

MADE IN LOCAL

Résidente ACROSS #36

JULIANA CAFFÉ

Décembre 2022

Juliana Caffé est commissaire d'exposition et chercheuse en art contemporain. Titulaire d'une spécialisation en Curatorship de l'Université de Cape Town UCT (Afrique du Sud), elle est actuellement doctorante en Esthétique et Histoire de l'Art à l'Université de São Paulo USP (Brésil). Juliana Caffé installe sa pratique à l'intersection de plusieurs disciplines, articulant recherche, projets expérimentaux, élargissant les connexions artistiques entre les pays à travers des processus collaboratifs et collectifs curatoriaux. Ces dernières années, elle a organisé des expositions et des résidences de recherche au Brésil, en Bolivie, à Cuba, au Ghana, en Afrique du Sud et en Uruguay.

Lors de sa résidence ACROSS sur la Côte d'Azur en décembre, puis à l'occasion de sa résidence à la Cité internationale des arts de Paris début 2023, Juliana Caffé développera ses recherches en cours, axées sur des productions artistiques qui interrogent les intenses transits et flux culturels contemporains. Comment le déplacement actif des choses, personnes et idées se matérialise-t-il dans le paysage, l'économie, les histoires personnelles et les histoires collectives ?

Juliana Caffé is a curator and researcher on contemporary art. She is currently a doctoral student at the *Postgraduate Program in Aesthetics and Art History* at the University of São Paulo USP. She holds postgraduate specialisation in *Curatorship* from the University of Cape Town UCT (South Africa). She understands her practice at the intersection of disciplines, articulating research, experimental projects, expanding artistic connections between countries through collaborative processes and curatorial collectives. In recent years, she has been curating exhibitions and held research residencies in Brazil, Bolivia, Cuba, Ghana, South Africa, and Uruguay.

During her ACROSS residency on the French Riviera in December, and then during her residency at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris in early 2023, Juliana Caffé will develop her ongoing research, focusing on artistic productions that question the intense transits and flows of contemporary culture. How the active movement of things, people and ideas materializes in the landscape, the economy, personal histories and collective histories.

Since 2020, thankyouforcoming commissions texts from art critics and exhibition curators following the ACROSS residency on the French Riviera. Of a relatively brief format, these texts of the collection "Made in Local" comply with a common narrative arc: namely placing the artists and initiatives encountered by the residents during their stay at the heart of the writing process.

-

Depuis 2020, *thankyouforcoming* mène le programme de commande de textes « Made in Local » auprès des critiques d'art et commissaires d'exposition venu-es en résidence ACROSS sur la Côte d'Azur.

Sur un format relativement court, ces textes suivent un fil rouge : placer au coeur de l'exercice d'écriture, les artistes et initiatives rencontrées au cours de leur séjour.

-

[Lire le texte en ligne](#)

RESIDENCIES AND THE NEOLIBERAL ART SYSTEM



Image: Photo taken during the residency, rooftop of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MAMAC) of Nice, December 2022. Credit: Juliana Caffé.

I. Transits

Brazilian artist Noara Quintana, in residence at the Cité Internationale des Arts, began in 2021 an aesthetic and urban investigation into the historical links between Brazil and France. If in the transit of trade relations, Brazilian modernism incorporated the values of the French *Belle Époque*, it is also true that in France *latex*, an indigenous Brazilian technology, was largely incorporated into the consumer goods industry. Among the sculptures developed by Noara is *Evenings of Water*, a nocturnal installation that reproduces, in *Art Nouveau* style, a water lily, an Amazonian plant named after Queen Victoria that only blooms once the sun has set. Transported to Kew Gardens, in London, in the 19th century, this floating lily was used by gardener and architect Joseph Paxton as a model to design, in 1851, the Crystal Palace in London, which became a technologically innovative landmark of modern architecture by replicating in metal and glass the functionality of the ribbed structure of the Vitória-Régia and its relationship with the water's surface.



Image: Noara Quintana, Evenings of Water, 2023, in the exhibition 'Pays rêvé, pays revers', curated by Juliana Caffé, at the Cité des Arts, Paris March 2023.

Persecuted by Rio de Janeiro militias¹, Brazilian Igor Vidor has been exiled in Berlin since 2019. Through the manipulation of symbols, materials and objects, the artist has been exploring questions about the arms trade between Brazil and Germany, establishing a counterpoint to the narrative of the war against the crime. In Germany, he went on to visit German arms manufacturer Heckler & Koch – whose MP5 submachine gun was used by militiamen to assassinate Brazilian politician and human rights activist Marielle Franco in 2018 in Rio de Janeiro. Based on this research, Igor developed a series of works, including installations and videos, which inscribe the problem of violence in the global dynamics, and have as a backdrop the proliferation of weapons in Latin America and the routes of the world arms trade between Brazil, USA and Germany.



*Image: Livia Melzi, Musée du Quai Branly, tupinambá cloak, photography, 2020.
Courtesy of the artist.*

Glicéria Tupinambá, a Brazilian indigenous leader and artist, visited the Musée du quai Branly in 2019 to take a closer look at the specimen of the

¹ In the popular Brazilian sense, milícia means a group of police officers and their members who act as mafiosi, as private paramilitary groups.

tupinambá cloak preserved in its collection. Braided with natural fibres and red guarás and blue araruna feathers, they were used in community ritual events. There are eleven tupinambá cloaks in the world, produced between the 16th and 17th centuries, all in European museums. Dating back to the 16th century, the cloak conserved by quai Branly was brought to France by André Thevet, and kept in the modern period in royal cabinets and in military museum collections. In defence of her people, Glicéria restarted the production of cloaks, which became a symbol of tupinambá cultural recovery. According to the artist, her visit to the French museum was essential to closely observe the techniques used by her ancestors².

Noara, Igor and Glicéria are some of the artists that I have been following for some years and that inspired the curatorial research project that I started in France in 2022, focused on artistic practices that were exploring, from a critical border thinking³, the transits of global economies and their social, political and cultural ramifications. In the contemporary context of globalisation, the dynamics of capital promote intense displacements of objects, people, and ideas. Mercantile logic crosses borders imposing optimization, quantification, productivity, and profitability criteria. How do these transits materialise on individual and collective subjectivities? In the landscape, seen as a lived space-time reality, endowed with symbolic and political characteristics? The project thus developed into two curatorial residency programs, at the Cité Internationale des Arts, in Paris, and at the Across Residency ran by *thankyouforcoming*, in Nice, Côte d'Azur.

It is curious to think that these displacements and transits of people, things and ideas are also part of the very meaning of the artistic residencies, which made the development of my project possible over these years. And it is on this bias that I would like to reflect in the first part of this text. Since the 1990s, residencies have played an important role in the so-called global turn in contemporary art, establishing subsidised networks of artistic mobility, valuable for the integration of the contemporary art system. Much is said about the formative role of residencies,

² Online catalogue of the exhibition presented in 2021 on the cloak and work of Glicéria: 'Kwá yepé turusú yuriri assobaja tupinambá: this is the great return of the tupinambá cloak': <<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/65935132/catalogo-kwa-yepe-turusu-yuriri-assojoba-tupinamba>>.

³ According to Walter D. Mignolo, critical border thinking is that which starts from subaltern epistemologies and breaks through the dominant geopolitics of the colonial and capitalist world-system to shift borders, horizontalize dialogues and diversify knowledge.

as spaces for creation, production and interaction. However, I would also like to highlight the importance of these spaces in the face of the neoliberal work system, marked in the contemporary art circuit by the strong presence of the art market and the precarious conditions of the artist - and here I also include the researcher and the curator, especially independent. Within this perspective, the residencies - when financed - fulfil a social function of promoting production, providing minimum conditions for the development of works and research projects. To better reflect on this bias of residencies, it is convenient to look more clearly at the contemporary art scene.

The paradigm of the artist as a worker is a structural problem of the circuit. His inevitable integration into the logic of the market took place based on his historical and romantic image of an outsider allied to the tricky mechanisms of value production - which are not simple in the arts. The difficulty of working on the issue, however, seems to be as great as the urgency of discussing it. The acute contradictions of capitalism in its present stage make the malaise even greater. The International Labor Organization classified the artist's function as an atypical work, in which the autonomous format predominates, located within the sphere of the informal economy, that is, without legal protection and without social security⁴. This precariousness in countries with a fragile economy, such as Brazil, creates particularly problematic scenarios, especially in times of political turmoil, which are constant. Thus, the vast majority of artists do not rely on art as a source of income and have to pay to produce.

The complexity of the value system is due to the existence of different economies that work in an allied way: every market value results from a construction of symbolic social value. That is, the construction of an artistic reputation and the acquisition of a place in the market are directly related to the social construction of this value, with legitimacy in the artistic field. Thus, what usually happens is that the artist accepts to work for social capital, not necessarily receiving a monetary value for it. The distance between social and market value widens even more in contemporary times when symbolic capital is driven by the

⁴ Sanchez Daza, G.; Romero Amado, J.; Reyes Álvarez, J. 2019. The artists and their working conditions. An approximation to your situation in Mexico. *Entreciencias: Dialogues in the Sociedad del Conocimiento*, vol. 7, no. 21, pp. 69-89, 2019. National Autonomous University of Mexico.

repudiation of economic capital, which occurs in many works and exhibitions based on critical, social and political discourses that, however, deep down, collaborate indirectly with market value insofar as they produce symbolic value.

The apparent contradiction between these two types of capital, social and market, is resolved not by the concrete negation of money - which flows freely and in large amounts -, but by the gesture of symbolically concealing it, which benefits business and holders of economic capital. For Daniel Jablonski, there is a historical construction of the artist's place that collaborates with this structural problem, and that takes on new contours in contemporary times: "to continue to see yourself as an authentic individual who is fully free and singularly sensitive – therefore, a genius – is today a way of exacerbating a process of social marginalization conjured by a form of self-exploitation", still guaranteeing, in a systematic way, "the preservation of an exclusionary and elitist social landscape", in his words⁵:

"This conclusion does not mean that we must simply reject the system. In a deeper sense, it calls for the rethinking of the role we play as artists inside it. There is a long history – from the Renaissance to Romanticism then Modernity – behind the figure of the artist as outsider and artistic work as exception. To retrace this history, even if in a summarized way, is something that goes beyond the purpose of this text. However, it is worth mentioning that we have witnessed a symbolic inversion. Today, the perpetuation of this idea has the practical effect of placing the artist at the forefront of a type of capitalism that is eminently symbolic and whose greatest asset is creativity. The "artistic autonomy" of 19th century bohemian artists is now sold as a form of professional fulfillment that is essentially individualist. The artist exception is now a commercial rule: "we are all outsiders"."

It is also worth remembering that these value systems operate within a digital revolution, where the image is built not only through exhibitions, open-calls, residencies, publications, but also on the internet. According to Anne Cauquelin, while the vanguard of modern art organised against the official market to preserve the autonomy of art, in contemporary art the intention is to absorb this autonomy through communication⁶ - exhaustive, by the way. For the artist to remain in the valuation network, he is obliged to accept its rules: to renew and individualise

⁵ JABLONSKY, Daniel. An Introduction to Ineconomy. São Paulo: Revista Traço, SP-Arte, 2020. Available at: <<https://danieljablonski.org/An-Introduction-to-Ineconomy>>. Accessed: 11 Feb. 2023.

⁶ CAUQUELIN, Anne. Contemporary art: an introduction. São Paulo: Martins, 2005.

himself permanently, under penalty of disappearing. On the other hand, so that saturation does not occur, it is necessary to block and renew artists and works, and to multiply new entries. The author sums it up well: the reality of contemporary art is built out of the work's own qualities, in the image it raises within the communication circuits.

Another issue that complicates the scenario is the connection of museums and cultural complexes with the entertainment industry, which has intensified since the globalisation of market economies - and here I emphasise once again that this gets worse in countries with fragile economies. Museums, vulnerable to economic instabilities, ended up focusing their programming on media exhibitions, investing, as Sônia Salzstein Goldberg says, not in committed research, but in what the author calls the "strict sense of curatorship", provoking the precariousness of institutional policies for the collections, and for the promotion of research and the training of specialised staff⁷. For Sônia, public education is not the same thing as investment in democratising access to art and culture, which implies hard training work. In this scenario of general precariousness, galleries gain space and power. In São Paulo, for example, a wave of hiring of curators by galleries fosters the culture of the "strict sense of curatorship", which dominates the city's cultural programming, now not only aimed at the media, but above all at the market.

All this digression to talk about the importance in this scenario of subsidised artistic residencies as spaces that collaborate with the production of the artist, the curator, the researcher, within a complex system that is increasingly precarious in its essence. It is common for many artists to plan their year based on the submission of their projects to residencies, which allow a minimal aid for the development of their work, making it possible to maintain their practice - at the limit, since the subsidy in residencies are usually adjusted to expenses incurred, or below, never above. Thus, disputed, the residencies are part, along with other artistic spaces such as the gallery, museums and art institutions, the circuit's

⁷ MAC-USP, Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo. Research and curatorship in higher education institutions (Pesquisa e Curadoria em Instituições de Ensino Superior). Youtube, 27 Oct 2020. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOvfe29nVuk&ab_channel=MACUSP>. Access to: 11 Feb. 2023.

legitimation network. In order for us to deal better with this plot, it is necessary to have a political awareness of the place we occupy within it.

If we observe the precedents of the residencies, we can glimpse their growing importance in the circuit, mainly from the modernization of cities. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, artists' colonies spread across Europe⁸, such as Giverny, France. With a rural character, the artists sought these spaces in order to abandon the urban centres that were rapidly modernising, dominated by the industrialization process, and get closer to nature and the simplicity of life in the countryside. At the same time, the *Bateau Lavoir*, located in Montmartre, stands out as an urban and Parisian experience, famous for the profusion of affordable ateliers for artists, where the conviviality and permanent exchanges between its visitors marked the artistic production in the city in the context of the European vanguards⁹.

In the 1960s, two important strands of residencies emerged: the Cité des Arts, in Paris, and the A.I.R., in New York¹⁰. Dilapidated and abandoned industrial warehouses and commercial spaces in New York City were occupied by artists who created artistic communities in that non-residential region - the A.I.R. or artist in residence. These alternative spaces, which made work economically possible, clearly questioned the official discipline of the city, seeking a common way of life, exchange structures and more accessible production conditions. In a different political and social context, the Cité Internationale des Arts appears in the same decade in the historic centre of Paris. Inaugurated in 1964, the institution marks the beginning of attempts by the city's cultural circuit to recover its spirit of 'cultural capital of the world' lost after World War II. From the 1990s, residencies expanded across the globe, driven by the so-called global turn in contemporary art, in order to build zones of solidarity, creation, reflection and conviviality, offering the artist alternatives for the development of research and works of art.

⁸ LÜBBREN, Nina. Rural artists' colonies in Europe 1870-1919. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

⁹ MORAES, Marcos. Artistic residency: training, creation and dissemination environments. 2009. Thesis (Doctorate in Design, Space and Culture) - Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, 2009.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

In recent years, the residencies have become important spaces for my practice as a curator and researcher, helping me with research mobility, enabling immersive access to libraries, museums and institutions in other countries, and expanding the network of contacts and exchanges with artists and researchers. In France, my time at ACROSS enabled the democratisation of my research beyond the artistic centre of Paris. Focused on curatorship, ACROSS stood out to me for its deep understanding of the specific research needs of a curator in residence, providing follow-up and broad access to local artists and institutions, facilitating research and amplifying its echoes. When arriving in an unknown territory, where we do not understand the codes and the local circuit, this type of reception and care makes a total difference for the work. Not just the resident curator wins, but the entire local network.

II. Nice

During my stay in Nice, Brazil, my home country, graced the covers of newspapers around the world more than once. Either because of the coup attempts by the extreme right-wing former president Jair Bolsonaro, or because of the death of Pelé, a symbol of Brazilian and football identity. Both events were accompanied by discussions in the media about the symptoms of the country's relationship with its memory - both by the insistence on anti-democratic political solutions, and by the lack of manifestation by a large part of the Brazilian players in the face of the departure of the one who "invented a Brazil", the "country of football". For historian Lilia Schwarcz, public power, in favour of pacification, has always manipulated the official narrative of the country based on the myth of a harmonious nation without hierarchies¹¹. There has never been a reparation policy to deal with collective traumas such as slavery and dictatorship. What constitutes, according to her, a violation of the right to memory. And when collective trauma is left untreated, it returns. This is how we walk, trapped by the stigma of a hierarchical, violent, and racist society.

¹¹ Schwarcz, L. Act of January 8 attacked the right to memory, says Lilia Schwarcz. São Paulo: Poder 360, 16 Jan. 2023. Available at: <<https://www.poder360.com.br/poder-e-politica-entrevista/ato-de-8-de-janeiro-agrediu-direito-a-memoria-diz-lilia-schwarcz/>>. Accessed on: 22 Feb. 2023.

This led me to think of documenta 15, which I was able to visit thanks to curatorial residencies in France. If documenta 14 - *Learning from Athens* - announced 'learning from the margins and not from the centre of Europe', my impression is that it was documenta 15 - *lumbung* - that put the precept into practice. It was beautiful to see the main buildings in Kassel filled with collectives of artists from the South, proposing, now from the margins, collaboration as a key element to face the issues of our time. Throughout the city, the material precariousness of most of the works was perceptible, which brings us back to the economic reality of the artistic circuits in the South. On the other hand, the participatory, collective, political and conceptual character of many works required time, interest and subjective contact. Those who allowed themselves to be affected by Ruangrupa's proposition could experience art in a different way. However, I've read little about this richness, most of the discussions were around the controversial work of the Indonesian artistic collective Taring Padi, accused of containing anti-Semitic elements. My feeling was that if the curatorship actually managed to bring the South to the centre of the show, the media, local critics and the public were not able to do the same, always turning their eyes to the country's history. However, something caught my attention, and made me think of Brazil and the front pages of newspapers, precisely Germany's relationship with its memory. Nothing passes. It is very expensive and they take very seriously any issue that raises the horrors of what happened there.

*Following image: Jean-Baptiste Ganne, Favole, 2006, Tone-on-tone spray paint.
View of the exhibition 'L'égosystème', Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers, 2006.
Courtesy of the artist.*



All these thoughts were organised, related and gained sense during the residency, and found an echo in some conversations. At Villa Arson I met Jean-Baptiste Ganne, and I was delighted to hear about his production, intelligent and sensitive in his formulations on the dialectic between image and language. Showing me in his portfolio images from the *Favole* series, where he takes graffiti phrases from the streets of Italian cities to reproduce them on the walls of the gallery, he dwells on one of them: under a white wall, the message "Ti amo", written in white spray paint, offers little contrast to the public eye. Ganne then asks me in a provocative tone, "can you read it?". In another work, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, the text of Cervantès' classic book is read in luminous morse code from his studio. Reading one of the great novels of modernity turns your window into a lighthouse that emits linguistic signs that are practically illegible to almost all people. Ganne seems to once again ask me, "can you read it?". The work referred me to our current difficulties as a society in communicating and dialoguing, to political polarizations, the symptoms of post-modernity and its liquid relationships, so liquid that we are now discussing post-truth - objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.



Image: Eleonora Strano, Ex Materia Series, 2018-2019. Courtesy of the artist.

During the meeting with the French-Italian Eleonora Strano, we talked about her *Ex Materia* photographic series, in which she stimulates, using portraits and landscapes, the tense atmosphere of her hometown, in southeastern France, after the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. While authorities in neighbouring countries were concerned, Strano says that in France scientists were saying there was no risk to public health. In the artist's childhood memories, doubt created a morbid tension and tormented the local population. If in scientific images radioactivity appears as luminous white dots, in Strano's work, sparks and glows stand out in black and white images. It's hard to look at work these days and not think about the pandemic, the different opinions on how to deal with the disease, the collective

panic in entrusting one's life to official public commands. Once again I was reminded of Ganne's work. I also remembered an interview with Bruno Latour in which the author comments on denialism in relation to vaccines and climate change, about post-truth and fake news: "if we land on terrestrial, we could begin to define a common world"¹².



Image: Still from "Moi aussi j'aime la politique" (*I Like Politics Too*), Marie Voignier, 2022. Courtesy from the artist and [thankyouforcoming](#).

In Paris, at the Center Pompidou, I went to watch, invited by Claire Migraine, the film *Moi aussi j'aime la politique* (*I Like Politics Too*), by the artist and filmmaker Marie Voignier, produced as part of a New Patrons action¹³ led by [thankyouforcoming](#) from 2018 to 2022. The documentary addresses migration and human rights issues and follows a group of citizens who gather to welcome exiles who cross the French-Italian border, in particular in the Vallée de la Roya, on the heights of Nice, between France and Italy. The film takes place as a listening

¹² Bruno Latour: "The feeling of losing the world, now, is collective". El País, 31 Mar. 2019. Available at: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2019/03/29/internacional/1553888812_652680.html>. Accessed on: 28 Feb. 2023.

¹³ The 'New Patrons' action allows anyone who wishes so, to take responsibility for the commissioning of an artwork. Under the slogan "reclaiming art, reshaping democracy", more than 500 projects have been commissioned in Europe and around the world so far. Thankyouforcoming is approved by the Société des Nouveaux commanditaires (link: <<http://www.societedesnouveauxcommanditaires.org/>>), the Ministry of Culture and the Fondation de France to develop the programme as a "mediator-producer".

gesture, in the sequence of dialogues that occur, for the most part, in transit. The abandonment and fragility of the exiles, the solidarity and hospitality of the group in an exercise of otherness and generosity, surprised and reminded me of Léonora Miano, for whom border identities, contrary to what is usually said, are anchored in a permanent space of reception and care, and not of rupture. I also remembered Achille Mbembe and his *ethics of the passerby*, of those who move around, building and rebuilding alliances, founding or forcing hospitality, which can also be seen as an ethics of resistance to the temporal (neoliberal) colonisation of everyday life, as an affirmative and active way of inhabiting time, challenging the vulnerability in which we find ourselves as a community. Finally, I remembered Édouard Glissant, for whom to recognize the difference is to respect the “opacity” of the other, to accept what cannot be understood — because to understand everything is to reduce the experience of the other to our own truth. To understand, says Glissant, is often to overwhelm. Transparency guards violence. Opacity allows for relative. And the relative never reduces to the absolute. I thought of a Europe marked by the financial crisis and the intensification of nationalist and anti-immigration discourse, and how the film and all these concepts were necessary.

In the experience of a curatorial residency, the work process goes beyond the period of immersion, it starts a little earlier, in the elaboration of the project and in the organisation of the work, and continues almost infinitely, both through the meetings that make up the network professional of both the artist and the curator, and can be activated at any time, as well as by memory, which acquires new resources to elaborate life, not just work. This is the beauty and richness of transits and residences and also the privilege of working with art, and through it constructing meaning, symbolically elaborating personal and collective issues. There were many meetings in Nice, here I have commented on just three of them that allow me to summarise some reflections. If in the first part of the text I brought more objective reflections about the residencies, the attempt here was to share a little of my subjective experience, perhaps trying to capture something about how it can affect us beyond any discourse, whether by the artist or the curator. Art by itself in the world.

Juliana Caffé for *thankyouforcoming*, March 2023.