

# Stop... listen... look and think about!

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## Abstract

Concerning the issues of gender inequality and violence, it is important not only to understand the contours of male domination (Bourdieu, 1999) but also to identify the advances, especially in contemporary societies, legal and political view in defence of the rights and principles of equity. For this, we critically resort to concepts such as honour and shame, especially in Mediterranean societies (Peristiany, 1988; Pitt-Rivers, 1988; Blok, 2001; Silva, 2003) in their various dimensions. The article by Isabel Salema published in the Portuguese Público newspaper of February 7th 2019, titled "The performance that put Ivanka Trump of vacuum cleaner in hand", had given us the motto! A group of teachers, researchers, artists and students, collaborating in the master's degree in Artistic Education at the Higher School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo, chose to approach in a pedagogical way the issues of gender and domestic violence, within the scope of visual culture. The project here described refers to the use of Service-Learning and video performance methodologies as a confrontation strategy, focused on issues of language and mass communication, in a collaborative and creative attitude, linked to the critical sense of an active citizenship.

**Keywords:** Violence, Gender, Visual Culture, Service-Learning, Artistic Performance

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence is one of the leading causes of death worldwide, killing over one million human lives per year between the ages of 15 and 44 (WHO, 2002: 3). Throughout time, men are educated in the framework of a "culture of violence" based on the need to defend both collective and / or family territory and male honour against competitors, where violence shapes male personality according to the noble model of virility and virtuosity using weapons (Muchembled, 2014). However, according to the same author, over the century's physical violence<sup>i</sup>, particularly in western Europe, has been significantly reducing, a trend evidenced by the decline in the number of homicides in the last seven centuries. After many wars, the European Union appears in the middle of the twentieth century as the only territory on the globe to eradicate the death penalty,

considering human life a sacred value. In a civilizing process, the modern state demands for itself the monopoly of legal violence and strives for the pacification of violent behavior (N. Elias, 1974), in which the role of political and functional democratization and the formation of the state, including the institution of judiciary and courts, became very relevant. In addition, explanations of the phenomenon are sought in the change of the notion of male honour and in the process of appeasing human relations, first in the public square and then, more slowly, in family life, throughout a "process of civilization" as referred by the same author. The civilizational process, and its advancement, is associated with changes in the personality structure of individuals, in its dominant lifestyle, and in various existing social configurations (Elias and Dunning, 1992). According to the same authors, this process reflects the development of social conduct norms that inhibit both physical aggression and the spontaneous demonstration of emotions, forming "civilized" cultural habits, in which the self-control of impulses (sexual and aggressive) conforms to a "second nature" in individuals, a nature that is part of the human personality, resulting in a kind of "self-mastery armour" forged by the action of civilizing institutions (family, school, company, social club, among others).

Violence, present in various contexts, seems to be based on a kind of acceptance or resignation from society, which incorporates it as a social and political normal and collective practice (Santos, 2009 in S. Gomes, 2015), enhancing its reproduction and dissemination. This phenomenon is transversal not only at the level of the different social and ethnic groups (elderly, children, gender, migrants / foreigners, people of color, people with disabilities, marginal groups), but also at the micro and macro levels; it raises concern from many quarters (science, public policy and civic organization) and calls into question, in addition to individual and collective security, social cohesion itself. It is also a theme that presents itself with great complexity in research as a social and cultural phenomenon.

## II. GENDER INEQUALITIES AND VIOLENCE

Although gender inequalities have a long history, being recurrent and transversal to different types of society, the fact is that studies on gender are

relatively recent which, for the academic interest and social and scientific relevance, since the decade from the 60's of the last century were emerging, having made its own path. This theme becomes pertinent, as it involves society and social reality which, being the object of analysis in its various aspects, counterbalances the traditional secular tendency of knowledge production by the male.

Gender inequality has been a recurring theme at the global level, particularly in contemporary societies, which has not infrequently manifested itself as something 'natural' and bio-cultural, where the socially constructed social order is in charge of legitimating through its own ideology and dominant speech. According to Bourdieu (1999), this same social order functions as a symbolic structuring mechanism for the legitimation of male domination (sexual division of labor, space structure and organization of times). The phenomenon manifests itself in various sectors, social classes and contexts, from the institutional ones such as school, work to the micro societal situations of everyday public and private life.

There remains some controversy and embarrassment regarding the explanation or explanations of gender inequalities. Although there are authors (Silva, 1991; Leandro, 2001) that are based on the family factor, composition and distribution of their members by the various professions, tasks / activities, that would be determined by institutions and exogenous and endogenous factors, such as gender, class, ethnicity, age, etc.; for others the family and its members would have a relative freedom of choice in deciding to set goals and implement strategies for equality (access and enjoyment of resources, division of tasks and activities).

In Portuguese democracy we have seen a significant reduction in gender inequalities, either through the legal-legislative aspect, or through the action of social and emancipatory movements, especially the feminist movement, and some political forces<sup>ii</sup>. In this sense, Portugal has made an important journey, especially since the twenty-fifth of April of 1974, so it was possible to implement the fundamental rights and freedom of citizenship, and the legal and political rights. But gender parity in legal terms is not enough, as stated by Silva (2016) because the legal representation of the private is attached to the normative model of family, making invisible not only gender issues, but violating the right to self-determination, for example, in the formation of family ties.

However, the phenomenon persists in Portuguese society at various institutional and social life sectors, for example, in marriage and inheritance (Geraldes, 1987; Silva, 1998; Sobral, 1999; Cardoso, 2016), in separation and / or divorce, and child custody (Torres *et al*, 1998, 2001; Wall, 2003); in the distribution of domestic power (Silva, 1991; Silva *et al*, 2012); in

the ways of residence, in the sexual division of labor and in domestic tasks (Perista, 2002; Torres, 2004); in the codes of the honour-shame binomial (Peristiany, 1988; Pitt-Rivers, 1988, Blok, 2001; Silva, 2003) and in the sexual segmentation of labor markets and low pay (Ferreira, 1993; Marques, Silva & Veiga, 2006; Kovács & Casaca, 2008). Portugal, according to the OCDE<sup>iii</sup>, regarding gender equality, is considered advanced in the laws but the results of social practices, for example, in the distribution of domestic work, are unbalanced, as women spend three times more hours a day than men in these activities. Another example, according to the same source, is that only a third of women occupy management positions in companies; and, according to more recent studies, in addition to women earning less than men in the same professions, women suffer more precariousness and youth unemployment; and are more at risk of poverty (Torres *et al*, 2018).

#### A. Gender violence: facts and impacts

The aggressiveness rate among women is relatively low compared to men (Muchembled, 2014) but, for example, in Portugal, a third of women die more from aggression (Torres *et al*, 2018). By culturally constructed and reproduced norms, they are expected to show softness and use no weapons, and it is difficult to bring a global explanation to evidence because geographical and (sub)cultural conditions and contexts may vary. Male aggressiveness is also heavily influenced by society, religion, state and institutions in general, with the culture of violence being predominantly male.

The phenomenon encompasses victims of all social and economic conditions and classes, being their aggressors from different socio-cultural and economic conditions. One indicator of power inequality in the family is evidenced by the number of occurrences of domestic violence reported by security authorities. According to the Annual Monitoring Report on Domestic Violence, in 2016, it remained the most reported crime against people at the national level, representing 33% of the crime registered in this typology, being the second most recorded crime in Portugal in global terms, following the crime of theft, corresponding in 2016 to 8.2% of all crime recorded by criminal police bodies (MAI / SGMAI, 2017). Between 2013 and 2017 APAV registered a total of 36,528 cases of support for people who are victims of domestic violence. These figures resulted in a total of 87,730 criminal acts, with 85.7% of the victims being female, with common residence being the most chosen place for the occurrence of crimes, in 65% of cases.

Recently, thanks to the media and the action of some social movements and political parties, gender violence<sup>iv</sup>, especially violence against women, by its size and impact on social and family life, has entered the political agenda<sup>v</sup>. At the Assembly of the Republic, on the initiative of the various

parliamentary groups, the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Affairs, Rights, Freedoms and Guarantees recently passed a series of bills related to domestic violence, with the goal to make adjustments to the penal code, in a way to ensure greater protection of victims, training of magistrates and prohibition of contact when persecution exists, among others (DN / Lusa, 16 April 2019).

### III. SERVICE-LEARNING-BASED ART EDUCATION

Over the last few years, several teachers from the Higher Education School of Viana do Castelo's Polytechnic Institute (ESE-IPVC) have presented papers that describe a range of ideas and strategies associated with media literacy in their classes and the several concerns that encourage them to use this as a resource in the development of their curricular activities. Researchers from the Higher School of Education of the Viana do Castelo Polytechnic (ESE-IPVC) and other national and international researchers and partner cultural institutions, such as the "AO NORTE" – Audiovisual Production and Animation Association believe that there is a broad consensus on the recognition of cinema as a means of developing media literacy. The problematization of cinema as an artistic expression and the promotion of interdisciplinarity between the areas of communication, cinema and education, have been established in the field of communication science teaching. Viana's International Film Conferences, with themes such as *cinema and school; film and art; science and culture* gather annually a large number of national and international teachers and researchers at ESE-IPVC, spreading diverse projects in this area and highlighting the number of schools of all levels of education that already are integrating media literacy in its educational offer, with a format that allows students to read critically and use audiovisual techniques, as a creative and communication medium (Moura *et al*, 2017).

The small empirical studies have shown that the main criteria for deciding the choice of images has been the motivation that they provoke in approaching the most diverse contents and the evidence presented supports Pacheco's (2009) statements regarding media education as a fundamental area for the acquisition of complete media literacy. According to the same researcher, media education involves knowing their contexts, their cultures and languages in order to know how to combine technologies and these same languages.

Talking about images is a relatively recent curricular and pedagogical component in our context, according to what we have been hearing in the space of reflection and sharing of experiences, in these Conferences. Getting students involved in discussions about images has proven to be a daunting task for many teachers (Moura, 2017) and many of them

continue to show some resistance to do it in traditional curriculum approaches.

In the various communications we have mentioned the impact of new teaching methodologies in a teaching-learning process, their influence on the acquisition of learning, as facilitating means in the implementation of projects developed by students. In this context, we diagnose students' previous ideas when they start a basic audiovisual language training in this area, supported by the AO-NORTE specialists, long-time partners of ESE-IPVC. We describe projects that are implemented annually, when students are confronted with the cinema, the audiovisual language, the analysis of still and moving images, the creation of documentaries with Docnomad' students, a BA Degree of Cinema, that come every year from Lisbon to Viana do Castelo (Northern Portugal), and the recreation of multimedia spaces from literary texts. All of this has served a variety of purposes, which are not restricted to the use of technologies, but that emphasize what images convey in terms of stereotypes, prejudice, racism, gender issues.

Gender identity plays a central role in the way a person experiences and conceives the world (Butler, 1990 in Cruz, 2010). In all societies, children learn cultural stereotypes related to female and male roles and their characteristics. The word gender is used here as belonging to the female or male, since the word sex is often connoted with biological explanations. When we talk about gender identity, we mean the awareness and acceptance of being female or male. In each society, gender-appropriate behaviors and attitudes are defined by culture. Stereotypes are formed about the role associated with each gender. We build our identity throughout our lives, within which context is very important. In the art world, women were either excluded and / or relegated to less valued practices, due to constraints on the exclusion of naked model painting, exercised only by men, being limited to the practice of themes considered less prestigious. It is clear that the use and abuse of women's roles in the world of painting has gone hand in hand with a certain practice of machismo that still persists in the artistic world, and it should be stressed that belonging to a cultural and / or artistic family cannot acquit any form of sexual discrimination. We have been asserting that Western painting has denied women the character of subjects, so that they are represented as objects of a perspective in which a certain masculine view is dominant. Through artistic representations and the production of meanings from these representations, power is exerted, which produces effects on our ways of seeing and understanding gender and sexuality. These new times of postmodernity raise new questions about the "exploration of gender, race and class, from the modernist canons and traditions, to images of sexuality and subjectivity, and politics of creation and representation" (*idem: idem*). This

question was largely made by artists and writers of social groups considered ethnic minorities.

#### **A. Video recording - performance - An open project**

Social movements, especially feminist movements, which have brought the gender theme to scientific research and public debate, also cross art (Cruz, 2010). In contemporary societies, social issues related to “niches”, be they differentiated cultures, gender issues, impact derived from social-cultural diversity, technology-interactivity - ethic, or even demographic increase, hyper-reality and current visual culture, are a hallmark of different studies in the different branches of the social and human sciences, cross-cutting issues present in the historical and educational speech (Cádima, 2009; Efland, Freedman & Struhr, 1996; Rojo, 1997; Acaso, 2009; among others). The speech produces identities and the body as well, and as Judith Butler (2003: 20) states, gender establishes interceptions with classist, ethnic, sexual, and regional racial modalities of discursively constructed identities. History shows us our place in the world: family, social environment, legal rights, institutionalized official culture and images. Images are no longer manipulated exclusively by artists, but perform social functions, that is, their role, “Thus, it distances itself from works of art, museums and cinema to focus its attention on everyday experience” (Sardelich, 2006: 462).

The role of images is unquestionable, whether the artistic ones or the ones appearing in the mass media that act as transmitters of the way of seeing the world, from the point of view of several societies, since they present the imaginary of each era to our eyes, with its aspirations and social models (Hall, 1997). In the social imagination, it is logically included the dialectic between the two sexes and the consequent cultural creation of two genders.

In this context, the reference to the study of performative artistic forms that directly or indirectly imply sociocultural issues, in the context of a broad research, brings us, first of all, to the artistic performance, artistic expression assumed as institutional, local or / and global discursive rupture, as seen in the example of the performance entitled “The performance that put Ivanka Trump with a vacuum cleaner in her hand,” an article by Isabel Salema published in the Público newspaper on February 7, 2019.

From the seventies, on the rise of conceptual art, and in the continuity of direct artistic actions involving the public - *happenings* (spontaneous artistic happenings of a scenic root) performed in galleries and museums in the late fifties and seventies by artists like John Cage (1912-1992), Joseph Beuys (1921-2018), Wolf Vostell (1932-1998), Yoko Ono (1933) and others, arises the artistic performance that brings us to the artistic debate about Art, Culture and Society. It presents a prior action script and does not involve the public; It sets itself in different registers

(photography, video and film), and is presented in museums, galleries, artistic festivals and artistic education centers (Fiz, 1997; Davis, 2008).

With roots in Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, like the *Happenings*, *Artistic Performance*, through representative artists such as Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), Lynn Hershman Leeson (1941), Cindy Sherman (1954), Wolf Vostell (1932-1998), Marina Abramović (1946) and Ulay (1943), Esther Ferrer (1937), among others, assume various formats, aiming to create a field of aesthetic exploration that may or may not combine with other artistic expressions, imposing itself as an artistic form of intervention and rupture (see *Flows, Body Art*),

(.....) “has been considered as way of bringing to life the many formal and conceptual ideas on which the making of art is base... The work may be present solo or whit group , with lighting, music or visuals made by the performance artist him or herself , or in collaboration , and performance places ranging from an art gallery or museum to an "alternative space" , a theatre, café, bar or street corner" (Golderg, 1988: 7)

Being a tangible art, it denotes a plurality of meanings that lead us to different domains of study and cultural intervention - artistic and, at the same time, makes us question about its prominence and relevance today. However, in times of great social, cultural and paradigmatic change, it is verified that artistic performance has become an artistic approach rescued and privileged by artists, as is the example of the post-revolutionary fertile creative period - the 1980s, in Portugal, by collective and individual groups of intervention artists. After the eighties, although with intermittent periods of presentation, these performative actions are once again gaining expression in art events and exhibitions (Pestana, 2009). If the inclusion of new technologies, on the one hand, gives rise to new challenges and artistic production formats, where a certain type of artistic performance gains great visibility, through virtual environments, networks, platforms -*intervention - art, social / cultural platforms, space - art*, on the other, direct performative action remains the basis of the edited piece, whether portrayed and / or videographic, in the work of performing artists (Arantes, 2005; Tribe *et al.*, 2006).

We can affirm that Western painting has denied women the character of subjects, so that they are represented as objects from a perspective in which a certain masculine way of seeing is dominant (Cruz, 2010). Through artistic representations and the production of meanings from these representations, power is exercised, which produces effects on our ways of seeing and understanding gender and sexuality issues. In this sense, we understand that the theme of Artistic Performance, after reinterpretation of scattered records, can constitute today a documentary *corpus* of interest in the Portuguese art

historiography, integrating performers, times and geographies, from the seventies to the present. The article “Susana and the Old Men” (*Idem*) analyzes the objectification of women, the social construction of myths around violence against women, and how images play a part in the construction of women's social representations in terms of gender and identity. The article presents a critical visual analysis articulated with a feminist socio-anthropological approach and deconstructs ways of seeing how women have been constructed as objects of voyeurism, seduction, provocation and desire, being watched, harassed and even raped.

#### IV. SERVICE-LEARNING METHODOLOGY: ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS - VIDEO RECORDING - PERFORMANCE - AN OPEN PROJECT

The presence of a performer in class, Assunção Pestana, (Fig. 1) reinforced the discussion about violence, using image analysis and two combined methodologies - action research and service-learning (AS), using the preparation of visual materials, including images from magazines, newspapers, famous paintings, contemporary art, television advertising and other media (Berger, 1972; Barthes, 1985; Chalmers, 1996; Moura *et al.*, 2017).



Fig 1: performative records in the classroom©pestana2019

Hall (1997) analyzed social codes in images and classified them as a process of active reciprocity by decoding images into classroom dynamics.

The images served as a pretext for exploring key concepts and the development of general and cross-cutting skills that enabled the training of critical and participative spectators. It meant interpreting, decoding, deciphering fundamental issues in the debate of postmodernism and the artwork, knowing and understanding the effects of power in validating art knowledge, deconstructing the analysis of diverse artworks and images, and recognizing their multiple codes. (Hall, 1997; Efland *et al.*, 1996).

With this project, we proposed that the theme violence should not be considered a peripheral theme in the current educational discourse, but rather casted in defense of human rights. This allows meaningful and collaborative cross-sectional learning in an approach to contemporary arts education through the service-learning (SL) methodology.

From individual or collective proposals, which called for direct / manifest actions, it was our purpose

to develop several thematic performative actions locally (ESE IPVC), making it a community significant, based on demystifying behaviors and problematizing cliché approaches involving this theme, and the focus of this action focused on this question: how to approach violence through expressions and image?

Eça (2010) highlights the importance of multiliteracies for students as they will enable them to be better able to meet the challenges of a global and diverse society, both socially and culturally. The fact that multiliteracies emphasize the multiplicity of languages and cultural differences in our society has specific effects at the cognitive, social and cultural levels.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Boys and girls continue to manifest prejudices and to have different tastes and behaviors, and it is a fact that they/we are all continually exposed to sexist messages and violence in the various media. The issues related to gender, violence and daily conduct fit into this artistic approach, committed to a socio-critical position and free expression.

This approach contributed to a broader discussion on the subject, as it allowed the analysis of environments where it occurs; to broaden the reflexive critique about perceptions, texts, differentiated discourses and media-interactive positions, or even to question how to maximize the prevention - being-acting- nowadays, locally or globally.

It is also known that the emerging artistic narrative goals of this theme allow, from the outset, a broader and identity debate in the media, when directed to the public space and to different target audiences.

Or, as other strategies, with innovative impact, with greater fluidity / surprise factor, and together with thematic studies, developed in the fields of social and human sciences, may contribute to new redefinitions of spaces, methods and intervention projects.

In an interdisciplinary approach, it is up to educational institutions to work on prevention in formal and non-formal environments, through the promotion of projects, cultural and artistic actions and (in)formative campaigns, directed to different communities (Yates, 1998). Or, at the educational level, as Rojo (1997: 77) points out from a critical didactic perspective, when he highlights the need to create his own texts, to reconstruct the students' thinking (which we refer to as critical, social and aesthetic), since idiosyncrasy of their own differences and everyday experiences, by including study in our time, with its contradictions and concerns in school. Thus, we promoted an artistic activity, "Video - Performance Registration - An Open Project" which allowed us to: a) contribute to the broad debate of different social phenomena through arts and visual

culture; b) foster a collective and individual civic awareness; c ) involve new geographies, audiences and actors in this cause.

Gender and violence issues, dealt with in a socio-educational context, meant, in our point of view, to develop alternative events, combined with contemporary sounds that resulted in a contemporary video-performance play (students, teacher and other actors) (Martin, S. 2005; Tribe *et al.*, 2006). Its final videographic record contains different performative proposals made by its stakeholders, as if it were a storybook, coupled with images / captured - images / documents, in a post-production phase, on the theme.

Art, in the opinion of Teresa De Lauretis, like other media, is a gender technology, as it works as a place for structuring our female and male identities. Art is sexual both in the poetics with which it is produced, managed and consumed (De Lauretis, 1987; Tota, 2000).

SA, based on art and visual culture, meant in this context that the arts were fundamental to the participants' experience as a mean of meeting the needs identified by the academic community related to violence and gender issues, as well as in the understanding of art as an end in itself (Bartleet *et al.*, 2016). This methodology allowed us to go beyond the traditional class, involving students with real versus imaginary contexts, learning and becoming aware of social phenomena through their own experiences and from members of society, artists and others.

The activities positively affected all stakeholders, enriching their learning experience, developing greater intercultural awareness and strengthening their critical awareness.

The performance described emphasizes the importance of (re)production, artistic and educational management in the diffusion and diversification of artistic offer, such as museums, galleries, foundations, schools and public spaces where interdisciplinarity and transculturality are engines of new perceptions, practices and reactivation of aesthetic experiences (Pestana, 2015).

It is concluded that nowadays it is essential not to discuss, at an academic and social level, this social reality that plagues and surrounds us, implying the arts in a postmodern approach of artistic education, with critical impact on visual culture and its narrative goals and connectivity. We argue that the creation of educational / artistic projects on this theme will be a visible and active way of problematizing this ancestral issue, so present in today's societies.

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## NOTES

- [i] The term arises in the early thirteenth century, derived from the Latin *vis*, which means "force" or "vigor"; It also defines a force relation that submits or constrains the other (Muchembled, 2014).
- [ii] It should be noted that, just as an example, at the international level, in 1975 the UN proclaimed the Year of Women, and, in Portugal, in 1977, at the initiative of the Portuguese government, it was instituted the Commission on Women's Status, currently designated Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality. In this sense, there have been several studies on the “female condition” and *gende* (cf. Schouten, 2011).
- [iii] OCDE, Social Institutions and Gender Index, 2019.
- [iv] Cf. [https://apav.pt/apav\\_v3/images/pdf/Estatisticas\\_APAV\\_Violencia\\_Domestica\\_2013\\_2017.PDF](https://apav.pt/apav_v3/images/pdf/Estatisticas_APAV_Violencia_Domestica_2013_2017.PDF)
- [v] Cf. Penal Code, amending and updating Article 152 regarding the crime of Domestic Violence; Law 112/2009 of September 16, establishing the legal regime applicable to the prevention of domestic violence, the protection and assistance of its victims; Fifth National Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (2014-2017); Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights, 2015; National Action Plan 2013, where its implementation is coordinated by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CCIG), the Commission being supported by an inter-ministerial working group that also includes civil society organizations (OCDE, Social Institutions and Gender Index, 2019); <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/PT.pdf>.