


# Conviviality and the Institutional



4Cs - From Conflict to Conviviality  
through Creativity and Culture



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# 13 SHOTS

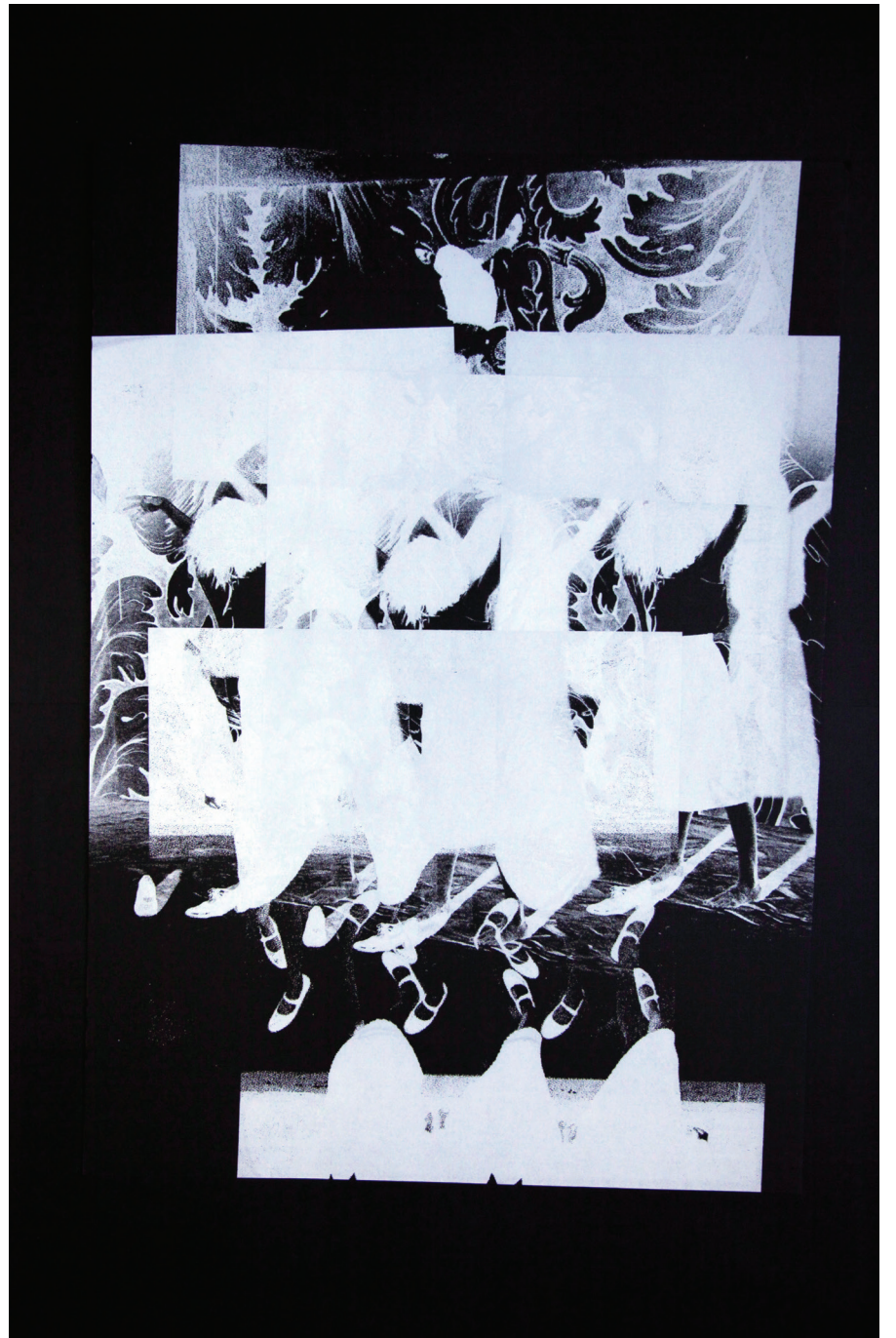
Image, latency, performativity

Visual Essay by Aimée Zito Lema  
Text by Ana Cachola, Daniela Agostinho, Luísa Santos









Memory, recording, and the intergenerational transmission of events through material history and the human body are central to the work of Aimée Zito Lema (1982, Amsterdam). Both conceptually and formally informed by these discourses, the silkscreens featured in this visual essay belong to the solo exhibition *13 shots*, held at Gulbenkian Museum's Project Space, which proposes a critical approach to memory-building processes.

The title of Aimée Zito Lema's artistic project, *13 Shots*, was inspired by Clarice Lispector's short-story 'Mineirinho', which deals with an event that shocked Brazilian society in 1962: beyond the pale of any legal framework, the police gunned down a murderer called Mineirinho with 13 shots. The title of the exhibition was chosen well before the recent case of police violence in Brazil in March 2018, which claimed the life of Rio de Janeiro's councillor Marielle Franco, a black, lesbian, feminist, human rights activist who was critical of police action. The recent memory of this case of necropolitical violence thus haunts the exhibition's title, which the artist had borrowed from Lispector to reflect about images as devices of violence. The *13 shots* of "Mineirinho" inspired the editing of the video installation in the exhibition, which is composed of exactly thirteen shots.

By exploring the semantic duality of the word shot (meaning both the firing of a weapon and the plane of an image), Zito Lema's project examines the histories contained in, but also obliterated by images, and the need to deepen, complement, and subvert the plane of visibility through the memory of bodies, gestures, and voices. After all, images exert violence both through what they represent and through what they hide. On the one hand, it is (also) through images that certain bodies are deemed human, and worth protecting, while others are deemed superfluous, dispensable, and subject to violence and invisibility, as suggested by Judith Butler and, more recently, by Alexander G. Weheliye.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, due to their own phenomenology (unavoidably incapable of conveying the corporeality of life, except through evocation or absence), images often reduce or flatten out the material experience and sensory dimension of bodies, i.e., the sensorial experience that supersedes the sense of vision (be it tactile, aural, olfactory or that of taste) but also experiences that occur on the molecular, genetic, or even elemental level.

This reflection on the work of images, and their way of simultaneously enabling and confining the transmission of memory,

underlies Aimée Zito Lema's artistic project, which began with a residency at Rua das Gaivotas 6 in Lisbon. During this period, the artist developed a research into the layered structure of memory through two different interests: the vernacular processes that mediate the intergenerational memory of the April 25<sup>th</sup> 1974 Revolution in Portugal, in particular oral memory; and the way we interact with images of the past through narrative fabulation and bodily engagement.

Zito Lema's process is often performance-based, not necessarily in the sense of performance as an artistic genre or medium, but rather as a method that solicits the physical, gestural, vocal involvement of different subjects to jointly experiment around a topic, concern, or object. During her residency, this research was developed together with adolescents from two theatre groups from the Lisbon metropolitan area – the Filipa de Lencastre High School Theatre Group and the Grupo de Teatro do Oprimido (GTO/The Oppressed Theatre Group -OTG), who explored different modes of memory transmission through the body.

In the context of a workshop at the Filipa de Lencastre High School, Aimée Zito Lema suggested the adolescents in the group to ask their parents and grandparents about their memories of April 25<sup>th</sup>, and to subsequently narrate, impersonate even, the memories that had been transmitted through the family. Some of the adolescents' parents had not experienced the Revolution directly, so the stories they transmitted to their children had been heard from previous generations, leading to a third hand staging of those memories. Such a retelling process showed how vernacular stories and affective attachments fill in the gaps of social memory via oral transmission, imagination, and fabulation, thus complementing the memories transmitted through historical or pedagogical means.

With GTO, Aimée Zito Lema's exercises most clearly bridged the two interest strands, the transmission of the April 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution across generations, and the way we engage with the archived image in the present. During the residency period, Zito Lema undertook research at the archives of the ACARTE, the former Animation, Art Creation, and Art Education Service of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (1984-2002), a department responsible for devising cultural and artistic activities that took place beyond the Foundation's museum space. Zito Lema photographed the photographs stored in the archives of the ACARTE, mostly images of performances that took place in Sala Polivalente throughout the course of two decades, and printed them out in large format. In the workshop with GTO, which was held in the same room where the photographed performances had taken place, participants were asked to describe the content

<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler (2004), *Precarious Life. The Power of Mourning and Violence*, London: Verso. Alexander G. Weheliye (2014), *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, Durham: Duke University Press.

of the images, and to ask and answer questions about the people, spaces, and situations depicted in them. Participants thus spoke to the prints and imagined stories to fill-in the narrative gaps of the photographic image. This exploration of the memories contained in the photographic archive culminated with the adolescents wearing the prints of the archive images, in an attempt to embody the memories of others, as well as the memory of the institution, which were unknown and distant from them. Through this narrative and bodily engagement with the photographs, another relation to the archive was rehearsed, one that foregrounds the possibility of embodying memories, or of the body becoming an archive of sorts. An archive that moves, speaks, touches and feels, but also an archive that, through embodiment, becomes aware of its textuality, its gaps and creases, as well as the marks of its own action in the world.

The group was then asked to tell the history of the April 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution, a history that is socially transmitted to them only in a pedagogical context. Through this exercise, the history of this event became entangled with personal and family memories, and braided together with historical inaccuracies that became fabrications. The work (with the two groups) revealed how memory mediation is a performative and transforming process that always acts on the transmitted past, a past that emerges in the present in different forms and strategies according to the enunciation contexts.

Aimée Zito Lema's silkscreens in this visual essay, based on archival photographs of the ACARTE, establish a parallel between the photographic process and the mnemonic process, which share the notion of latency. Etymologically, latent refers to something concealed or secret. From the Latin *latens* (nominative *latens*), the present participle of *latere* means 'to be hidden, to conceal itself, to veil itself', which in turn relates to the Greek *lethe* (forgetfulness, sleepiness) and *lethargos* (lethargic, forgotten, asleep). The notion of latency is, therefore, in a transition zone between the visible and the invisible, between memory and oblivion. In the photographic process, latency refers to the period in which an image is at the point of revealing itself but is not yet quite visible. Similarly, in the field of psychoanalysis, the 'latency period' is understood as a phase during which desires are formed, without, however, manifesting or coming to fruition, becoming visible only through oblique strategies such as repression or fantasy. Juxtaposing different photographic images, Zito Lema's silkscreens perfectly represent the layers that give shape and texture to memory transmission processes; processes made of lacunae and fissures containing experiences that were never seen or articulated, but remain in storage, in wait.

As an instance of the past that is revealed in the present, memory contains in itself this tensional relationship. On the one hand, it can be said that memory always requires a cohabitation of temporalities that form a new image, in which different times overlap. On the other hand, memory is also a place of conflict between what was and what is, between remembrance and forgetfulness. By articulating these tensions, Zito Lema's silkscreens may be understood as dialectical images in Walter Benjamin's sense: the imaged territory in which a past moment insinuates itself into the now, and only there, in that subjective moment. The existence of an image of the past does not amount to knowing how that past actually occurred; one can only capture those memories as they flash in a moment of danger<sup>2</sup>. The moment of danger is when the image of the past becomes visible before vanishing forever. In Zito Lema's silkscreens, however, this image of the past never really becomes visible, but it also never really vanishes, remaining materially stored and suspended in latency. It is through this process that the complex temporality of images and memories persists as unfinished process. And it is only in this suspension that it may be able to act upon the present.

<sup>2</sup> BENJAMIN, Walter (1999a), *Illuminations*, London: Pimlico.

13 shots is the result of a residency at Rua das Gaivotas 6. It is one of the eight chapters of the exhibition produced in the context of 4Cs: From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture.

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**Luísa Santos and  
Ana Cachola**  
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**Daniela Agostinho** is a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen, where she is affiliated with the 'Uncertain Archives' research project, funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research. The project approaches big data phenomena through the lens of cultural theories of the archive, emphasising the epistemological, ethical and political implications of digitisation and datafication. Her research is concerned with representations of historical violence, from colonialism to contemporary warfare, with a particular focus on feminist and decolonial perspectives on visual and digital culture. She currently works on the ethics of digitisation of colonial archives, the visual culture of remote warfare, in particular drone warfare, and cultural theories of big data, in particular feminist and post and decolonial critiques of datafication. She was awarded a Mads Øvlisen postdoctoral fellowship by the Novo Nordisk Foundation to conduct a practice-based project on the ethics of care of digital colonial archives (2018-2020).

She studied Media and Culture Studies in Lisbon and Berlin. She holds a PhD (2014) in Culture Studies from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa [Catholic University of Portugal] with a dissertation on the photographic records of Ravensbrück women's concentration camp, in which she discussed the relation between visibility, archival reason, gender and disciplinary power. Before joining the University of Copenhagen, she was a lecturer in the MA and PhD programmes of Culture Studies at Catholic University of Portugal, where she was also executive coordinator of the Lisbon Consortium programme and the Lisbon Summer School for the Study of Culture, and project manager of Culture@Work, a platform for collaborative cultural exchange, co-funded by the Culture programme of the European Union (2013-2015). She was also founding editor of *Diffractions - Graduate Journal for the Study of Culture* (2012-2017).

She is a member of numerous research networks, such as the network on 'Drones and Aesthetics' sponsored by the Danish Research Council, and 'Algorithmic Software Cultures', funded by the Danish Agency of Science and Higher Education. Her recent publications include 'The Uncertainties of the Uncertain Image' (with Ulrik Ekman, Nanna Thylstrup & Kristin Veel), *Digital Creativity*, 24:1, 2017; 'Big Data, Time and the Archive', *Symploké*, 2016, and the volume *Panic and Mourning: The Cultural Work of Trauma* (with Elisa Antz and Cátia Ferreira, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012). She is also an independent curator, having recently curated the Lisbon leg of Artists' Film International 2017 (at MAAT, Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology), as well as solo shows by Rita GT (2017, Lisbon, with Pipi Colonial collective) and Aimée Zito Lema (2018, Lisbon, with Luísa Santos and Ana Cachola).

Visual artist **Aimée Zito Lema** (1982, Amsterdam) engages in her practice with questions around social memory and the body as an agent of resistance. Zito Lema studied at the National University of the Arts (former IUNA), Buenos Aires, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, and obtained a Master in Artistic Research from the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Imprinted Mater* at Looeirsgracht 60, Amsterdam (2017) and *A Series of Gestures* at Kunsthall, Trondheim (2017). Group exhibitions include *Idiorritmias* and *Muestreo #1*, both at MACBA, Barcelona (2017), the 11<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennale (2016), Dorothea von Stetten Art Award, Kunst Museum Bonn (2016), *Hors-Pistes: L'art de la Révolte* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016), *Movimento Contínuo*, Hangar – Centro de Investigação Artística, Lisboa (2017), and *Prometheus Unbound*, Steirischer Herbst, Graz (2017).

She was artist in residence at the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (2015-16), a long-term collaborator with Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht (2013-17) as well as artist in residency at *Castrum Peregrini*, Amsterdam (2017), and most recently at *Rua das Gaivotas*, 6, Lisbon, in the frame of the project *4CS – From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture*, co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union (2018).