

Tatiane Rebelatto¹

**Between
installations,
sculptures,
performances
and teaching of
the arts:** interview
with artist-teacher
Andréa Stanislav²

Entre instalações, esculturas,
performances e ensino das artes:
entrevista com a professora-artista
Andréa Stanislav

Entre instalaciones, esculturas,
performances y enseñanza de las
artes: entrevista con la profesora-
artista Andréa Stanislav

Abstract

This text³ is an interview with the teacher and visual artist Andréa Stanislav. First, she speaks about the beginning of her career in Visual Arts, the schools she attended, the artists she had classes with and her interest in photography, installation and performances. After commenting on her work as a teacher in an institution that has an interdisciplinary path, she talks a little about the challenges of teaching sculpture classes using digital platforms. In the end, she sends some images of the current work, related to the pandemic context.

Key-words: Teaching of visual arts. Artistic production. Teacher-artist.

Resumo

O presente texto trata-se de uma entrevista com a professora e artista visual Andréa Stanislav. Primeiramente, ela contou sobre o início da sua carreira nas Artes Visuais, as escolas que frequentou, os artistas com os quais teve aula e seu interesse pela fotografia, instalação e performances. Após, comentou sobre sua atuação como docente em uma instituição que possui um percurso interdisciplinar e contou um pouco sobre os desafios de ministrar aulas de escultura por meio das plataformas digitais. Ao final, enviou algumas imagens do trabalho atual, o qual se relaciona com o contexto pandêmico.

Palavras-chave: Ensino das artes visuais. Produção artística. Professora-artista.

Resumen

Este texto es una entrevista con la profesora y artista visual Andréa Stanislav. Primero, habló sobre el comienzo de su carrera en Artes Visuales, las escuelas a las que asistió, los artistas con los que tenía clases y su interés por la fotografía, la instalación y las performances. Posteriormente, comentó su desempeño como docente en una institución que tiene una trayectoria interdisciplinaria y contó un poco sobre los desafíos de impartir clases de escultura a través de plataformas digitales. Al final, envió algunas imágenes del trabajo actual, que está relacionado con el contexto de la pandemia.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de las artes visuales. Producción artística. Profesora-artista.

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³ This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) - Finance Code 001.



Fig. 1 - Teacher-artist Andréa Stanislav. Photo: Chaz Mottinger. Source: University Indiana (2018).

Andréa Stanislav was born in Chicago, but lives between New York and St. Petersburg, Russia. She completed her degree in Fine Arts at the Art Institute of Chicago and her master's degree, also in Fine Arts, at Alfred University in New York. In addition to traveling through these places producing and exhibiting her works, she is an Associate Professor of Sculpture at the Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture and Design, at Indiana University in Bloomington, USA, a school where three disciplines are joined together in order to offer an interdisciplinary training. When she joined the university as a teacher, as Andréa commented at the interview, interdisciplinary is still out of academia and added that "We are at a point where there is a need for a new definition of what the visual arts can be, [...]". (STANISLAV, 2018). The articulation of different areas and expressions is also present in her production as an artist. In her interventions, most of them carried out in public spaces, she mixes performance, photography, sculpture and digital media.



Fig. 2 - Installation Convergence Infinité that composed the individual exhibition held at the Saint Louis Art Museum / Eua, 2016. Photo: Tony Carosella. Source: Andréa Stanislav (2020).

The contact with the teacher-artist took place through the Pushkinskaya-10 cultural center in Saint Petersburg, Russia, which has an artistic residency program called SPB ArtResidence, which welcomes artists from all over the world. On the occasion, planning a stay at the cultural center and following the virtual exhibitions of current resident artists, I became interested in the work of some teacher-artists who were participating. Upon contacting them to conduct an interview, Andréa returned saying that she would accept to answer few questions. The brief interview was structured around questions involving the beginning of her journey through Visual Arts, her performance as a teacher-artist and, above all, her performance in the artistic and academic environment in the midst of the pandemic. I am grateful to the teacher-artist Andréa who, in the midst of this context of social isolation and the work overload with the end of the school year and also in the midst of her artistic production, took the time to answer some questions. Thank you!

Tatiane Rebelatto: Could you tell us a little about your trajectory in Visual Arts? Where did you study and what artistic expressions were you most interested in?

Andréa Stanislav: My interest in the visual arts started at an early age, I can remember drawing obsessively by the age of three. My mother had coffee table art books on painting and photography especially ones on Bruegel and Bocsh and Georgia O'Keeffe that I looked at obsessively. My mother also strongly encouraged me to draw and by the time I was in kindergarten my teacher let me draw instead of going out to play with the other children during recess, this is something I continued

to do throughout grade school. By the time I was in third grade my teacher suggested that I study with a private art tutor. I did. There I learned how to paint landscapes and working watercolor.

I grew up in a family of musicians, and it was expected that I would go to music school. I was a child musician, trombonist. When it came time to go to college I had a scholarship to the School of Art Institute of Chicago, so I attended the Art Institute for my BFA (instead of going to music school). At the Art Institute I studied with noted Chicago image painter Carl Wirsum for four years, and studied four years of renaissance art history with Sir Robert Loescher. Through Prof. Loescher I met the avant-garde filmmaker Kenneth Anger. In addition to painting and art history I engaged in performance art and photography and ended up graduating with an exhibition in ceramic installation.

After graduating, I immediately started exhibiting my large-scale installations and had my first solo show at the age of 24 in New York then at the 14 Sculptors Gallery, and Amos Enos Gallery. At this time I was also engaged professionally in performance art and part of the Rubber Bullet performance group, and was working as an exhibits artist at the Field Museum of Natural History, where I learned how to create 3D scientific illustrations and mold making and casting. I moved to New York City and then received a full scholarship to the School of Art and Design at Alfred University, graduating with a MFA concentration in sculpture and video installation. I had always been strongly informed by cinematographers like Antonioni, Fellini and Tarkovsky¹. The bread mix of cinema, music and architecture became key informants to my immersive installation work.

TR: Regarding your teaching career, you are linked to Indiana University in Bloomington², at the Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture and Design, a school that defines itself as interdisciplinary. Which subjects do you teach and in which course? Can you comment on the training path of students at that institution?

AS: I teach Public Art and Intervention, MFA seminars, Installation and Introduction to Sculpture classes. The students graduate in either Fine Arts, Design or Architecture. We are creating more hybrid classes that combine the creative disciplines.

TR: For you, what is the importance and contribution of this interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary teaching?

AS: Transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching is in response to, and furthers the evolving creative practices of the present — the way we think, question, perceive

¹ Filmmakers: Federico Fellini (1920-1993 / Italian), Michelangelo Antonioni (1912-2007 / Italian), Andrei Tarkovsky (1932- 1986 / Russian).

² This university was founded in 1820 by the American state, eight years later it was called Indiana College and in 1830 it was renamed Indiana University. According to information on the institution's website, schools linked to the arts started in 1920. The first was the music school, after the university's art museum was created. In 2016 this museum was renamed, becoming the Museum of Art Sidney and Lois Eskenazi, honoring the couple who financed the renovation of the site. That same year, the Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture and Design emerged. It is currently divided into 14 areas: painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, printmaking, fashion design, interiors, products and comprehensive design. There are also the areas of ceramics, metallurgy and jewelry design, digital art, fibers and merchandising. Information about the university and the art school can be found at: <https://soaad.indiana.edu/about/centers/index.html>.

and project manifest the world today.

TR: In the postgraduate course to which I am linked, there are several studies that deal with the performance of the teacher-artist. These are discussions around the performance and training of teachers who are also visual artists. It would be interesting to know how you perceive yourself, how you combine artistic making with the teaching of visual arts. How is this relationship for you and the institution you work in?

AS: I have always identified myself as an artist-teacher, in that to teach fine arts you need to live and experience the discipline that you are teaching first hand, otherwise I have no business being in the classroom. The performance of teaching and being an artist in my courses is taught from my life and professional experience. I instill in my students that they have a responsibility as an artist to respond to the time that they live in through their practice, well making others aware of the present through their art. I also instill in them that attending arts school is the beginning but their education is never ending but continues outside of the classroom in the professional world working at museums, galleries, productions and in artists' studios.

I have my students engaged as professional artists in their studios, entertaining critiques combined with rigorous observation of art while questioning why they are making and what is their art contributing to the larger conversation. My studio and classroom currently does not merge in a physical experience because they are in two different cities. But I make my students aware of my creative practice and projects through lectures and slideshows. In past institutions where I have taught my students have been part of my studio practice working as research and studio assistants. Some of my colleagues are artists and teachers, others are dedicated arts educators. Some of my colleagues teach enter and transdisciplinary classes some do not.

TR: As for your role as a teacher in the midst of the pandemic caused by Covid-19, what else has changed? Can you tell us a little bit about what your classes were like before the pandemic? What are the difficulties in teaching subjects in which the practice and contact between students are mediated by technologies? How did the students react to this situation, that is, how are they dealing with social isolation?

AS: Teaching sculpture is a hands on practice dealing with space and sometimes immersive experiences. Before the pandemic the crits were central to the classes, with the pandemic the crits were still central to the classes that were conducted by video-conferences. This past semester was compounded by the fact that our sculpture department was moving and due to CV 19 was delayed until halfway through the semester so the students did not have studios to work, even though the courses were listed as a hybrid course. I created projects that focused on land art and performance, forcing the students to work outside and with found objects and performance, in addition there was a strong focus on the history of sculpture, lectures in contemporary sculpture and a focus on the discourse of documentation. I found

teaching online for my MFA seminars to be relatively successful in terms of discussion but the ability to see the material detail of their projects was difficult. I found students to be very eager to participate, but also did suffer often from depression, needing to take days off.

TR: Observing your works that involve projections, sculptures, installations in public spaces and also participation in artistic residencies, how has it been for you as an artist, to produce in the midst of social isolation? What are the challenges and difficulties that you encountered in your creative process?

AS: I've been working on several museum exhibitions during the pandemic, so the ability to be in my studio more often has been quite productive. Ordering materials and supplies has taken more time as certain materials are not being produced in great amounts, or are experiencing a shortage of supply — such as acrylics. It has also been difficult not to have the help available in my studio to work.

TR: Are you developing any production in this period of isolation? If so, can you tell us a little bit about the work and show us some pictures?

AS: I am working on a solo exhibition — Surmatants (Mars Rising) for the Mattress Factory Museum a Contemporary Art in Pittsburg. This will be an immersive media installation in collaboration with NYC contemporary composer Jesse Gelaznik, and the Tamburitzan Dance troupe. We recently finished shooting the multichannel video component for the installation, informed by in the pandemic experience and Bernt Notke's Surmatan Painting of a dance macabre³.

Below are some images of the work mentioned.

³ The Macabre Dance is a painting where a group of people dance around tombs. This work was done by the German painter Bernt Notke, at the end of the 15th century, in the chapel of Saint Nicholas in Estonia. Source: <https://brewminate.com/danse-macabre-the-medieval-dance-of-death/>.



Fig. 3 and 4 - The Macabre Dance, 2020. Source: Andréa Stanislav (2020).



Fig. 5 - *The Macabre Dance*, detail, 2020. Source: Andréa Stanislav (2020).

Submetido em: 17/12/2020
Aceito em: 19/12/2020