

ARTISTIC RESIDENCIES: PATHS AND METHODOLOGIES

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Abstract

We live in a dynamic time for research methods. In this context, art-based research gained relevant popularity in the social research context. However, incorporating the arts into research methodology involves much more than use artistic forms and expressions to understand and represent human experiences. In this paper, we aim to: (1) address divergent definitions associated with art-based research; (2) describe research methodologies that employ arts; (3) relate divergent definitions to common criticisms and misconceptions surrounding art-based research; and (4) present paths and methodologies for art education. In addressing these issues, we will present some projects developed in a funding program of the Portuguese Science and Technology Foundation (Portuguese national Research Funding Organization), "Artist Residencies" in 2020. Participated in this program eighteen (n=18) fellowships students from different countries. The program's organization represents the logical reasoning for the acquisition and development of theoretical, technical, investigative, and artistic skills. The results addressed in this paper are related with the gains of lesser-known paths and methodologies in art-based research, that provide an interesting approach, both in the structure, as well in the commitment, effectiveness and even the creativity of the research and researchers.

Keywords: Art-based research, art education, research projects.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Polytechnic Institute of Bragança is part of a unique context, whether because of the geographic, orographic, or climatic characteristics that characterize it, as well as because of its culture and art, which are rooted in remote references that have been known to reinvent and update in full accordance with the requirements of the present and the future. As a result of the articulation between the Basic Education Research Centre and the Graça Morais Mountain Arts Laboratory in terms of their interrelationship, specifically education and training, the training program in R&D Artistic Residency-Arts was developed in the scientific area of Artistic Studies, covering their multiplicities and specificities, bringing together the following areas of supervisors: Plastic Arts; Design and Audio-visual Communication; Artistic education; Literature and Multimedia. This program, within the activities of the Mountain Arts Laboratory Graça Morais, comprises the development of an artistic research process in the context of Mountain that characterizes the region, with variable theoretical and practical components, relating to each research process, foreseeing the development of a process that will culminate in the public presentation of the products of artistic and research activities carried out and, consequently, their dissemination and publication in scientific journals with impact. The organization of the program represents the logical reasoning in the acquisition and development of skills (theoretical, technical, research and artistic) necessary for the idealization and implementation of the objectives defined for this program, consisting of three phases: (1) conceptual phase, centred on development of a training course, it represents an embryonic stage in the preparation, revision and construction of the entire artistic plan foreseen in terms of its objectives, frame of reference, strategies and other elements necessary for the development of the program; (2) experimental phase, focuses on practices of analysis, experimentation, creation and artistic investigation in context (Artistic Project); and (3) the conclusion and communication phase, public presentation and discussion of the entire creation process and its products.

2 METHODOLOGY

The 18 scholarship holders of the Artistic Residency Program-Arts in the Mountain were selected from among 39 applications submitted. All scholarship holders were IPB students. The group consisted mostly of female scholarship holders (66.7%), with a 33.3% participation of male scholarship holders.

Regarding the distribution of scholarship holders by Portuguese and foreign nationality, the group consisted of 38.9% international scholarship holders and 61.1% national scholarship holders. International scholarship holders came from: Brazil (5.6%), São Tomé and Príncipe (22.2%), Guinea-

Bissau (5.6%) and Cape Verde (5.6%). Most of the scholarship holders were attending a degree course (88.9%). The remaining scholarship holders were attending a master's study cycle (11.1%).

The work program lasted 162 hours (6 ECTS) and provided scholarship holders with contact with artistic and research activities associated with the area of Artistic Studies. The R&D training corresponded to supervised internships integrated into different artistic areas:

- 1 Design and Audio-visual Communication: it is developed through a set of theoretical-practical actions, with the following objectives: (i) to know and investigate the importance of Design and Audio-visual Communication in valuing the culture and identity of the territories of Mountain; (ii) carry out previous studies identifying needs/opportunities from the Mountain territory, creating synergies between the academy and strategic partners to develop projects in both areas; (iii) plan and design, through systemic work methodologies for multidisciplinary teams, projects in the two areas of activity. The R&D training is centred on the investigation and analysis of case studies of works that promote the valorisation of the culture and identity of the Mountain territories, passing to the holistic study of these areas, aiming to find opportunities to plan and implement projects.
- 2 Plastic Arts: comprises the development of an artistic investigation taking the Mountain as its object and context and the physical, sensory, expressive, and metaphorical paths [1] [2] that can be considered about a subject with this reality in the region where the IPB is located. The training program in R&D in the area of Fine Arts, within the three structural phases of the project (conceptual, experimental and concluding and communication) is subdivided into the following stages that provide for the audio-visual recording of the process and intermediate and final products for reflection and evaluation: (1) expressive experimentation of techniques, materials and supports through the sensory exploration of stimuli that are produced in the Mountain context; (2) definition of the individual work plan; (3) training in R&D related to the process; (4) artistic creation with research and practice in context; (5) organization of the final results of the process for public presentation; (6) development of a reflection on the process and results with the dissemination of the results in scientific publications.
- 3 Multimedia: the work plan for research activities aims to study the artistic event called "tendArmada", which has been held at IPB for ten years, to produce a website to enhance the identity of this event in the scope of the visual arts, dramatic arts and music, namely through the following development activities: (1) framing the activity in the investigation method: descriptive research with a quantitative approach classified as documentary; (2) website analysis and design. (3) development of web pages and audio-visual content; (4) Website evaluation by a panel of experts.
- 4 Literature: pursues the following objectives: (i) to know (read and understand) works, in the context of different literary modes, in which the Mountain is central both as a physical space and as a social and psychological space; (ii) experience the challenge of literary creation, from the experience of the spaces of the Mountain; (iii) create, favouring an inter-artistic approach, texts, performances and other artistic objects (creative portfolio). The program is developed in a "continuum" of activities that, starting from the reading and analysis of works and literary texts and favouring Mountain authors (such as AM Pires Cabral), aims at creative experimentation, valuing immersion in Mountain contexts and interaction with local institutions whose activity is relevant in the preservation and dissemination of Mountain (culture) – such as the Graça Morais Contemporary Art Centre and the Montesinho Natural Park. The program aims to produce two types of results (works): (i) articles and reviews about the works and texts read; (ii) a creative portfolio, linking the literary "invention" with other forms of artistic expression.
- 5 Arts Education: centred on three fundamental domains of the musical universe (composition, production and technology), it provides for the development of consecutive processes of (de)construction between the entire theoretical/technical dimension and elements that emerge from empirical research, in which they emerge the principles of totality (understanding the elements under study as an open, dynamic and global system), recursion (dialectical/dialogical relationship of its elements) and transformability (improving the relationship itself), integrating mixed methods in data collection and analysis. The program is divided into two complementary components: (1) theoretical dimension, centred on musical analysis and theoretical/technical review of the fundamental concepts related to the theme of the research program, looking at points of synchronization and transversality; (2) technical dimension, experimentation and development of musical composition processes that will allow analysing, building, and defining new forms of approaches. The crossing of analytical instruments will be essential to deepen aspects related to dialectical/dialogical relationships and new strategies for the construction and consolidation of these relationships.

The formative dynamics of the scientific initiation stage Artistic Residency-Arts in the Mountain-followed a logic of learning based on problem solving, favouring the development of critical thinking and creativity and the autonomy of the scholarship holders.

The 18 scholarship holders who attended the course were distributed as follows by area and projects: four in the artistic area of Literature, three in the Visual Arts, nine in the Design and Audio-visual Communication, one in the Artistic Education and one in the scope of Multimedia.

The course was structured in five general training modules of mandatory character, mentioned above and that the 18 scholarship holders attended. The specific technical workshops, carried out by the supervisors, focused on issues, problematic and contemporary artistic practices: (1) The colours of sensations; (2) Good Practices in Creating Scientific Electronic Presentations; (3) Design and Audio-visual Communication in the Valorisation of Mountain Territories; (4) Graça Morais, from local to global; (5) Good Practices in Creating Scientific Posters; (6) Creative writing: «Poemas aos Montes»; (7) From traditional music to poetic writing; (8) Music in the Community; (9) Experimentation and musical creation laboratory. Scholarship holders were able to choose the workshops within the offer of the training course, General Scientific Initiation Internship, which, as mentioned in section 1, encompassed a total of 90 workshops in different areas and themes. Unlike generally structured art-based research [4], the paths and methodologies developed in this process were specific and individually nurtured, establishing the most profitable connections between researchers and the mountain context and community. Art-based research [3] is not an unstructured approach to research, nor must have unstructured components, but fields of liberty and creativity within, that allow and foster structured methodologies to address challenges [5].

The assessment was conceived in a formative and continuous perspective. The supervisors were monitoring the development of the studies in progress and were reorienting the scholarship holders in terms of their achievement and achievement indices. Focus Group sessions were also promoted for reflection and discussion on themes associated with this program. In addition to these evaluation indicators, all scholarship holders produced a report on the activities carried out within the scope of the scientific initiation internship at Artistic Residence-Arts in the Mountain, with the respective report from their supervisor.

3 RESULTS

The results obtained in the Artistic Residency Program-Arts in the Mountain research process can be divided in two levels: (1) Group and context achievements; (2) Individual breakthroughs.

In the framework of group achievements, due to the transdisciplinary work that all the participants took in the attended workshops, and to the Focus Group sessions, it was possible to develop collaborative outcomes in the frame of art-based research, centred in the process and in collaborative work, fostering communication and creativity. In this context, collective work and reports were developed, and shared within the larger groups of the participants enrolled, helping to acknowledge different approaches, and different art-based structures. This process was helpful mainly in the early stages of the Artistic Residency-Arts in the Mountain according to the learning methodology based on problem solving, aiming at the development of critical thinking, promoting creativity, and supporting autonomy of the scholarship holders. Throughout the process, collective work, reflection, and reports resulted in the strengthening of the adopted paths of art-based research, establishing common ground of analysis of the different processes developed.

It must be highlighted interesting results related to the participation of different actors within the region that ensued from the process, as shared both by institutional partners, such as the Abade de Baçal Museum, the Graça Morais Contemporary Art Centre or the Montesinho Natural Park and individual people from the community, such as inhabitants of the city of Bragança and the encompassed villages including farmers, shepherds, and artisans. These by-participants provided positive feedback of the process, withstanding the data collected through the research developed, the never considered by themselves connections between partners and areas, such as agriculture and art, and even insights that the process provided, such as the possibility of collective work of artisans.

In the context of individual breakthroughs, it was registered the capacity of the enrolled students to potentiate fields of interest of their study plans, exploring lesser-known paths that resulted in different outcomes. Effectively, each of the stages of the process provided outcomes, that, as stated before, progressed from collective results into individual ones, strengthening each of the student's paths. These outcomes were posters, exploratory works, reports, artistic projects, design projects and several other

products. As the individual work required specific approaches and structures, arranged with the supervisors, the processes held provided breakthroughs not only within the scope of the participants, but also in the overall context of the other scientific stages held in IPB. Globally, there can be accounted: 7 outputs related to digital platform planning and development; 5 outputs related to literary production; 2 outputs related to artistic production; 2 outputs related to artistic and documentary project; 1 output related to website planning and development and 1 output related to creation of teaching material.

The outcomes proved to be as stimulating as art can be, fostering creativity not only in the researchers-artists, but as well in the public. This proved to be ground-breaking, as presented to the public, research methodologies that employ arts and that are too often hiding in favour of the final result, or artistic work. Such was registered by the participants in the dissemination sessions held in the end of the process, such as scientific presentation sessions involving 3 posters from participants of the program, or 2 exhibitions of artistic production in visual arts, or the award of 1st place in the national competition “Acredita Portugal” promoted by Banco Montepio to the ROOTure a cooperation platform between artisans and designers, developed from the groundwork of this process.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we address divergent definitions associated with art-based research, throughout the development of the Artistic Residency Program-Arts in the Mountain, that provided the exploration of lesser-known paths and methodologies in art-based research, considering the development of the process by the 18 participants. These lesser-known paths were grounded in the assumption that Art-based research must encompass an open structure that allows primary participants, but also secondary participants, such as the community members that took part in the process to collect and create data both as creatively as critically, allowing and fostering structured methodologies to address complex challenges, rather than considering that art-based research is an unstructured approach to research or is defined or constituted by unstructured components.

The Artistic Residency Program-Arts in the Mountain provided an ideal frame of research that incorporated different methodologies of the various fields that were explored, such as Design and Audio-visual Communication, Plastic Arts, Multimedia, Literature and Arts Education. In this context, despite every participant developed similar stages in the process, such as research; data analysis and processing and a creative final stage, there were considerable differences among the paths that were explored, due to the specific concepts and fields of interest, but also to the specificities of the artistic fields comprehended. As the approach was progressive and followed from collective work into the individual work, as proved by the evaluation that all participants made of the process, held in a formative and continuous point of view, the research methodologies undertaken were clear for the participants, highlighting the fact of that they weren't all originally from artistic study plans. The process developed through the individual guidance by supervisors from each artistic field within the scope of art-based research.

The new paths in art-based research that were conducted provided a sound connection between conceptual fields of operation of the participants, the mountain context comprising geographical and natural characteristics of the region as well as the immaterial aspects of the society, as the instrumental features of the contemporary world that surround every characteristic of the daily life. These paths proved to be challenging and demanding but very rewarding, due to the particular and individual structures and characteristics of the participants research, developed specifically to address the participants projects, and to foster critical and creative connections between the participants and the mountain context and community members. The process attained full commitment of both students and supervisors, effectiveness of the processes held and nurtured creativity in the research, researchers and public.

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