

REMINISCENCES: PERIODICAL PUBLICATION
AS AN ACADEMIC PROBLEM

Paulo Silveira

Translated by Ana Carolina Azevedo

ABSTRACT: This article offers some recollections about the implementation of support for Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul's periodicals, a concomitant and following action to the consolidation of the editorial production of Brazilian universities from mid 80's to late 90's. Furthermore, it adds some remarks on the long, arduous preparation period of an academic journal, an adversity shared by many fields of knowledge, including the Visual Arts.

KEYWORDS: Scientific journals. Scientific divulgation. Artistic divulgation.

The thoughts hereby presented, concerning the past experience with university journals of different fields of knowledge, are based in reminiscences. This is the reason for this paper's personal and informal nature. This report must therefore be considered a case study within risk of small inaccuracies and missing items. The images of the past are fragmented, but not incidental. It is a deliberate form of approaching a very familiar topic: the insertion of artistic academic research — history, poetics, theory, etc. — in the paradigms of scientific divulgation methodology. This essay will assume the cordial role of a business card to arid and even painful brawls.

One issue that has been in my mind for a long time is related to editorial problems also present in scientific vehicles in print media. What comes forward are the specific, non-exclusive relationships between journals that represent artistic knowledge and the larger system in which they may be found, that is, the divulgation of the Universities' intellectual products. This experience can be associated to a specific professional period of my life, a period of specialized work, thus marking it as a personal one. The cycle was not interrupted, but redirected in its specificity. Since its inception, it

is supported by common grounds to methodology, graphic design, figure of speech and art.

I was first introduced to academic publishing in 1982 through my work at the university press (or publishing house), which was back then called *Editora da Universidade*, although it has now received a new name, *Editora da UFRGS*, at Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), initially as a communication technician, then as visual programmer (the designation for graphic and visual designer, after the restructuring of positions in the federal public service). Despite lacking the desired (and thoroughly requested) speed, the publishing house was able to overcome its hardships thanks to the efforts of a small group of technicians with effective professional identity. Its main task was (and still is) the publishing of books, but it also published catalogs, reports, brochures, sheet music, illustrations, posters and other printed goods for UFRGS' main cultural products. The most striking event among the attended ones was *Unimúsica*, which consisted in musical performances, especially national music, held since the year of 1981. The event was a big success among the student community and, in subsequent years, would be followed by *Unicena* (drama), *Unifilme* (cinema), *Doze e Trinta* ("Twelve Thirty", classical music played at 12:30 at UFRGS' Vale Campus) and *Unidança* (contemporary dance). Later, they would be gathered into one larger project, called *UniarTE*. The project should not be confused with its namesake Visual Arts' *UniarTE*, created a few years later as part of the new *Unicultura* (which kept the existing themes, but included photography, video, books and other artistic expressions, each with its own name starting with "Uni"). I believe it fair to assume that this delay may point to a certain indecision from the Institute of Arts to intensify its role as culture producer in a larger project. However, the artists of the Institute would soon adopt an important role on the University events' schedule.

Editora da UFRGS was young but already applying all the time and staff available for the production of books, while also collaborating with journal preparation, despite its lack of duty on the matter.¹ Consider the word "journal" in its broad sense, that is, including all publications repeated once in a while with the same title or

¹ Originally, it used to be the Editorial Board's duty the elaboration of a non-specific university journal. The Communications Office (press office) has a hold on this task by monthly publishing the newspaper *Jornal da Universidade* since 1997, under the editorship of journalist Annia Chala. Subjects concerning the arts have excellent coverage, with signed texts, and the Institute of Arts collaborates regularly. The journal was preceded by *Jornal da UFRGS*, 1986-1989, and *Jornal Mural da UFRGS*, 1978-1985, among others.

the same identity.² Early 1980s saw the publishing of *Revista do Instituto de Biociências* [Journal of the Institute of Bioscience], annals of conferences and meetings, special issues of some journals (published in book form), management reports, undergraduate courses and extension activities (courses, community relations, cultural production etc.) catalogues, and Division of Community Outreach's newsletter *Extensão* [Outreach], a folded poster with a cultural schedule on one of its sides. In addition, the publishing house ventured to collaborate with the editors (who were, sometimes, students) of journals that sought its assistance. As an example of that, there is the academic journal *3x4*, which resulted from the final coursework for the Journalism major at Communications. It used to have difficulty wrapping up issues due to the dubiety between classes with typographic calculus (its measurement unit in cicero, Didot system) and the reality of Brazilian graphic daily life, which prints mainly in offset (and pica is its formerly Anglo-American, now international measurement unit). Then the publishing house's (sometimes the printing company's) technicians were sought after to teach how to fix the layout.³ In addition, many trainees (interns) reinforced their knowledge (and personal finances) on preparing, reviewing or editing various periodicals.

The collaborations did not seem to have an end. They included specific answers for a growing number of needs (from publications about biodancing to rice cultivars, reports to pamphlets, periodicals that worked out to those who never advanced from their first issue). The effort halted the press's full swing, which is the diffusion of intellectual production by the University through the publication of books. It was necessary to make a very well thought upon decision: to interrupt the collaboration (ratified by the division). However, soon this resolution had to be reconsidered. The vigorous increasing pressure for academic research promotion, along with the

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This solution is applied in certain journals, books, studies, reports, catalogues, etc. For example, instead of a journal or newspaper, *Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México's Médios Múltiples 1* (2005), 2 (2008) e 3 (2010)'s books are periodicals — and a fourth one is scheduled for publication in 2013. Its project and its results are in *Porto Arte's* 33rd issue.

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UFRGS has its own *editora* (publishing house, which designs, promotes and distributes, with a multidisciplinary editorial board) and *gráfica* (printer, a printing department), two separate entities and subject to different authorities. That which is usually called in Brazil *imprensa universitária* (university press) may be the merging of the two, but it usually only works as a printing company, without an editorial board.

new panorama of art finalization processes, determined by computer information, demanded of UFRGS, as a whole, an effort to update the procedures. The minimum intended was for the outclass of a certain kind of amateurism, thus making possible the lessening of editorial delays. So, in the early 90's, the Division of Research proposed a technical effort based on the press's experience. This effort was not ideal, but was the possible "lubrication" at that moment.

I'll shine some light on it in order to help you understand the scenario. The technicians working in the University publishing house during the 80's were properly trained, but based in the most absolute administrative and financial insecurity. Posters were designed for only one printing (one color); special formats were barely used; letter art and photocomposition were also scarce; some works were produced with purposely rude aesthetics (for example, with the "explosion" or enlarging of texts or manuscripts typed in old typewriters, magnified vigorously); tricks for high-contrast drawing and reusing of printed images were commonplace. The publishing house was so skilled at dealing with the lack of resources they began teaching directors and technicians from other universities their methods.⁴ Such solutions were possible only because the work was creative, developed from plastic design notions. The responsible for this task during those years were us, both University undergraduates in Plastic Arts from UFRGS.⁵ There is no reason to feel proud of our adversities, but we should certainly be proud of our solutions. We were skilled at traditional techniques and, with computer information spreading quickly in the early 90's, we attended the three basic courses offered at the Data Processing Center: *Introduction to computer science*, *MS-DOS* and *Windows*. And we studied the use of such programs on our own, reading manuals that we paid for ourselves (such as the manual for the then-revolutionary CorelDraw, in its 3 and 4 versions). In other words, we were quicker than the few

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The first time in 1983, at the *1st Encontro de Editoras Universitárias do Rio Grande do Sul e Santa Catarina* [an event for University Presses from the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina], and then in other seminars and professional meetings (private or corporate).

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I was accompanied by Carla Luzzatto, from Porto Alegre, who was awarded the *Prêmio Açorianos de Literatura*, for the cover of the Brazilian edition of *A Tecnologia na arte: da fotografia à realidade virtual*, 2003, by Edmond Couchot, of the "Interfaces" series, coordinated by PPGAV/UFRGS's press program, and for the editorial and graphic project called *Saramago na Universidade*, 1999, organized by Tânia Carvalho.

graphics laboratories at the University. We were quick learners and UFRGS became an important publisher of academic books at very low costs. We took an important role within what is considered the era of consolidation of university publishers in Brazil, the years 1989 to 1998 (Bufrem, 2001, p. 377). It is important to add that this process may have begun earlier, perhaps between 1981 and 1988, thanks to PROED (in English, Program for the Publishing of Intellectual Work by Federal Institutions of Higher Education, Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education). However, priority was given to textbook (confirmed by Gabbidon, 2008, p. 20), which frustrated some of us. Also, PIDL (Inter-University Program for Book Distribution), which begun in 1982, was very important, particularly because it is non-governmental. And, finally, the progressive corporate association of university publishers, a process started at UFRGS with the creation of the Association of Publishing Houses (or university presses) in the South Region (Eduni-Sul), established in 1983, but deactivated, since it would involve the creation of the Brazilian Association of University Presses (ABEU) in 1988. In 1984, only 5% of the 867 Brazilian superior learning schools had publishing houses (Gabbidon, 1984, p. 55), but, in 2012, ABEU had 109 publishers.⁶ Therefore, it was only natural that, judging by technical and creative experience accumulated, the publisher aided journals and their publishers and editors. So that was done. The Division of Research⁷ proposed that we aided everyone in any way possible. There were several works: full or partial editing of the periodical; cover graphic design; logo redesign; digital finalization of older projects; elaboration of modular covers for later adaptation; processing of graphics layouts into digital files; graphic calculations, etc. From the maximum level of interference to the most subtle suggestion, several titles came by the UFRGS publishing house, such as *Anos 90* [The 90's] (by the Graduate Program in History), *Boletim do Instituto de Biociências* [Bulletin of the Biosciences Institute] (nowadays *Journal of Brazilian Biosciences*), *Cadernos do Aplicação* [Aplicação Notebooks] (by *Colégio de Aplicação*), *Humanas* [Humanities] (philosophy and humanities), *Episteme* (philosophy and history of

science), *Horizontes Antropológicos* [Anthropological Horizons] (social anthropology), *Organon* (by the School of Languages, Literature and Linguistics from UFRGS), *Revista do SAJU* [SAJU magazine] (by the University's Legal Assistance Service), *Caderno de Farmácia* [Pharmacy Notebook], among others. The more intense procedures lasted about two years.⁸ Soon the collaboration was abandoned, for already mentioned reasons: the demand for non-periodicals publishing was prominent and a big priority.

Years later, in June 2004, a new cooperation was formed through the gathering of efforts from both Divisions of Research and Community Outreach. This cooperation, then, realized the Book Editorial Production course, an 8-classes course organized with the Program of Support of Periodical Production. Despite being an open event, it was targeted to UFRGS' journal editors. The subjects were divided into specific modules: from the original to the article, then to the publication, standardization, graphic process, divulgation of periodicals, indexing, exchange etc.⁹ Everything was a success. The sessions were fully booked. No *Porto Arte* editors attended the course, but I represented the Graduate Program in Visual Arts, at the time, as the PhD student representative.

These and other experiences allowed for some remarks about the difficulties accompanying the publication of scientific journals in Brazilian universities, especially public ones (responsible for the largest share of research in the country and, in the case of Visual Arts, for almost its entirety). The biggest issues concern the maintenance of periodicity, a task hindered by delays of all sorts, justified or not, and by individual amateurisms localizable in the editorial work routines. Authors who submitted works by invitation (with editorial function or for thematic dossiers) will be delayed if requested too late, and submitted articles need to undergo assessment, which require better routine management. The work needs to be reviewed and prepared, translations and versions need to be provided, illustrations need to be checked, the publishing needs to be closely followed.¹⁰

⁶ See ABEU's website: www.abeu.org.br/EditorasAssociadas.aspx. Retrieved in October 2012.

⁷ With general supervision by Marininha Aranha Rocha, specialist in higher education methodology, Director of the Division of Research and later Vice President of Research (1996-2009).

⁸ Under journalist and Chief of Press, posteriorly Director of Press (1997-2002) Geraldo Huff's supervision.

⁹ The general supervisor was Jusamara Souza, Director of Editora da UFRGS (2002-2008) and editor of *Em Pauta*, the journal of the Graduate Program in Music. My theme was the university book's editing, together with the implementation of such knowledge into periodicals. The event also counted with the Central Library's and the Press's support.

The management of these activities is often made in a selfless, but amateurish way, by teachers who are not qualified to do it (except in areas such as Journalism, Advertising, Publishing and Editorial Design). And, frankly, what teacher can comfortably devote for these tasks nowadays in Brazil? They have to give classes, devote themselves to the guidance of students, do extension activities, do research, take administrative roles, organize events, participate in board examinations, commissions, councils, centers, labs... The ideal would be to have qualified technicians with clear professional identities at our disposal. The public sector describes the job as “publications editor” (just “editor” in the previous legislation), intended for servers with high degrees in Communication, Journalism or Language and Linguistics,¹¹ still, unfortunately and anachronistically unaware of the possibility of existence of specific training.

It is true that the development of a single journal means very little work for a professional editor and his team, which could serve a greater number of publications at the same time. The most important requirement is the ability to deal with the particularities of the scientific editorial rhetoric and have intellectual receptivity to diverse fields of knowledge. In this case, the task has to be understood as the construction of bibliographical work from its illustrative and textual content in the various areas of knowledge with which the university works. We would very much welcome a more holistic and straighter training, since the university editor (or publisher) is the

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The necessary attention to the methodology of academic publishing is basically the same for periodicals and non-periodicals. Its structure is balance in the best possible manner between props that may not be in harmony: (1) the basics of graphic design and communication (visual programming, including technique and psychodynamics of illustration); (2) a faithful approach to the original text and the message; (3) a compliance with the grammatical and lexical rules (including the official vocabulary); (4) the obedience to national technical standards and to standardization; (5) the consideration for traditional or established uses of bibliography; (6) an attention to technical and budgetary contingencies; (7) goodwill with the institutional interests; and (8) common sense. The successful juggling of these factors is behind consistent editorial decisions, which are not always accepted unanimously, and may even cause suspicion, annoyance and resentment.

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As annexes II and VIII of the Career Plan of the Technical-Administrative Positions in Education, Law no. 11.091 of 2005, with subsequent amendments, which “supervises the structuring of the career plan of the technical-administrative positions in education, within the framework of federal institutions linked to Ministry of Education, and other rulings”. See also <http://www.ufrgs.br/progesp/progesp-1/setores/dima/descricao-dos-cargos/cargos-de-nivel-e#14-1> (Retrieved in October 2012).

“most genuine of scientific editors” (Salvadó, p.4), noting that “the scientific editor’s tasks are different from the university professor’s or the researcher’s”. To many, if it is true that university teachers “must not play the role of editors without suitable professional preparation”, then the editors, in their turn, need “doubtlessly to be helped by teachers and investigators” (Salvadó, p. 21) As UFRGS does not offer its own publishing house’s support anymore (supposedly a place with more fit professionals), it tries to offer any aid it can through a group of editing at the printing house (which helps periodicals). But we do not know whether there is an editor there, or an intern with a fit degree, since the University still does not offer a BA or Specialization in the area. There are only a few courses in Brazil aiming at editorializing (especially the ones at University of São Paulo and at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro).¹²

At UFRGS, the main problems have been identified and are the same as twenty years ago: “maintenance of periodicity”, “lack of divulgation and circulation of the journals’s significant piece” and “limited structure of editorial committees” (Gruszynski; Golin; Lucchese, 2007, p. 7). As for *Porto Arte*, the first thing to be observed is that it may be above the average age of their university peers,¹³ having the merit of being one of the oldest journal by the Graduate Program in Arts in the country (it was first issued in June 1990). That does not mean that *Porto Arte* does not have the same difficulties as its peer journals. It also suffers from the lack of continued professional and exclusive supervision, a problem that persists since its inception. Just like in other academic fields, the work ended up being taken by dedicated teachers, but the University did not supply any technicians. This dedication to the Graduate Program, with multiple functions, does not imply on rapid editorial process. Much to the contrary. The even more evident difficulty can be identified in the very, very long time spent on preparing each issue. The use of an editorial board to also take roles that normally are taken by one professional only (the editor) ends up extending the executive step of the work flow.

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The University of Sao Paulo’s Communication course at ECA, *Escola de Comunicações e Artes*, offers training in Publishing, and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro provides a course on Editorial Production at ECO, its school of communication.

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In 2010, the average age of periodicals printed by UFRGS was 17, according to Ferreira; Mandy; Job (2010), p. 8. But we question their work’s method or source, because they have ignored the existence of *Porto Arte*. Therefore, it is likely to incur in the same mistake by omitting other periodicals.

Sometimes it also does so in certain deliberations. I will hereby use an example experienced by myself in another field of knowledge. After the creation of two or three covers for a new magazine that would be published by the History course, it was decided that the propositions would be analyzed by the course's council's teachers (I do not record with clarity, but there were about four or six people) As a result, there was much disagreement. *Porto Arte* went through a very similar period. Some years ago, after comings and goings, all propositions for the current series cover were refused, even the last one, which was simple, had two printings, with one dominant spot color and the issue number positioned geometrically slightly to the right. Later, the journal ended up deciding upon a more elaborated version, made by someone else: a simple cover, two printings, with one dominant spot color and the issue number positioned geometrically slightly to the right! In the Visual Arts, contrasting tastes and opinions may be all the more thwarting than in other fields.

When we think of the Brazilian model for print periodicals (electronic ones offer more resourcefulness), the idea that comes to mind is that of book editors who, during the 80's, advocated by the federal administrative independence of university presses and other production or marketing dreams. If we take such ideals and put it on journals, we will find, here and there, successful models, albeit in other contexts. Art academic thought may be intentional as for alternative financial paths, and the ideological attitude of researchers and artist-editors tired of the painful path of realization, can take them to a system that is paralleled to the university. The journal produced by Visual artists, for example, will hardly be the spokesman for the academic world, even though it has trained and "empowered" its agents. It is easier for this role to persist in periodicals structured by theory and word. Imported models (less dependent on "allowances") will certainly be more illustrative.

An international, small-length example that only changed afterwards was the *Semiotext(e)* journal, published in New York from 1974 to 1984 (from then on as a series of books) by the Frenchman Sylvère Lotringer together with students from Columbia University, where he taught literary criticism and philosophy.¹⁴ The periodical

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The "e" in between parentheses indicated the relationship between languages, according to the irony of Chris Klaus (one of the current editors, together with Hedi El Kholti and Lotringer) "a pun devised in the mid 1970s, referencing both the bi-cultural basis of the whole enterprise ("text" being "texte", a French feminine noun) while parodying the preponderance of parenthetical clauses in hip academe, e.g. The (M)other ... Umm, you probably had to be there." (Morgan, 2012).

was "a strategy to position himself outside of academia while still being part of it" (The European..., 2012), presenting names randomly identified as pertaining to the "French theory" (such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Baudrillard, Paul Virilio, Jean-François Lyotard etc.) and interviews with local artists (such as Philip Glass, Robert Wilson, John Cage). Later on, it published interventions in the occasional bulletin *Animal Shelter* (Allen, 2011, p. 296). Originally an independent periodical, its books constitute a series published by MIT Press, an academic institution, since 2001. A similar but lasting example regarding presentation is the journal *October*, which was started in 1979 and still is one of the most influential journals. Its name comes from the homonymous Einstein movie, and it was created by Americans Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson (alongside Jeremy Rolfe-Gilbert in the first issues), thus detaching from the crescent commercialism of *Artforum*. The first editorial informed its intention "to address those readers who, like many writers and artists, feel that the present format of the major art reviews is producing a form of pictorial journalism which deflects and compromises critical effort" (*October*, v. 1, n.1, 1976, p. 5). It goes on to show the most important names of theory, critic and art history (including also the divulgation of French theory to the Anglophone public), besides artists. Douglas Krimp, Yve-Alain Bois, Hal Foster, Benjamin Buchloh and others have been or still are part of the Editorial Board. The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies actually made room for its conceiving, but since its fifth number it pertains to MIT Press. It has now more than 140 numbers. Housed at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *October* is cuddled by a specific model of academic world that guarantees its navigation autonomy.

We must recognize that the erudite consumption of information seems to give priority to textual reflections — in our case, the so-called *of art* or *about art* journal —, more common than the visual languages propositions — the artist journal. The receptiveness in the institutional means of a journal such as *Revista-Valise* does not need any explanations. The virtual periodical has no printed edition and was created and kept since 2011 by students from the masters and PhD courses of the Graduation Program in Visual Arts from UFRGS.¹⁵ It is very careful in the selection of articles. It has an elegant, functional, obedient graphic project to the predetermined

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Revista-Valise and *Refil's* (introduced below) editorial boards may not last, for they are recent periodicals with student involvement. See their websites to verify their expedients.

SEER system¹⁶, which diminishes risks such as the deadline for the completion of issues. Although it has only printed a few issues, it is no longer just a promise. It is a consistent vehicle run by teachers of the same program as Porto Arte, its older sister, to whom it is a welcomed addition.

As to the second possibility of divulgation, the artist journal, its possible publication between regular activities of undergraduation in Arts would be an important and necessary victory for the exercising and divulgation of researches on artistic means of communication, besides having an effective increase in learning. A small demonstration of this argument inhabits the School of Fine Arts of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Still very recent, there is also *Refil*, a journal that has been created in 2010. It has released only four numbers (certainly, it was a chance they took), as a “lab journal”, produced by the Núcleo de Produção em Artes Gráficas (Graphic Arts Production Group). It is an example of courage. For the time being (or as proposed), it has not defined its periodicity, neither does it have a standardized format; it does not suggest the continuity one expects from a journal (it has no ISSN).¹⁷ What it does have is sincerity and communicative energy. It can be made of paper waste (leftovers from the bindery) and most of its pages are visual, but it may also be eminently theoretical and textual. It can freely choose whatever way it wants to go. The project “combines three main ideas: the *showcase*, through its device-packaging; the *supply* expressed by the journal’s title and related to the desire to achieve extracurricular research and workplace fronts; and, finally, *free and irresolvable experimentation*”¹⁷. This experimentation is intellectual and formal, composed of word and image, with prevalence of interviews and writings by artists and theorists, many of them teachers. It is supported by the partnership of *Pós*, the Graduation Program in Arts at EBA/UFMG.

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The SEER is a system for processing electronic scientific journals, originated from the Open Journal Systems, developed by University of British Columbia and adapted in Brazil by the Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology (IBICT). The periodical can be created in an entirely electronic manner (predetermined formatting) or by previewing the pages with a similar layout to the printed version.

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The International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) is an eight-digit number (divided into two groups of four, separated by a hyphen) periodical identifier. In Brazil, the ISSN Network is represented by IBICT, Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology. The number is printed on the cover together with its specific barcode.

I believe that the very young *Revista-Valise* and *Refil* are not dichotomous, but complementary and synchronous. They are distinct products of an effort to promote intellectual production of our schools of Art: one is virtual while the other is material; one is lengthier while the other is shorter; one is made by Graduate students while the other is made by undergraduate students; both are operated in busy federal educational institutions. They both select and publish the artistic thinking with independence and seriousness. They are, judging by their qualities, spontaneously inherent to their origins, defending the alternatives of an artistic, scientific and editorial status that is being sought. They are fast, and they make me laugh at painful burdens of the past that are, nowadays, valuable methodological grants. The methodology involved in the publication of knowledge conceived in research and education centers need to impose, for demonstration and divulgation purposes, the universal and singular characteristics of its proposals, hypotheses, problems and results.

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PAULO ANTONIO DE MENEZES PEREIRA DA SILVEIRA: Professor at Institute of Arts from Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Master and PhD in Visual Arts from the same University (1999 and 2008) with a degree in Art History, Theory and Criticism. His writings were published in books and periodicals, mainly in books and other publications on artists and their role in the establishment of contemporary art.

