

GENDERED DESIGN IN STEAM (GDS) - PROJECT TEAM POSTERS

GDS, Carleton University

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GENDERED DESIGN IN STEAM



Pernambuco, Brazil

Team

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"We... focus on gender when we value women's personal experiences, when we offer them space for listening and a place to speak, or when we allow them to use their reports, images, and bodies to break the silence."

— Débora Ferro

ID91

Studying the use of artifacts to rebuild self-image and identity among female breast cancer survivors in Brazil



This study qualitatively analyzes the individual and social well-being of female breast cancer survivors who underwent mastectomies in Pernambuco, Brazil. This study focuses on the potential of design as a vehicle for the resignification of self-image by women who have undergone mastectomies due to breast cancer, and to aid in reducing negative perceptions about their bodies. Through interviews, workshops, and exhibitions in collaboration with The Support and Self-Awareness Group for People with Cancer, this study has collected diverse personal experiences from survivors of breast cancer and of those receiving treatments, has highlighted the demands during the different stages of cancer treatment, has provided insight on the relationship these women establish with their own bodies and with artifacts they use, and has allowed women to explore strategies to rebuild their self-image and break taboos related to breasts and breast cancer.



Soap modelling results during team training for modelling workshop.

Outcomes

- Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, virtual methods were adopted to carry out research. A booklet and video was produced to instruct women participants on how to use the google meet software in order to join in on the interviews and workshops virtually.
- Digital booklet created addressing photography tips for women to participate in photography workshop. Women participating in this workshop took pictures of themselves at different stages throughout the research. This research was used to evaluate the different relationships women had with their bodies during and after cancer treatment, as well before and after having a prosthesis.
- An exhibition was developed based on the research and the materials produced by the female participants, first as a virtual exhibition which was then translated into a physical exhibition called "Guerreiras do Calendario" (Calendar Warriors).



1. Digital booklet created to assist participants with the virtual meeting platforms so that they can participate in the meetings and workshops.
2. "Guerreiras do Calendario" (Calendar Warriors) exhibition.

Methods

- Prior to conducting research, it was essential to be in contact with public hospitals, plastic surgeons, and mastologists to understand the public health point of view. Also partnered with the Support and Self-Awareness Group for People with Cancer in order to conduct interviews and create workshops. 30 women over the age of 18 with personal experiences with breast cancer and treatments participated in the interviews and workshops.
- Conducted a virtual search on blogs, forums, social networks and commercial websites that included strategies, artifacts and debates that were promoted by women's organizations regarding the fight against breast cancer. The data collected from this search was used to guide the project further with the development of specific workshops such as clay modelling and photography.
- Due to Covid-19, experiment was reformulated and redesigned for a remote format keeping in mind the different ethical concerns that could arise through a virtual setting versus a physical setting. Workshops were thus conducted virtually and were centered around understanding the different experiences women have with breast cancer and treatments, how they perceive their bodies, and provided a safe space for women to share their stories and work towards rebuilding a positive image of their own bodies.



1. Virtual exploratory research done prior to conducting the workshops.
2. Modelling training workshop for the team using soap to create models.

Lessons & Future Directions

- Expand the scope of the project beyond women with breast cancer to involve other people who have experiences with in different areas.
- This project was conducted in conjunction with the principle investigators thesis, in which a dissertation is being produced that will involve the research objectives, methods and outcomes of the project.

Learn more



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