

THEMATIC SECTION:
ART EXPRESSIONS
AND CONTEMPORARY
SUBJECTIVITIES

Educação
& realidade

Markings in School: *pichação*, graffiti, and subjectivities in art education

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ABSTRACT – Markings in School: *pichação*, graffiti, and subjectivities in art education. How can images produce students as subjects belonging, or not, to a certain place? This issue led us to what is known as *pichação*, to understand the processes of subject constitution amid discourses of appreciation and of devaluation of this form of expression and of marking in the city. We work from a poststructuralist perspective, inspired by Michel Foucault's studies, to affirm that we are the result of discourses crossed by power relations. Thus, *pichação* becomes a matter of different discourses immersed in the games of truth and falsehood that end up constituting this object of thought.

Keywords: Pichação. Graffiti. Art. Subjectivities. Schools.

RESUMO – Marcas na Escola: *pichação*, grafite e subjetividades no ensino com arte. Como as imagens podem produzir alunos e alunas como sujeitos pertencentes, ou não, a um determinado lugar? Essa questão nos levou para o que é conhecido como *pichação* para entender os processos de constituição dos sujeitos em meio a discursos de valorização e desvalorização dessa expressão e marca na cidade. Trabalhamos com a perspectiva pós-estruturalista, com especial inspiração nos estudos de Michel Foucault para pensar que somos resultado de discursos atravessados por relações de poder. Assim, a *pichação* torna-se um problema de diferentes discursos imersos nos jogos de verdadeiro e falso que acabam por constituir esse objeto de pensamento.

Palavras-chave: Pichação. Arte. Subjetividades. Escolas.

Introduction

We aim to discuss the act of looking at cities and schools as a research possibility¹. Hence, this article – which is part of an investigation seeking to shine a light on the teaching practices of art teachers in their image and subjectivity constructions with their students – endeavors to address this process of looking beyond schools, focusing on looking at the markings of the city. However, thinking about our look at something which unsettles us is even more enticing when we question that which looks back at us. To better understand this relationship between looking and individuals, Nelson Brissac Peixoto (2003) indicates two conditions for this act. The first, traditionally, happens when we seek an identity, an intrinsic meaning of things in the relationships between individuals and landscapes, specifically while traditional cities were meant to be looked at closely, by someone who could slowly walk and observe things thoroughly. According to Peixoto (2003), this is unlikely to happen today, since the communication complexity of these landscapes exceeds the supposition of a reality anteceding the look. Thus, Peixoto (2003, p. 361) affirms we must know how that which currently presents itself to our look is constituted.

The second condition for looking considers the contemporary individual, a metropolitan passenger, affected by the city's own transformations – such as the urban structure, the architecture, the means of communication and of transportation – which modify the perception and the constitution of a reality. Thus, it is as if the individual might experience and look at a different, faster, and flatter city. As Peixoto (2003, p. 361) affirms, for those moving in a vehicle, speed results in a flattening of the landscape. The faster the movement, the less depth things have, the flatter they become, as if placed against a wall, against a screen. According to this author, the contemporary city corresponds to this new look – its buildings and inhabitants are going through the same mode of enshallowment, making the urban landscape akin to outdoor advertisements. The world is turned into a setting, the individuals into characters – a cinema-city in which everything is image.

Hence, as the contemporary individuals we are, we find ourselves in constant movement, in a fast pace, wanting to pay attention to everything, but missing some details. Taking these ideas as enticers, we undertake a *research-travel*, one which encompasses a focus on the individual as a passenger with a traditional look, observing the details, trying to see the representation of things, even though the city can no longer offer this time or the meaning of a traditional representation. How is school placed in this movement and this encounter of the look with the markings which constitute this space? What are the challenges and possibilities located in the process of unschooling the look so we can have a different perspective? How are school and art implicated in this process?

It is in displacing the look from the city to the school that we want to maintain a sense of surprise and question that which we look at with-

out realizing, to highlight the markings in the school for the teaching of art. From these objectives, we undertook a research in the Postgraduation Program in Education at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) investigating the following question: how are individuals produced by images attached to surfaces in a dust-like, ephemeral manner? Our initial interest was to investigate what is commonly known as *pichação*², which emerges as a problematizing aspect for the understating of these processes. Based on the perspective of problematization as an investigation methodology, we aim to highlight what Foucault (2006) denominates a problematization method as a means to look at the markings of/in the city and, consequently, of/in the school. This means that, from within the discursive and non-discursive practices, *pichação* becomes a problem of different discourses, be they academic, social, or political, immersed in the games of truth and falsehood which end up constituting this object of thought. Problematization is a critical exercise of thought, so there is no single truth within the ideological impasses, nor a search to solve such problem (Marshall, 2008).

Thus, the research worked with the experiences of art and of education in the school and in the city; it took, at first, observation and walking around school as its methodological procedures. In an art classroom activity, students were provoked to look at the markings in the school. After walking and collecting the markings on walls and doors, students took these markings back to the classroom. It was in this movement that the teacher noticed the insistence of a marking, in particular, which was also found in the city's walls. From the images in the school, the look became interested in the city, looking for that which are the markings of the subjects in both sociability spaces. Our work was based on the observation in the school to broaden the look and on walking around the city with a photographic camera and journal. In this careful look towards the city we found ourselves in an art space known as *CasAbsurda*³ [AbsurdHouse], where we could broaden the procedures with open-ended interviews with some participants, such as Mônica⁴, a girl who also coordinates a graffiti project in the city of Juiz de Fora, which constituted an important moment for the research. Our research interests were centered in the graffiti lessons for the students of a peripheral neighborhood, who would bring to this space their own concepts of art, education, and belonging to the city. Hence, we were back in contact with the school and its possibilities in the production of the experiences of individuals.

We must, then, forgo a sense of experience tied to the accumulation of information, of knowledge, of lived situations, to adopt a sense of experience as Larrosa (2015) proposes, i.e., as that which places us in front of something which marks, which crosses, which transforms the individual in thought, in gestures, in attitudes, based on what is strange, what makes one question oneself, displacing the individual to somewhere else. Thus, similarly to Foucault, experience is always a fiction, because we produce it, built it while we research and write, making us also emerge, from this writing-experience, transformed. In this

sense, it is an investigation perspective based on the Foucauldian models of desubjectivation (Fischer, 2012, p. 22).

This is the investigation process based on art that we are working with in this article, i.e., a performative perspective and writing, such as Fernando Hernández (2013) points out, then transformed in a resource through which we can create or recreate an experience in which the body is inserted in relation to others, or as an ethnographic poetics in which one desires to touch the audience, the reader, enticing emotions and promoting alternatives to see the world by means of that which the individual narrates. The image we claim as our investigation proposition is marked, produced by students in school and is built by a desire to reinvent spaces, looks, ways of life and, consequently, to educate.

Therefore, problematizing can be an investigative look at the modes of subjectivation of social individuals who appropriate and produce images to build a place of belonging and to rethink their transitory identities. In this sense. This article's analysis focus is to try to understand how images can produce students as individuals who do or do not belong to a certain place, or as images surviving in places which do not recognize them. Based on the gathering of markings and inscriptions which inhabit the school but are made *invisible* to the school's inhabitants, this article explores art and education as fields of reflection and of broadening the gestures left by the body from the observation of an art teacher intervention in a federal public school in the city of Juiz de Fora.

The birth of the research and its methodology

This research began with the art teacher's act of looking at the markings on the walls, stairs, and doors at her workplace, a public federal school with about 1,400 students. A casual look which, however, originated a practice she had not previously experienced: that students would walk the school with her and would share this aesthetic experience of looking at the school's markings.

As teachers, we walk around schools and begin noticing the presence of images and markings on the walls, doors, boards – *invisible* inscriptions which enticed a desire to research about students' movements and gestures while they marked the walls of this space of socialization and of construction of subjectivities. However, there was no delineated form of methodology to be followed. An education in art understands that research in visual arts presupposes methodological parameters which are different from a scientific research, since, in the art field, due to its specificities, they are related to the realm of values and not of deeds, as in science (Rey, 1996). Thus, approaching Sandra Rey's (1996) perspective, this being an investigation through art, we do not want to indicate a path to be achieved. According to this author, the work of art is a trail with multiple crossings, in which we are allowed to make mistakes, not in the sense of being fooled, but of wandering, spreading out to some directions, allowing ourselves to be taken by another's path, in this case the work of art, i.e., to lose ourselves in the

visual creation allowing for other unfoldings, other possible works. And if there is not an *a priori* project in the work of art, as in the research, there is a process. Rey (1996, p. 1) affirms that the work of art is an education process and, at the same time, a process in the sense of processing, of building meaning. The work challenges our senses, it is an active element in the elaboration of meanings and in the displacement of pre-established meanings; it disturbs the world knowledge which was previously familiar to us: it processes us. Hence, Rey (2002) posits the work of art is a process also in this sense, of performing a processing of someone. The work of art forces us to rethink our parameters, our positions. Artists, entangled in the process of constructing the work, end up processing themselves, placing themselves in a process of discovery. As Rey (2002) indicates, artists thus discover things they did not know beforehand, and that they could only access through the work of art.

The mode of investigation in art is somewhat close to the mode of writing and of research in the post-structuralist perspective. As Guacira Lopes Louro (2007, p. 237) affirms, being attentive to language does not mean intending to control its possible effects or intending to fix its meanings. If we think from a post-structuralist perspective, according to the same author, we will be convinced this is impossible: a text can always be interpreted differently, can always be interpreted again; a text slides away, escapes.

By connecting both authors, we are defending a methodological perspective that functions as a process, a practice, and a plastic investigation performed together with the students, inside and outside of the classroom. This perspective confronts past and contemporary artistic productions and interacts with and criticizes the different poetic repertoires⁵ that the students might construct.

To Hernández (2013), the relationship of artistic activities with investigations can be denominated tautologic, understanding that in every artistic activity there is an investigative purpose. The work with students is always a way to make and legitimize research, since, at the moment we practice art, we find the means for investigative approaches located in the experience of the atelier and of the classroom. Both the artist and the educator are agents who do not hold the power to control how one reads, relates, learns, experiences, and lives. What is important, then, is how this happens in the *in between* – what can be done between a reading and another, what can be said of differentiated places.

How can we explain that an artistic experience – in the sense of technically and poetically experiencing and perceiving its effects of production of art knowledge in the classroom – can enable a path for a research in education? Furthermore, Hernández (2013, p. 43) proposes the following questions: How can the arts bear an investigative process? When we take art as a referent for an investigation in a field “outside” of the realm of arts, to what degree can meanings be derived which would otherwise not emerge? To what extent does this inquiry question the commonly accepted sense of what investigation means – to unveil what was unspoken?

Facing these questions, we also ponder on the aesthetic/artistic experience in the classroom in relation to the markings in the school. Perhaps this can be understood based on the presuppositions defended by Irene Tourinho (2013, p. 64): a game in which teaching is a practice tied to research and, at the same time, that research is a practice which underpins, organizes and renews teaching. The author regards this as the vital point, as she understands that research and teaching become freedom and emancipation projects when they ally themselves with and happen through the aesthetic/artistic experience, since it is this experience which moves our sensorial, affective, and imaginative sensibility to project transformations, changes, and challenges. Art, then, creates, feeds, and strengthens transformative possibilities of research and of teaching.

We are all entangled in this game, being affected and subjectivized among the cultural and the aesthetical productions of students, of artists, of teachers, and of the other possible relationships inside and outside of the school. Subjectivizing ourselves as historical subjects based on the discursive practices of the art and of the culture in which we are inserted, but also in the human relations which form and transform us amid educative process. Considering, as Foucault did, that the modes of subjectification, the *history of the subject*, are a history of practices which were not funded, originated by the subject, but which are under the effect of a constitution of a historical plot (Castro, 2009, p. 408). Hence, realizing that in the historical conditions of the subject we find implicated the circumstances of space and time is saying that we are submitted to positions which allow us to be and to speak from a determined place.

We can say that educators and researchers are directly tied to subjectivation processes which crisscross a state of art in the sense described, in 1968, by Mario Pedrosa in the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* as an experimental exercise of freedom. There is no defined, correct course of action; however, what we defend is the experimentation and the elasticity of the form and, thus, of the subject-form. An understanding of education tied to the exercise of freedom which seems to propose to teachers and students an educative process which entails readings, experiences through the noises, through what is left behind, through skewed looks about the same cultural and artistic production. There is a desire for provocation, for divergence in this article, a deliberate will, from us, to reconfigure that which is already made, given, digested.

Carlos Skliar (2003, p. 148) affirms that all that is different from us does not ask for our permission to break into our lives. Thus, by means of thinking about difference, it was possible to notice how our path to an investigation is built in the sense of allowing ourselves to be affected by the differences in our daily lives. Skliar, then, provokes us to think about our condition as subjects. If we consider difference as the meeting point, we can allow for the distance, for distancing ourselves, for taking a step back to notice that which we do not know but which also speaks about us and about others.

We understand that the action of taking a step back is similarly dimensioned by the thought of James Marshall (2008). This author invites us not to look for solutions, not to search for knowledges to be discovered and which verify/certify declarations as true or false, but, conversely, to invest in the freedom of separating ourselves from what we do, in the movement through which we are separated from what we do, so we can establish it as an object of thought and reflect about it as a problem. As Tomas Tadeu da Silva (2014) posits, affirmations about difference can only make sense as affirmations about identity, as both are inseparable. Thinking and acting in this research through difference is, at the same time, gathering traces of identity. Hence, according to this author, difference is the result of a process and can be also understood as a production together with identity, since we are the ones producing it in the contexts of cultural and social relationships. Based on a pedagogy of difference, how are identity and difference produced?

We aim to problematize the difference of a classroom practice from the difference of perspective about schools, the different way of living with students, the different modes of walking and perceiving the city, of acting politically and of knowing different people. These are the motivations of our research.

Looking at the School and at its Markings: a lesson proposal and an invitation to move out of one's place

The invitation/provocation for students to walk around school observing the markings found demanded another relationship with the school and with the art subject. However, for this to happen, it was necessary to contextualize, to provide a theme for this action. At that moment, the teacher was developing, as content, a practical proposal chosen from within the history and practice of art about the emergence, the transition, and the permanence of the supports of painting, specifically those related to the use of surfaces such as walls, which go beyond the traditional white canvas.

The historical context proposed a discussion starting from the rock art of the primitive man as the constructors of the *first* images, until present-day artists who work with this type of support and promote displacements in the perception of different *landscapes*, such as muralism⁶ and graffiti, for example, which are frequently placed in the center of debates about art and the relationship with the public space⁷. From this perspective, the activity done with the students intended to establish a dialogue with the work of Laís Myrrha (2004).

The work of this contemporary artist was the starting point for the discussions about the relationships between private images and public spaces and about how Myrrha strategically constructed her poetics from the appropriations and displacements of common-use objects to the realm of art. One of the questions brought about from this artist's work is the legitimization of graffiti as art and its authorship as work, since she did not expect an *artistic/poetic* intervention in a context tra-

ditionally recognized as transgressive (where *pichação* takes place) or even as offensive from the point of view of the belonging of certain images to certain spaces.

The work *Fachada Subtraída nº 1* [Subtracted Facade no.1] consisted on a two-month process in which the artist proposed an intervention by overlapping, on the wall of an automobile repair shop in a busy avenue in the city of Belo Horizonte, a wall made of wood, identical to the original one. The original wall was a frequent target of *pichação*, filled with varied inscriptions and drawings. The artist considered the place as a preexisting surface which presented the accumulation of random markings: the natural deterioration of time and the interferences made by passersby in signatures, scratches, and scribbles. This pervasion of the wall by several images made it, in a way, invisible in the context of an urban landscape also pervaded by so many other images.

The artist proposed, then, to substitute this surface by another, a completely clean one, as if the wall had been painted, perhaps aiming to make it visible or even attractive. During the period of exposition of the false virgin wall, the artist expected accident and chance to add to the installed mimetic wall. After some time, this wall was to be transferred to the Pampulha Art Museum, as something of a deposit of a certain chaotic memory obtained from that surface's living with the city and, also, as a possibility to poetically discuss the construction of the contemporary urban imagination.

However, the facade was not altered by *pichação*, as the artist expected. After a few weeks, the wall was purposefully graffitied with the consent of the owners of the repair shop. At that moment, the discourse which was taken as a wall with *pichação* was lost and *replaced* by an artistic aesthetic of graffiti, which, in a way, has become accepted or even desired due to its pictorial aspect, perhaps more easily decodable than the often truncated elements used in *pichação*.

Aiming to achieve a poetic practice but using a path which is, say, inverted or different to the one proposed by Myrrha, students were asked, as a strategy to construct an artistic work, to look at their own school, at the markings on its walls, doors, and chairs. The idea was to propose an action of a careful, critical, perceptive look at the marked places, where the young students circulated and inhabited. At the same time, students would be able to signal, to indicate the markings and images produced by themselves and by others in the institution's spaces. The inversion of this work lies precisely in not starting from a *virgin* surface awaiting for the intervention of the markings, of the *pichação*, but, conversely, to highlight and evidence that which already exists, which holds the memory of the school, its writings.

Hence, the intention of proposing readings and appropriations of pre-existing interferences on the school's walls, chairs, and doors led to the questioning of the practice between the students' and the artists' daily-life experiences, allowing for the juxtaposition of actions which can converge/diverge in poetic dialogues and unfold in the construc-

tion of aesthetic values. From this, in the relationship composed between two experiences, what can emerge as the substrate of a teaching experience? On the one hand, the artist looks at the markings in the city, on the other, students look at their own markings in their schools.

Based on all of this, could we suggest, in a way, that the school is a surface similar to the city, which is activated by subjects who transit, interfere, move the senses with which they relate? What can we build as education through the surfaces? Or how can we evidence this surface's layers? It seems interesting to think about schools in these terms, as a support for painting, as the stage of traditional movements, with all the rules applied, which went through purity experiments to speak its own language (what makes a school and how is it made?) and now sees itself in a plot, submersed in overlapped images, in fluid methods, creating a surface of palimpsests⁸. Are the palimpsests the displaced interferences produced in the school's walls, as stories retold over other stories, inhabiting a place where these images perhaps should not exist? And how can we see ourselves and translate ourselves in these overlapped images in this surface?

Continuing with the work proposal, students' actions were directed to an observation, a perception, and a gathering of images, using tracing paper. They started from a search for any inscription produced by themselves or by other students who had studied or belonged to the school and who had left their markings on the walls, doors, fences, benches, posts, etc.

The idea behind the work presupposed this gathering of images included in the school's architecture but which are or have become invisible to those who daily occupy this space. There was no restriction or censorship as to what images students could gather; on the contrary, they were stimulated to find the images which most provoked, shaped, or bothered them. The visual reproduction was supposed to be as close as possible to the original traces and gestures present in the school environment.

The walk was marked by a certain sense of estrangement, as if students were strangers in their own space. Bathroom doors, previously dormant, became something with the students' presence, as if these objects could tell silenced stories, making us reflect about students' need to write on these surfaces, thus structuring other readings spaces. Why do we have the need to mark surfaces, places, territories? Can we consider that the people who mark some objects/places and delimitate them are taking part of this game of producing difference and of affirming identity, the necessity of which is intrinsic in this very relationship, since these people intend to mark positions, symbols which represent them to establish a limit and their own self-awareness? And, from these marked spaces, how can we resignify other territories?

The city's territories are parts of the urban space which, according to Saint-Clair Trindade Júnior (1998), are implicitly or explicitly delimited and controlled by certain actions, the product of the correlations of

forces or of differences which are established with other agents (Júnior, 1998). Thus, when we mark a territory, we are inevitably destabilizing the forces which act over a certain place and we are producing other relationships which can entail other reactions and meanings for the agents who experience it.

The agents engaged in the urban structure are not in the same level of power correlations, but instrumentalize their interest by means of colligations which enable their actions and which, usually, are tied to the dominant actors. That is, the urban sprawl follows the manipulation of interests which are related to the hegemonic ones (Júnior, 1998). Thus, we can ask about what we can do in the city, about what power circumstances we can inhabit and interact with, and even to what limit we identify or not with these spaces.

We must question whether the binary opposition established between belonging and not belonging, being inside and being outside, being included or being excluded can exist in the relations of power, of knowledge, and of recognizing ourselves as part of certain places. In other words, we must ponder whether the desire to identify and differentiate ourselves is part of our culture as a construction process of a social order. According to Kathryn Woodward (2002), social order is maintained through binary oppositions such as being an insider or an outsider in a determined social system.

Social control is exercised through producing categories whereby individuals who transgress are relegated to 'outsider' status according to the social system in operation. Symbolic classification is thus intimately related to the social order. For example, the criminal is an 'outsider' whose transgression excludes him or her from mainstream society, producing an identity which, because it is associated with lawlessness, is linked with danger and set apart and marginalized. The identity of the 'outsider' is produced in relation to the 'insider'. [...] One identity is created in relation to another (Woodward, 2002, p. 33).

Perhaps, the inscriptions and markings in the school environment can characterize these *outsider* identities which occupy unauthorized spaces. If we consider the limits between the students' and the teachers' spaces, limits of what is permitted or prohibited inside an institution, and how students' and teachers' power and knowledge relations act and reflect, this can be classified, ordered based on the production of identities.

The power relations established between teachers and students in the context of the institution can be understood from the Foucauldian perspective, according to Revel (2005), as an agency process in which practices, knowledges, and institutions are intertwined, and in which the type of objective being pursued is not reduced only to domination, because it belongs to no one and it varies in history or in the knowledge relation – which is not the same as the production of knowledge, but a relationship with the objects of knowledge and the subjectivation pro-

cesses. We absolutely do not want to categorize such spaces, to define and establish these identities as fixed, even though it would evidence identity construction processes and lead to a problematization of the role of the space we are discussing, the school, and of the people we are addressing, the students and teachers. Are only young people marking this space? Is it possible to affirm that only young people produce this type of action, marking walls and desks?

Sandra Medeiros (2009) points out and problematizes students' actions of writing on the tables. According to this author, writing on tables – and, we might add, on doors and walls – is a practice which is inscribed in the students' actions, for them to become inhabitants of this world with invades them, i.e., the traditional school they attend, filled with stories and memory spaces. Medeiros (2009) affirms students must feel proud to belong to such institution, but this is not enough. Belonging demands more than being approved in exams and, thus, being authorized to wear a uniform recognized by the city's population. Something else is needed for a student to become part of a "body" constituted by the complexity of human interactions present there, but also by the relationships between the generations who shaped this space, who left visible marks in its walls and in the way through which people live the school and live in the school.

Based on this, it is important to highlight the work being performed with the students as a way of retelling stories, the paths inhabited by them, and to enter the school's memory by the spaces where images escape the sight of the place's inhabitants. We must discover, perhaps, as Medeiros (2009) mentions, how those teenagers, brought together or identified by certain images, were molded by other generations. And we must notice students' belonging degree to that school and how this can be a way to think how we mark, belong to, or limit ourselves to certain places.

After this collecting exercise, there was a group reflection asking what is carried with these images which are perhaps somewhat *transgressive*, in the sense of being aggressive, of evading the rules of students' expected conduct, or *provocative* amidst students, for enticing a response, an expected action. Who expects these images? What can these images indeed move? Who are these images' targets?

The relationship at play was to problematize the social and political processes of the school institutions through the markings, the modes of communication, and the forms of expression – languages which the young people already used and which made them belong to that environment. How can the markings address the school's spectators? What do people think in relation to the markings? Is it possible to highlight these markings and consider them as *pichações* of a public space? Are the markings legally permitted when done by young people as an act of belonging to a place, but a crime in relation to public property damage? However, there was no approval or disapproval for the presence of these images, either from the school or from any interested party. Moreover,

even if *pichação* is considered a crime, and if the people who perform it can be at risk, can be imprisoned, etc., there seems to be a certain indifference towards these markings as we progressively get used to them.

The next steps of the activity were directed towards a visual production. Students were instructed to think about a visual product based on the images they had collected, so they could appropriate those images and resignify them by means of an urban aesthetics. This aesthetics is characterized by young people's cultural production, by their musical choices, by their pictorial repertoire, i.e., everything which is related to their lives could be related to the production of the work.

There was a contextualization of the activity's procedures and an approximation to an aesthetic reading of the artist Jean-Michel Basquiat⁹. This artist's form of creation, techniques, concepts, and frustrations were presented to the students. Soon, students were introduced to a debate opposing *pichação* and *grafite* (a Portuguese word derived from *graffiti*) by means of texts and videos. The terms themselves and their origins open a discussion about signification and its developments. In the English language, the term *graffiti* stands for both Portuguese terms mentioned above. Célia Ramos (1994) affirms that *pichação* differs from *grafite* both in practices and in aesthetic value, and believes that *grafite* is a more elaborated process, concerned with organizing a wider range of symbols and in re-dimensioning them to the space, to the support. There is a project and a poetic concern. *Pichação*, conversely, is considered an improvised, random process, determined by the circumstances of chance, which does not necessarily prevent the emergence of the poetic, nor does it entail it. According to Ramos (1994), the main difference between both forms is the aesthetic value.

In the Brazilian culture, broadly speaking, *pichação* is classified and typified as that activity which is performed by individuals who damage public and private properties, and is seen as a transgressive act, or as a limit experience of an individual, which prevents him or her of being the same as in other situations. According to Foucault (2006a, 2014), such limit experiences are articulated with the notions of practice of one's self, of the way of being unsettled by oneself, of self-desubjectification, and of creating resistance. Resistance to the power relations, to the games of truth imposed over the discursive practices of the institutions in relation to how a certain space is occupied. Fighting for a space, resisting certain social conducts, can also bring a sensation of pleasure, intimately tied to power. Power of being there, of producing a marking anywhere, and of crossing a limit.

Conversely, what we refer to as *grafite* in Portuguese is associated to the intellectual movement which prominently emerged, in recent times, in artistic manifestations and has been debated in art discourses in academic contexts. However, according to Gustavo Coelho¹⁰ (2010), *grafite* and *pichação* can be seen as two worlds which share similar practices but remain unfamiliar to each other. The author also affirms that the problem of *pichação* is one of communication.

Despite the debate about *grafite* and *pichação* having generated, to some students, a disagreement on whether *pichação* can be considered art, they all understood that there is no clear limit separating both activities, since they believed a person who produced *pichação* could also produce *grafite* at the same time. One of the class's students reported being a practitioner of *pichação* and believed himself that his action was criminal. However, he also affirmed that this was a path he intended to follow, for it satisfied his need for expression. The teacher passed no judgement, since her intention was precisely to problematize this theme and to broaden students' perception in relation to the existence and to the belonging of these images, either as *pichação* or not, in the school.

To conclude the practical activity, students were told to make a resignified visual product, modified based on the gathered images. The teacher suggested a new reading proposal, the use of stencils, a graffiti technique, to produce symbols based on their experiences which established a dialogue with the collected markings. Next, these works would be exhibited to the rest of the school. Could a return of the images to the school's public eye through an aesthetically modified perspective cause another impression of the *pichações* present in the school's walls and desks? What would the other students feel facing these resignified markings?

The repetition of some recurring images and symbols in the transcriptions produced by students led us to think about an identification, about the possibility of construction of a collective identity. What are the reasons for students to transcribe symbols from other cultures and other times? What is the identification with those symbols? Is it something which passes from generation to generation, or is it the assimilation of ideas built from other experiences by other school subjects?

A concrete example for these inquiries was the swastika symbol which frequently appeared in students' works and was resignified according to the interpretations and affections of the images made by students. The appearance of this element in the visual productions caused discord in other classrooms. It was then that some questions emerged regarding the exhibition of the works to other classes, as it would imply the expansion, the reintroduction of certain ideologies in a broader context.

In this sense, another question arose related to the exhibition of the students' works, since, facing a product which was signed and identified by a specific student, the inscriptions on the walls lost their anonymity and could be interpreted and *judged* from the public perspective. And since this production was placed in a spotlight, with the amplified representations of the *pichações*, some students felt uncomfortable in the presence of the selected images, entering a state of identification, and feeling somewhat imprisoned by their choices. Is this a common behavior and/or a dilemma for students trying to show their opinions by means of transgressive acts? And when they are in the spot-

light, why do they feel intimidated in relation to the moral judgement of the presented situation, specifically, of the inscription on the school's walls?

Two situations brought further questionings by students during the activity. The first related to a young girl who collected her own marking: "FODA-SE VOCÊ DAN" [FUCK YOU DAN] in painting and "#VSF" [#FY] in stencil, an acronym for "vai se foder" [fuck you]. In the first instance of the practical process, she did not express the intention and the affection towards such image, but, when she realized her collected object would be amplified and exposed to the school's audience, she felt regret, and chose not to continue with her work. The teacher asked her what the difference was between her intimate act on the walls, desks, and bathroom doors and her bigger and more emphatic act in a painting of 70 x 80 cm. Was a message created by different vehicles producing the same idea, the same feeling of freedom of expression?

After a while, she explained the reason which bothered her and made her afraid regarding her work. The name present in the *pichação* was of a former failed relationship she had and that, at that moment, due to the fact of the mentioned boy no longer attending the schools and because she no longer felt anything in relation to him, it made her uncomfortable to make an emotional problem of the past resurface. The student declared she was afraid some people could associate her work with a return or a permanence of her feelings.

But why had she chosen such image? For the young girl, what had that immediate action facing a constructed, hurtful gesture of a disenfranchised *passion* meant? What did it still mean? Was the public declaration, in uppercase letters, of how much her love was disgruntled the same as shouting to everyone her dissatisfaction? Did she want to point herself as the author of the markings? What configurations would those markings take under another public perspective, leaving the anonymity of the then invisible walls? The teenager was previously free to make her own choices, to write what she wanted on the school's walls, to express herself in different forms, so what restrained her now, in her visual production, regarding the judgement of others?

The new situation made this student take a step back, ponder on her new condition of exposing herself in a different manner, of revealing being in a different circumstance, but which, for her, would cost another notion of freedom. Freedom, in the Foucauldian sense, is not from the order of liberation, but of constitution. As Edgardo Castro (2009) points out, man is made into an object of knowledge so man can convert himself into the subject of his own freedom and of his own existence. Hence, facing what she had done and what she had exposed, analyzing and becoming aware of her own impulsive gesture, the student might have generated a knowledge about herself, which brings us closer to the Foucauldian concept of subject.

The subject, to Foucault (1994), is not a substance, and essence, a fixed form; on the contrary, subjects progressively construct themselves, folding and unfolding, dissolving in their own history. Based on

this, Revel (2005) asks how a subject is constructed in a historical plot, in a construction of knowledges, of discourses, of the dominions of objects. And we might ask: how did the student constitute herself at that moment?

Could we say, then, that a relationship between power and knowledge emerged in the presence of the “FUCK YOU DAN”? From its historical construction, the reemergence of this marking could elicit new interpretations, which did not exclusively depend on the student’s will to express herself, but which allowed for other disenchantments escaping the control of whoever made them or whoever read them. However, what actually existed was the displacement of a marking from its initial form which could enable a new look towards this young girl, which challenged her regarding her posture and the acceptance of the image. Based on this, to what degree are we free to say/draw/graffiti/mark what we think?

The second moment in which a discussion took place regarding this proposed activity happened when the teacher was organizing the works from the students of the first year of Secondary School who had made their painting about the inscriptions on the school’s walls. While she was placing the paintings on the workbench to let them dry properly, another teacher’s second-year students entered the classroom and sat on their places waiting for the class to begin. The first-year teacher was faced with the dissatisfaction of a teenage boy, a second-year student, who questioned her responsibility regarding the images he was observing. The visual product in question represented a Star of David – an immensely important symbol for Jews and Israeli who believe in Judaism – with a swastika drawn inside – a symbol used by the Nazis. Over both symbols, the word “Liberdade” [Freedom] was applied in stencil.

It is interesting to notice how the first reaction of the student was to attribute the responsibility for the image’s existence to the teacher. He did not ask who might have drawn or created that drawing but questioned whether the teacher could accept that as an art project. In this case, we could reflect over how art can provoke adverse reactions on people, or even how visual artists use *poetic license* to produce and manipulate contradictory images to express what they wish to without any concern for the other’s permission or judgement.

Perhaps, we can think about how the concept of artist represented as the figure of the genius of Romantic aesthetics – which “postulates [...] the work of art as a product of human subjectivity” (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 92), a product of a subject who observes the world from above and translates what he looks at into images – can fall apart, in the sense that post-modern artists *rummage* the world, search, operate and exchange the value of things, of the social relations, and stir our modes of being and of seeing the universe. In this sense, Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) proposes a *transversalist* concept of artist:

Only a ‘transversalist’ conception of creative operations, lessening the figure of the author in favour of that of the

artist-cum operator, may describe the 'mutation' underway: Duchamp, Rauschenberg, Beuys and Warhol all constructed their work on a system of exchanges with social movements, unhinging the mental 'ivory tower' myth allocated to the artist by the Romantic ideology (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 93).

The artist, as the producer of subjectivities, is produced in the heterogeneity of the forms, of the social groups which, in turn, do not have dominion over their own signature in the work or in its style, since their exposed subjectivity is nothing more than the contraction of other subjectivities. If we make an analogy between the situation of a teacher and the artistic production of the student, this may justify the teenage boy's indignation in blaming the teacher for the image of the Star of David with a swastika, since the teacher is responsible for the production of the students and also because she produces subjectivities in the classroom.

However, the art teacher found herself in a situation in which her actions and attitudes were also being analyzed and, perhaps, mirrored by students. This process of young people building their affirmations or constituting themselves as subjects based on the other can be understood as *natural*. But, within the circumstances in which the problem was exposed, the teacher took a position of problematizing the thought and attitude of the student, investing more in the answer than in the question: And why not? Why can art not contemplate such expression? With these questions she sought to challenge the student towards another way of seeing the situation.

Perplexed, the student justified his behavior by explaining he came from a Jewish family and that the image exposed outraged him. With this information, the teacher investigated the student's reading of that work, which could elicit many interpretations. First, the freedom of two ideologies coexisting in the world, which would be, if not ironically, impossible. Second, a claiming for peace and liberty between the people who suffered the historical consequences of a situation of humanity. Third, and last, the fact that the swastika was drawn inside a Star of David makes us think about the origins of the ideas and of their corresponding to functions of power and purposes in which one would not exist without the other.

Facing this conjecture, the student revisited his point of view, but left a certain resentment in the air that things, that the information, should be more translucent for those observing the paintings, to avoid confusion and misunderstandings. Then, what is the purpose of art, if not to provoke? With this question, the teacher ended the debate trying to problematize the function not only of art, but also of art in education. Beyond being a mandatory school subject, being an essential component of human education, an educative need of a culture, and an aesthetic experience which is inherent to the education of the students, Celso Favaretto (2010) defends that we need to think about art in school in the context of contemporary transformations, of a critique of the il-

lusions of modernity, of the reorientation of its presuppositions – which implies thinking about the displacement of the subject, the production of new subjectivities, changes in knowledge and in teaching, the disbelief in systems of moral, political, and educational justification, the mutation of the concept of art and of the artistic practices, and changes in behaviors.

Accepting art to provoke, destabilize, unsettle, is perhaps accepting this condition of education of the student, the way these students relate to their present, the way they constitute themselves facing visual productions, the way they subjectify themselves. This does not lead to effects of overcoming and of progress, but it awakens a critical attitude to modes of being in the world.

Final Remarks

What can we gain from all of this? The importance of opening the discussion of the reading of the images with the students allows us to understand and apprehend that it is not enough to simply present/exhibit students' visual works, even if they are contextualized and constructively criticized in the process of their creation, but, indeed, to amplify the debate field between the public directly or indirectly related to the visual production after its exhibition. What are the affectations, readings of the images which constitute and shape the teenagers? At the same time, problematizing the question of visual culture in the teaching of art and how it is interpreted by young people in the construction and education of their production of knowledge can be a way to problematize these forms of acquisition, of being in the world to think of other ways to handle the relationship between art, the teaching of art, and education in the subjectivation processes.

We have demonstrated how school is an integral part of the cultural context, it is part of an image education which is present in other social spaces and establishes a dialogue with the school. Not by chance, the markings we have found in the school were also found in the city, leading us to reflect about the participation of the students in the act of recognizing themselves as a constitutive part of the city by means of their markings. At the same time, they establish a closer relationship between their school, their neighborhood, and the city.

Marking the school is also a way of being present, of seeing themselves as present, of establishing a certain recognition relationship with a certain group of people who are able to identify themselves in the images. Images constitute us. Being aware of this role of school and of the teaching of art seems important to define the position of students in the relationship between what they learn, their social and cultural context, and new possibilities of being in the world. The teacher's actions were in this direction of, based on looking at the images in the school, also looking at the city. The aesthetic involvement built from her actions aggregated the knowledge of the teaching of art to the city and to the culture which constitutes the students.

The images' aesthetics enabled other forms of looking at the school, at the city, and at themselves in this process of becoming what they are, implicating in the act of educating in the sense of building new ways of being in the world, which is related to the teaching of art and with subject education as a whole, demonstrating that the teaching of art broadens the capacity of perception, of imagination, of experimentation, and of desubjectivation. From the Foucauldian perspective, we are beings of experience, and experience can only happen in the process of desubjectivation-subjectivation. The experience, which the teacher provided, invested in this desubjectivation process. Thus, she led her students to experience other looks, ending the activity different from what they were when they started it.

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Notes

- 1 This article was produced based on a paper published at: <<https://repositorio.ufjf.br/jspui/bitstream/ufjf/5923/1/brunatostesdeoliveira.pdf>>
- 2 The term *pichação* refers to a typically Brazilian form of graffiti which consists in the tagging of walls, monuments, and vacant constructions in a distinctive and cryptic manner. In Brazil, *pichação* is distinguished from *grafite*, as the latter is usually done with the consent of the owners of the wall being painted and is widely considered a socially accepted form of art, while the former is done without the consent of the owners of the property being tagged, is considered a crime, and is usually socially condemned.
- 3 CasAbsurda [AbsurdHouse] functioned until 2016 located in a traditional residential neighborhood in the city of Juiz de Fora, near the downtown area. It was occupied by local residents by people from other cities. The condition to momentarily occupy the house was to offer some workshop to the population. Moreover, the house was constituted as a space for events and parties for the group of graffiti, *pichação*, skate, and hip-hop artists.
- 4 This and other names presented in the text are fictitious, preserving the anonymity of the research participants.
- 5 We understand as *poetic repertoire* a set of questions which are entailed in the relationship of the artist with the process of construction of a possible work of art which might come to exist – in this case, the students' visual works. These questions establish a dialogue with the creation procedures, such as the technical activity, world affectations which are implied in the development of the work.
- 6 Muralist art is characterized by a painting intrinsically connected to the architectonic surface, which also makes the work belong to the public space. Thus, by conquering the urban space, the art is evoked to the collective. One of the more developed and ancient techniques is the fresco, done mostly by Greco-Roman civilizations.
- 7 Recently, in Brazil, graffiti has taken a central role in the debate over the construction of the urban imagination. Examples can be found in the *I Bienal In-*

ternacional do Graffiti [First International Biennial of Graffiti] which happened in the city of Belo Horizonte in 2008, and in numerous educational projects directed towards the learning of this language in workshops. Furthermore, artists such as Alexandre Orion have evidenced a broadening of the visual/linguistic repertoire which overcome the use of paint and sprays, aiming to, in many cases, subvert the language itself in order to produce it.

- 8 The use of the meaning of the term *palimpsest* here does not differ significantly from the original, i.e., the reuse of manuscript pages which were previously written upon. Images were painted on walls to tell a story of an Empire, such as the history of Egyptian art, of a pharaoh and his time ruling. When rulers were exchanged, other histories were painted over the old ones, repeatedly. However, histories overlap and unveil themselves as walls are peeled off, creating a pictorial palimpsest.
- 9 Jean-Michel Basquiat, a black New York artist, acted on the urban art scene in the 1970s/80s. Basquiat became famous as SAMO, and, in a successful self-promotion campaign, he wrote under this pseudonym on the walls of the best exhibition places in the art world. His paintings were full of words and sentences which had been crossed, changed, substituted for better versions.
- 10 Gustavo Coelho is a professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). In 2015 he acquired a doctorate degree for his research *PiXadores, torcedores, bate-bolas e funkeiros: doses do enigma no reino da humanidade esclarecida* [People who produce *pichação*, soccer fans, street-soccer players, and funk fans: doses of the puzzle of the enlightened humanity]. He co-produced the film *Luz, Câmera, Pichação* [Lights, Camera, *Pichação*] released in 2011.

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