes the same events.²⁵

²² CARR, Edward Hallett. **Que é história?**. Lucia Mauricio de Alverga (Trad.). Revisão de Maria Yedda Leite Linhares. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Paz e Terra, 2006.

²³ WHITE, Hayden V. **Meta-história: a imaginação histórica do século XIX**. 2. ed. São Paulo, SP: USP, 1995. Giselle Beiguelman, in her *Impulso historiográfico*, tells us: "From this perspective, historiographical art is as much metahistory, in the sense of organizing a narrative that explains its procedures and representations, like New History, for being less concerned with absolute origins than with "multiple lived times"". BEIGUELMAN, op cit, p. 8. The author also evokes LE GOFF, Jacques. *A História Nova*. Eduardo Brandão (Trad.). São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2015.

²⁴ See FERREIRA DA SILVA, op cit. See also FERREIRA DA SILVA, Denise Ferreira da. **A dívida impagável**. São Paulo: Casa do Povo, 2019. MOMBAÇA, Jota. "A plantação cognitiva" in MASP; AFTERALL. **Arte e descolonização**. São Paulo; London: MASP; Afterall, 2020. Available at: <<https://masp.org.br/arte-e-descolonizacao>>. Accessed on: 16th May, 2023.

²⁵ For *Rumor*, the following collections were researched: linked to the Municipality of São Paulo: the Documentation Center (CEDOC) of the Department of Culture of the São Paulo City Hall, Department of Culture, Department of Historical Heritage (Departamento do Patrimônio Histórico), São Paulo

By referring to the relationship between the archive and contemporary art, Hal Foster, in his seminal essay *An archival impulse* wonders why at times “these sources are familiar, drawn from the archives of mass culture, to ensure a readability that can then be disturbed or *détourné*”, while, at others, “they can also be obscure, retrieved in a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory”. Such a counter-memory, the author informs us, is by necessity “fragmentary” - it does not seek to produce a totality - and is organized based on a “material persistence”, that calls for an “interpretation”, unlike, therefore, the mere systematic organization of information in a database.²⁶ Despite noting the propositional potential of such an “archival impulse”, dialectically speaking, Foster does not fail to consider the paranoid character present in the same impulse, which aims to select and arrange information in a way that confirms a given narrative. Although motivated by Benjamin's messianic feeling (see the *Theses on the Concept of History*) of the redemption of narratives obliterated by hegemonic discourses, the paranoid aspect would help to balance revolutionary fantasies and any drive towards totalization. For Foster, this is rather a “will to relate” that aims to produce “new orders of emotional associations” that sometimes prove to be “absurd”.²⁷ Therefore, such a desire is fatally “biased”:

On the one hand, these private archives do question public ones: they can be seen as perverse orders that aim to disturb the symbolic order at large.

Archeology Center, and the online database of Artistic and Cultural Collections of the Municipality of São Paulo - for iconographic and artistic references with representations of Beco do Pinto over time. From the collections linked to the State of São Paulo, within the Department of Public Security, the Civil Police Museum, also known as the Crime Museum, was consulted and, as already mentioned, extensive material was studied in the State Public Archive, in the collection of documents from the Institute of Forensic Medicine (IML) and Crime Records. At the University of São Paulo, consultations were carried out at the Faculty of Medicine, particularly with the “Prof. Carlos da Silva Lacaz” Historical Museum, the Technical-Scientific Museum of the Oscar Freire Institute, and the collection of rare works, which document the beginning of the practice of forensic medicine in São Paulo, at the faculty Library. At the National Library, the Hemeroteca Digital was consulted - a repository for newspapers in which the reporting and dissemination of violent crimes in São Paulo was investigated, with a focus on the central region of the capital, close to Beco do Pinto. Finally, the private collection of periodicals of the Historical São Paulo Institute (Instituto São Paulo Antiga) was consulted, in which we researched magazines and publications on crimes and violence in São Paulo, and the Comic Book Archive (Gibiteca) of the São Paulo Cultural Center (Centro Cultural São Paulo). This entire research trajectory in the collections and archives was registered in photographs of all the textual and iconographic documentation, from the time frame of the period of operation of the Forensic Medicine Office installed in Casa n. 1 (1924-1970), during the time in which an on-site police station operated there (1910-1970). The enormous amount of material raised served as a subsidy for the development of the artistic project.

²⁶ FOSTER, Hal. “An Archival Impulse” in BEIGUELMAN, op cit, p. 7. Foster’s essay was originally published in October, 110, Fall 2004, p. 3-22. See also: MEREWETHER, Charles (Ed.). **The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art**. London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

ENWEZOR, Okwui. **Archive fever: uses of the document in contemporary art**. Nova York: International Center of Photography, 2008.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 41.

On the other hand, they might also point to a general crisis in this social law - or to an important change in its workings whereby the symbolic order no longer operates through apparent totalities [...] Perhaps the paranoid dimension of archival art is the other side of its utopian ambition [...] This move to turn “excavation sites” into “construction sites” [...] suggests a shift away from a melancholic culture that views the historical as little more than the traumatic.”²⁸

It might be said that *Rumor* is without doubt organized around a paranoiac method that looks for traces of sadism and necrophilia in official state documents and in documents from mass culture (as we shall go on to see). Despite this, an unlikely crossover occurs between dystopia and utopia, in the form of creating a public space in which tension related to violence and death could be shared, experienced collectively, loudly and clearly. Visitors were frequently observed sitting on the steps listening to the audio, provisionally converting the steps into a public square.

Note too, however, that the text by Hal Foster used here is accompanied by the provocative work of translation, *detournement*, carried out by Giselle Beiguelman. Beiguelman's translation replaces references to European and American artists with practitioners of what the author calls “historiographical art” (*arte historiográfica*), as an alternative name for “archival art”, or “archival impulse”. In this inventive exercise of translation, Beiguelman, whose own artistic work could also belong within this conceptual framework, analyzes works by other artists such as Tiago Sant’Ana, Rosangela Rennó, Bruno Moreschi and Bianca Turner. She also mentions, in passing, names like Jaime Lauriano, Lais Mhyrra and Andre Penteado, among others.²⁹ We highlight here, in terms of the affinities with *Rumor*, the importance of the material vestige as a “historiographical” source in many works by Tiago Sant’Ana, taking the form of a game of signifiers that are permanently reorganized into new

²⁸ Ibid, p. 41-43.

²⁹ See also the interesting developments of the work carried out by artists at the 3rd Bienal da Bahia (2014), curated by Ana Pato, Ayrson Heráclito and Marcelo Rezende, from the Public Archive of the State of Bahia. In an article that reflects on the experience of this Biennial and the relationship between art and archives, Ana Pato tells us: “It was in the course of one of these surveys that the project took an unexpected turn: by investigating the theme of candomblé objects seized by the police in the first half of the 20th century by the former Police Office for Games and Costumes, the artist Eustáquio Neves discovered the existence of the collection of a deactivated museum in the Technical Police Office of the State of Bahia. The discovery of the archives of the Estácio de Lima Anthropological and Ethnographic Museum completely changed the course of the curatorial project and the research of the artists involved”. PATO, Ana Mattos Porto. “Arte contemporânea e arquivo: Reflexões sobre a 3ª Bienal da Bahia” In **Revista CPC**, São Paulo, n. 20, pp. 112-136. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1980-4466.v0i20>. Accessed on: 1st May, 2023, p. 124-126.

networks of meaning. In Sant'Ana's works, this polysemic operation is visible both in the use he makes of refined sugar - which can cover objects, such as a miniature boat or a pair of shoes - and in the flexibility of the expressive means used by the artist - ranging from performance, video and objects to photography. The color white is yet another signifier which the artist insists on, addressing, at the same time, the post-abolitionist Brazilian policies of whitening (*branqueamento*) the black and brown populations, the historical relationship between sugar and enslaved labor and, furthermore, white fabrics that indicate the continuation of slavery in the form of domestic labor. There is even a certain sadistic component, if we may say so, in the violence staged by the artist who, by using his own body, contemporizes colonial violence. We can also speculate that, dialectically, if we go against the grain and take white as utopia, as we see in many works by Rubem Valentim, a possibility of re-signification opens up, offering perspectives that depart from, but aim to overcome, this traumatic actualization.³⁰

If, on the one hand, attention to the polysemy of material vestiges can activate the “historiographical” interest of an artist such as Tiago Sant'Ana, then it is worth mentioning briefly a project that is based on the archive, but which is totally different in that it focuses on a phenomenology of the body and memory, which is the case of *Les archives du coeur* (2010), by Christian Boltanski.³¹ In this idiosyncratic archive, we find a recording room that collects and permanently expands on an archive of sounds taken from the heartbeats of anonymous people, a room for researching these sounds in a database and a corridor in which the artist proposed a complex synesthetic experience. It is a space immersed in darkness, inside which we can hear the heartbeat of the artist himself. Sound simultaneously fills and alienates the space, physically involving the body, in a way analogous to darkness. The architecture is briefly perceived by a single source of light that pulsates in time with each heartbeat. On the walls, one can see countless black rectangles of mirrored material, which create elusive virtualities and self-representations. We therefore have sound, material and spatial components that demonstrate the intrinsic connection between a phenomenology of memory, time and the body.

Eroticism and morbidity (the sound and the voice)

³⁰ See VALENTIM, Rubem; RANGEL, Daniel (Curator). *Ilê funfun: uma homenagem ao centenário de Rubem Valentim*. São Paulo: Almeida e Dale Galeria, 2022. Pay particular attention to the sculptures from the series *Templo de Oxalá* (1977).

³¹ See <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/boltanski.html>. Accessed on: 1st May, 2023. Part of the work *Coeur*, was originally presented at La Maison Rouge, France, in 2005, and the “archive of the heart” began in the same place, in 2008, and was subsequently exhibited in other places. The installation in the remote location of the island of Teshima, Japan, is intended to be a permanent center for recording and expanding the archive.

Returning to *Rumor*, having gathered the archives, some more subtle details took on greater conceptual relevance, such as the type of handwriting used in the reports and documents, the differences in color, the state of conservation of the documents, the stains and accidents, the fragility, the narrative stylistic resources. In the reports of the Institute of Forensic Medicine consulted, the classifications used in the early decades of the 20th century, and the graphic resources for identifying them, were immediately perceived. The embellished letters present themselves to the contemporary eye in flagrant contrast with the content related to public health, police matters and the recording of various causes of death and countless forms of violence, in an arc that encompasses rape, child abuse, age measurement, accidents with vehicles or industrial machinery, murders, even exams for “pederasty”, to which men of all ages were subjected. Added to this is an excess of literary figuration in some of the reports and researched materials. From its inception it was an important condition of the project to observe these signs of sadism and necrophilia, interpreted within the scope of the project as a mixture between eroticism and morbidity. Many other examples could serve to illustrate such a mixture.

One such example can be found in the wax figures of Augusto Esteves,³² three-dimensional models made largely from the body parts of the sick or cadavers. In these models, the pictorial work - a kind of makeup - lends the pieces a hyperrealism. The materiality of the wax is also subtly related to the tactile perception of the softness and translucency of the skin, imbuing the experience with an unusual phenomenological meaning. Other examples can be seen in the arrangements of artifacts present both in the collection of the Oscar Freire Institute (Instituto Oscar Freire) - currently closed to the public - and in the Civil Police Museum (Museu da Polícia Civil) - known as the Crime Museum. In both collections, objects such as weapons, human remains, reconstructions of scenes and objects are often organized with great attention given to the decorative or hyper-realistic appeal in terms of the furniture, window displays and environments.

What we wish to highlight here is that this excess of description releases an erotic, fetishistic, necrophilic component, which has the same cognitive effect, the same impact on perception, as the sensationalist headlines found in the National Newspaper Archives

³² See at Prof. Carlos da Silva Lacaz Historical Museum, in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of São Paulo, the long-running exhibition *A pele enferma: Augusto Esteves e seu museu de cera*. Available at: <<https://www.fm.usp.br/museu/exposicoes/a-pele-enferma-augusto-esteves-e-seu-museu-de-cera>>. Accessed on 16th May, 2023. Works by the artist can be found in the care of the Medicine Faculty. See: <http://www.pesquisadores.museu.fm.usp.br/index.php/augusto-esteves-1891-1966;isad>. Accessed on: 16th May, 2023.

(Hemeroteca Nacional), in the crime magazines and comic books consulted. The titles of these sensationalist headlines are listed in one of the audios, like a litany of tragedies, violence, blood, corpses and dismembered body parts. This is, of course, a speculative exercise that operates through similarities - the “doctrine of the similar” proposed by Walter Benjamin - in the formation of constellations of objects and meanings.³³

In *Rumor*, the use of audio and voice served, therefore, to emphasize and exaggerate this erotic morbidity. To make this possible, the documents - at times, literal, at others, fictional - were reproduced in voiceovers performed by professionals such as voice actors, broadcasters and even a professional who makes audio recordings for the “carro da pamonha” (door-to-door food sales) and other sound announcements from vehicles on city streets. As a result, the audio covered a wide range of associations with everyday sounds. In most cases, the sound style was dissociated from the narrated content. For example, an account of torture inflicted in basements during the military dictatorship is transposed onto a recording of the sound of a telephone on hold, whose soundtrack and tone of voice are distinctly corporate and motivational; the technical description of an autopsy is narrated by a professional dubbing artist, which results in an overload of drama and emotion; newspaper headlines are turned into radio advertising, with distortions and pop sound effects; a story of cannibalism is related as a radio soap opera and children’s song. These and other displacements form the critical and poetic operation of *Rumor*. This work would not have been possible without the invaluable collaboration of Renato Gama, Ronaldo Gama and Kauê Gama (Pele Preta), Manuel Fabrício, Cristiane Fernandes, Paola Molinari, and Guilherme Soares Dias (for the journalistic text he wrote especially for the project and the loan of his voice for the narration), Manoel Gonçalves, and Fred Studio Produtora de Jingles and Voicetel Comunicações. Credit is also given to the valuable contribution of physician and professor Paulo Saldiva (Faculty of Medicine of the University of São Paulo) and the writer Santiago Nazarian, with texts commissioned for the project.³⁴

³³ Walter Benjamin tells us: “It is not that the past sheds its light on the present, or that the present sheds its light on the past; more than that, the image is that in which that-which-has-passed comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, the image is the dialectic in an immobilized moment. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, continuous, the relation of that-which-has-passed to the now is dialectical: it is not a question of a progression, but of an image suddenly emerging. Only dialectical images are genuine (that is, not archaic); and the place where we find them is language”. BENJAMIN, op. cit, p. 492. See also the essays *Doctrine of the Similar* and *Theses on the Philosophy of History* in BENJAMIN, Walter. **Magia e técnica, arte e política**: Ensaio sobre a literatura e a história da cultura. Sergio Paulo Rouanet (Trad.), Jeanne Marie Gagnebin (Preface). São Paulo, Ed. Brasiliense, 1987, p. 108-113 and p. 222-232, respectively. Acknowledgements to the artist Flora Leite for suggesting the *Doctrine of the Similar*.

³⁴ Sadly a collaboration with Márcia Fernandes, known by her artistic name Márcia Sensitiva, did not come to pass. She was invited to narrate her perception of the spirits and ghosts of Beco do Pinto. The same is true of the invitation given to Rubens Francisco Lucchetti, author of pulp fiction and

Horror and gore

“Horror” comes from the Latin verb *horreo*, which refers to fear which provokes shivers (felt in hair and in the contraction of the skin), as Xavier Aldana Reyes reminds us, connecting a narrative genre with physical sensations produced in the body.³⁵ According to Aldana Reyes, the experience of cinematographic horror deals with intense feelings produced somatically, reflexively, in the spectator's body. For *Rumor* and for the recent set of works by Renato Pera, which draw energy from this cinematographic genre, this idea is valuable, as it allows recoding the perceptive experience in terms of a phenomenology of hyper-intensity and threat. Having a body means to be subjected to a series of violent experiences in our present produced by neoliberal, necropolitical and spectacular regimes, and this conjunction has been brilliantly analyzed by Sayak Valencia, in *Capitalismo Gore*.³⁶ The critical literature on horror cinema points to very important interpretations for this reflection. On the one hand, we find the attempt to deal with the shock effect of abject images and their spectacularization (Aldana Reyes and Linda Williams, to name just two prominent authors). On the other hand, we think about horror in terms of its ability to disfigure "reality", through the use of eschatology, the abject, monsters, aberrant formations (social, bodily and biological), and the release of repressed conflicts of race, gender, sexuality, class, among others. It is as if the horror film, when produced as a moving photographic image, would use the relationship of verisimilitude both to mirror “reality” – establishing a realistic space-time, so to speak – and to introduce dissonant heterogeneous elements into it. In other words, “reality” could be overturned, tested, fissured, made implausible, horrifying. The effect that interests us here is the promise of catastrophe, the latent presence of a lack of control, and the aim that returns us to the “reality” of everyday experience. That is, understanding

horror comics, responsible for writing scripts for cinema and television by director José Mojica Marins, as well as scripts for film maker Ivan Cardoso. The narrative genre of national horror in the 20th century is undoubtedly associated with Lucchetti.

³⁵ ALDANA REYES, Xavier. **Consuming mutilation**: affectivity and corporeal transgression on stage and screen. PhD Thesis, Lancaster University, 2012, p. 12.

³⁶ VALENCIA, Sayak. **Capitalismo Gore**. Santa Cruz de Tenerife (España): Editorial Melusina, 2010. A more technical and generic possible definition - and for the same reason, somewhat superficial - of the term gore might be: “For some, the explicit depiction of bodily fluids, mutilations and eviscerations involves an appeal to base and degraded elements of human character. However, for theorists and critics of the horror genre, the effects of gore relate more to a fascination with the body and its workings; a repressed or marginalized fascination in other more decorous areas of our culture [attention to the morbid aspect of this fascination and the physical concreteness presupposed by the term “body”]. In turn, fans of the genre seem more interested in appreciating the makeup techniques that produce certain effects than just witnessing nauseating moments. For these fans there is a gore aesthetic in horror cinema”. HUTCHINGS, Peter. **Historical Dictionary of Horror Cinema**. Lanham; Toronto; Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2008, p. 147-148.

everyday experience as polymorphous, erotic and perverse like a monster, and implausible in its appearance of normality and hygiene.³⁷

Humor, parody, debauchery, allegory, precariousness, violence and humiliation are elements synthesized in the notion of “*terrir*” a key concept for Renato Pera’s reflections, both in *Rumor* and in other previous projects. For example, *Sangue* (2020) consists of a sound installation in collaboration with José Mojica Marins, known for his character Zé do Caixão.³⁸ Mojica narrates, in his iconic voice, a traditional recipe for chicken in blood sauce, bringing an uncanny quality to the recipe and the installation space. Other examples appear in the project *Morto vivo* (2022), a performance, and *Rigor Mortis* (2021), an immersive and interactive virtual reality project. “*Terrir*”, a singularly Brazilian concept -a portmanteau of the words, *terror* and *rir*, meaning laugh -, seeks to name the slapstick comedy full of blood, organs, sex, humiliation, precariousness and humor, exposed to the tropical harsh light.

In the end, Renato Pera's choice to focus on horror and humor represents an attitude towards the excess of determination and meaning in the cultural sphere and, in particular, in the visual arts. The artist favors nonsense, contradictions and ambiguities, both in the themes and in the form of his works. That is, in the objects, materials and surfaces that are put into circulation in the works in direct relation with their social, cultural and geopolitical contexts. As for the means employed, the artist opts for experimentation that is always open and non-hierarchical, refusing identification with just one language or style.

The circulation of the work *is* work

In *Rumor*, the graphic design, the video documentation and the texts included in the catalog were taken as elements for intense experimentation. Posters, flyers and the catalog were objects of constant creative investment, in collaboration with the artist and designer Mauro

³⁷ A range of authors including Robin Wood, Mark Jancovich, Noël Carroll, Harry Benshoff, Barbara Creed and Jack Halberstam have sought in horror a key for thinking about interstitial situations that threaten to undo the normative fabric of reality and for thinking about of a symbolic circulation of socially repressed elements.

³⁸ Zé do Caixão appears for the first time in 1964, in the film *À meia-noite levarei sua alma*, conceived and directed by José Mojica Marins. He will play the leading role in two other sequences *Esta noite encarnarei no teu cadáver* (1967) and *Encarnação do demônio* (2008). He will also appear briefly in *O estranho mundo de Zé do Caixão* (1968), and in *Ritual dos Sádicos* (1969) - only released in 1982, under the title *O despertar da besta*, a change which sought to pass the censorship of the military regime - *Exorcismo negro* (1974), a cine-biography *Demônios e maravilhas* (1976-1989), and *Delírios de um anormal* (1978). In addition, he was seen publicly on television, product labels, carnival floats, film launches, and at parties. Mojica's public figure would come to totally identify with his character, which penetrated the popular Brazilian imagination strongly. See the biography organized by BARCINSKI, André; FINOTTI, Ivan. **Maldito**: a vida e o cinema de José Mojica Marins, o Zé do Caixão. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 1998.

de Souza. As Leandro Muniz once said in a conversation with Renato Pera, “the circulation of work *is* work”. That is, the circulating image of a work produces textuality and, therefore, meaning, beyond the temporal and physical limits of the exhibition. The artist is both interested in the dispersion of the work, while at the same time, circulation underlines the existence of a context bestowed with a certain institutionality. *Rumor* intended to materialize this context, to dramatize it. A decision was made, therefore, to incorporate graphic codes - the relationship between text and image - from advertising for horror films, series and comics. The same procedure informed the video documentation of *Rumor*, in collaboration with Paulo Pereira (Teia Produções). In the video and the virtual tour, the three-dimensional space was digitally reconstituted, interposed with testimonies from the artist, whose image is disfigured, in the manner of television interviews with anonymous witnesses.

In terms of the texts present in this catalog, there are contributions from Leandro Muniz, the psychoanalyst Luiz Fernando Carrijo da Cunha, pathologist and professor Paulo Saldiva, journalist and editor of *Guia Negro*, Guilherme Soares Dias and from writer Santiago Nazarian. The latter three authors produced texts that were dramatized in audio for *Rumor*. In the end, some of the texts for the audio recordings can also be found transcribed in the catalog. By way of conclusion, it is worth noting that the catalog, although presenting a totalizing effort, will thankfully fail in this endeavor. It will serve, at best, as an allegorical fragment, a tiny constellation, that seeks to bring up to date the elements in the project, without attempting a translation or a wholesale reconstitution. This impulse for the actualization of the latent images, that is, of dialectic and polysemic synthesis of the “that-which-has-passed” with the “now”, guided ever stage and process of *Rumor*, opening up each aspect of the project to experimentation with diverse languages.