

DRAG PROJECT A 400 WEEK

OEI #66: POEMA/PROCESSO

Colophon

OEI #66 2014: Process/poem (poema/processo)

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Poema/processo in the Northeast

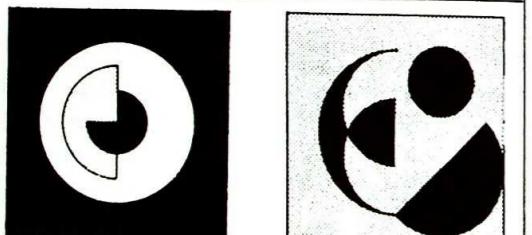
(an interview with Falves Silva by Cristina Freire)

Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, July 24, 2013

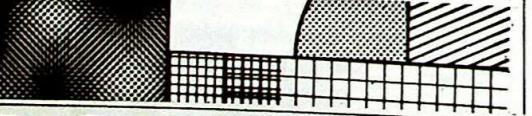


VLADIMIR DIAS PINO

Sou filho de tipógrafo. Eu lido com tipos desde criança. Isto me levou a uma certa saturação da Letra. Em 56, num importante depoimento dos concretistas à Revista O Cruzeiro eu digo que poesia se faz sem palavras. Isso é muito chocante. O Décio, o Gullar, me condenavam porque achavam que a poesia tem compromisso com a palavra. "Solidá" não é mais um livro tipográfico, a própria "AVE" já não é mais um livro só com letras. Não me interessava só quebrar verso e a palavra, me interessava o não uso da palavra, o não uso do compromisso com a palavra. Porque se vamos fazer um novo código que é a semiótica da poesia, da posição da palavra no suporte papel, não podemos ficar presos a outro código, porque o alfabeto é tão arbitrário que não permite a superposição. Ao criarmos outro tipo de código podemos superpor camadas de código. Este era o sentido do Intensivismo: trabalhar com camadas de significados. Quando propúnhamos o indicador de leitura, que eram os gráficos no intensivismo, nos percebemos que a grande questão atual no poema seria a visualidade nascer simultaneamente à inscrição do poema. Não escrever mas o inscrever do poema.

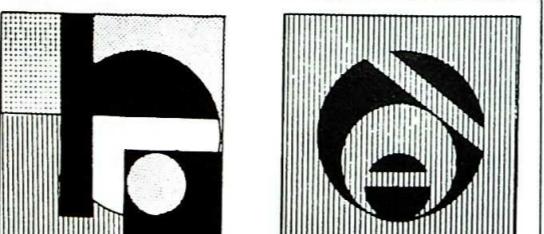


O movimento do poema processo é justamente para você ler sistemas, você ler sistemas e não estruturas. Porque quando você muda a Arena pelo PDS você está mudando uma estrutura por outra mais quando você muda capitalismo para socialismo você está mudando processos. Se você educa para a leitura de estrutura você está apelando para uma política de mudança de estrutura mas se você educa um povo a ler processos ou sistemas você está propondo mudanças de sistemas. Só o processo é revolucionário, a estrutura não.



Hoje eu sobreponho não mais a imagem do intensivismo mas os gráficos, as direções de leitura. O que diferencia o poema da pintura é a problemática da direção da leitura. O quadro é emblemático, é um todo e toda leitura de um poema é ordinal, segue uma ordinalidade, o que não existe na pintura. Por isso é que digo que meus quadros são poemas... Então a medida que se sobreponem informações geométricas a leitura é eletrônica e não mais mecânica. Mas como é possível ao cérebro ler isso? Por exemplo, um satélite capta em uma semana informações que um homem levaria 200 anos para ler. Essa leitura é feita estatisticamente, em blocos, fragmentadamente.

A holografia, o computador são meios, apenas meios como é a arte correio. Não geram uma arte específica. O que eu quero é fazer um poema que possua uma máquina específica para ser lido e não fazer um poema para uma máquina existente ler. Pois se fizer isto estou subordinando o poema ao poderio dos donos dessas máquinas, estou alimentando estas máquinas servilmente. E o papel do poeta é justamente quebrar esse lado servil para com as máquinas.



Eu sou o produto falante e ao mesmo tempo eu sou o consciente dele (poema, obra). Esse é o grande papel do artista: ser o consciente do seu trabalho. Por isso é que eu levo um susto quando um artista mata o trabalho dele com um título... ele não estava consciente. Às vezes o trabalho está na frente do indivíduo, geralmente está. Eu faço um exercício imenso para estar rente com o meu trabalho.

entrevista em janeiro de 87 por Evandro Salles, Carla Guahard e Márcio Rolo.



A Margem #8 1987, "Poema/processo 1967-1987", ed. Falves Silva, Anchieta Fernandes, Franklin Capistrano

Cristina Freire: I would like you to tell me about your activities over the last fifty years. How did your artistic practice start, what were your interests, how did you connect with the network of mail art and how did you develop your own poetry work?

Falves Silva: I am self-taught and have been working in the field of printmaking since my childhood. I always had a strong relationship with paper, so my work constantly uses paper as its support. There was a period in the 1960s when I took a correspondence course in drawing. During this period Natal had no university, there were only courses in medicine and law, and I was not interested in that.

CF: When were you born?

FF: I was born in 1943 in Paraíba and came to Natal when I was 10 years old. Working as a child, always with that curiosity... I've always liked pictures. I started reading comics, it was normal at the time, and then I started reading books, at the beginning, of course, without any (critical) criteria. I always liked detective stories and felt a desire to learn to draw, so I took this correspondence course between 1962 and 1964. I liked art, but was always working with printmaking; I belonged to a group that called itself Juventude Operária Católica (JOC) (Young Christian Workers). There we created a JOC film club, the Tiró Cineclub, which was the second film club here in Natal. At that age I loved film. Through this film club I came in contact with people who had a more robust library than mine, and I started reading other books and other authors. One of them, as I always liked detective stories, was Edgar Allan Poe.

Then I began to show my work here. My first exhibition was in 1966. There was a gallery on the Andrade de Albuquerque square. The show was supposed to be up for a month, but it was the time of the military dictatorship, mid 1966, so it was up for only a week and was then closed down. The gallery was in front of a church, and a well-known journalist proclaimed that my exhibition was stimulating students erotically... It was the first exhibition of mine that was closed down, others would follow...

In 1967 my group became interested in concrete poetry, mainly through the work of Moacy Cirne (1943-2014). Moacy was part of this group of young intellectuals, and cinema began to have a very strong influence on our work. We made three short (ten minutes) black and white films on 16mm. We had no color super 8 film stock. In the 1960s Natal only had between 100,000 and 120,000 inhabitants, so the city was small. Moacy, who often traveled to Rio de Janeiro, brought back a magazine of concrete poetry, *Invenção*, and we got to know Décio Pignatari, Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, the work of Ronaldo Azeredo... We were starting to have a somewhat avant-garde, or pre-avant-garde, vision. The city of Natal has a very interesting feature, which is that we are survivors of modernity. Since the beginning of colonization, Natal, as it is a port, has always received much news. But at the same time the people of Rio Grande do Norte, as the Northeast in general, are very traditional people.

After concrete poetry we got to know the work of Wlademir Dias-Pino, which triggered the poema/processo movement here, and we organized the opening of a simultaneous exhibition in Rio de Janeiro and Natal on December 11 in 1967. It was very well

planned. We were experiencing a period of dictatorship and great care was necessary. We were a bit afraid, but luckily nothing ever happened to us, while the group in Rio faced repression, and made a rasga-rasga [a public book tearing] there. We tried to do some demonstrations here, but ... Anyway, at that moment we knew of some Marxist theories and had some information on the avant-garde cinema of the period and these influences fused in our understanding of poema/processo.

CF: How do you see the difference between poema/processo and concrete poetry?
What interested you most in poema/processo?

FJ: I was interested because I considered concrete poetry to be a dead end. It was closed in on itself, while in poema/processo, the process leaves a margin for the input of the reader, who is stimulated to make a version of the poem. This idea of the version is a great element of poema/processo. In reality, though, the idea is not unique to poema/processo, but has existed time immemorial. If you think about it, literature somehow stems from the idea of copying. The Bible, for example, was, I would not say plagiarized, but repeatedly told and retold during history. Joyce's *Ulysses* is a retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*. The works of Shakespeare are reinventions, ninety percent of them is a reinvention of already existing texts. So they are versions. Likewise poema/processo allows the reader, who happens to also be a producer, to make his own contribution, to become a poet as well. This is the difference between concrete poetry and poema/processo. However, as I see it, this does not mean that concrete poetry has no meaning or value. Rather, poema/processo comes as a continuation of some aspects of concrete poetry. I personally met Décio Pignatari, Boris Schneiderman and Haroldo de Campos; they are people that I have the greatest admiration for. In Rio de Janeiro Wlademir Dias-Pino and Álvaro de Sá had a clash with the Campos brothers. I don't know if you were aware of it, but this thing was evident between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo; there was a rift. However this was not the case here in Natal, where we had an independent group. Poema/processo has no leaders, it is a free thing, and each one participates without guidelines. You just follow the aesthetic line of the movement.

CF: How was your first contact with poema/processo?

FJ: My work at that time was a poem called "Ponto" ("Point"). This poem would later be reproduced in many books and magazines; even abroad, in Julien Blaine's magazine *Doc(k)s* in France and in different anthologies, and also in Spain and in some books of Alvaro de Sá. We observed that the concrete poetry groups kept to the big cities, e.g.

from São Paulo to Minas Gerais, from Minas Gerais to Belo Horizonte, from Belo Horizonte to Rio de Janeiro, from Rio de Janeiro to New York. This left a gap in Brazil's interior. So we said, let's include poema/processo in our correspondence with other emerging artists. We started publishing our work in single sheets, to differentiate from the book. First of all because the printing cost of a book was much higher than that of ten pages. So we gathered ten pages in an envelope and sent it to an institution. And as we corresponded with different institutions the poema/processo movement was spreading around the interior of Brazil.

CF: And so your magazines were published in envelopes?

FJ: There were several envelopes, and we even created a publication called *Projeto* in collaborative correspondence between Rio de Janeiro and Natal. This publication does not have a regular continuity, #1,2,3,4 etc. Each person creates his own design, his own issue, by assembling things. *Projeto 70* is a tribute to my 70 years of age, that's why it's called *Project 70*.

CF: But *Projeto 70* is still in the making?

FJ: Yes, it continues, *Project 70* is not yet finished ...

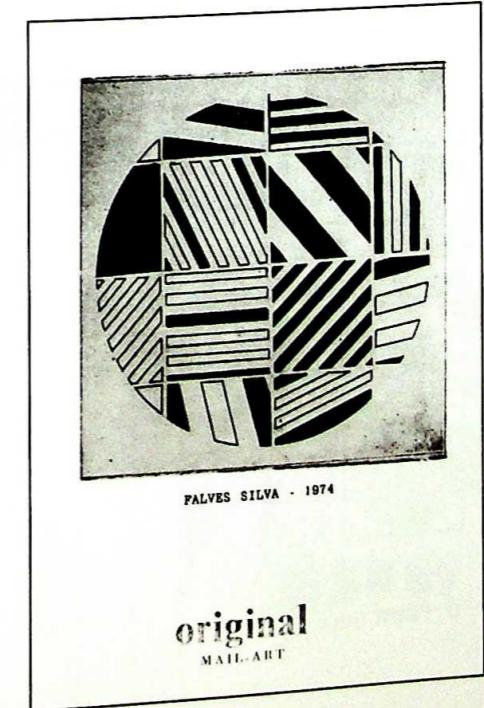
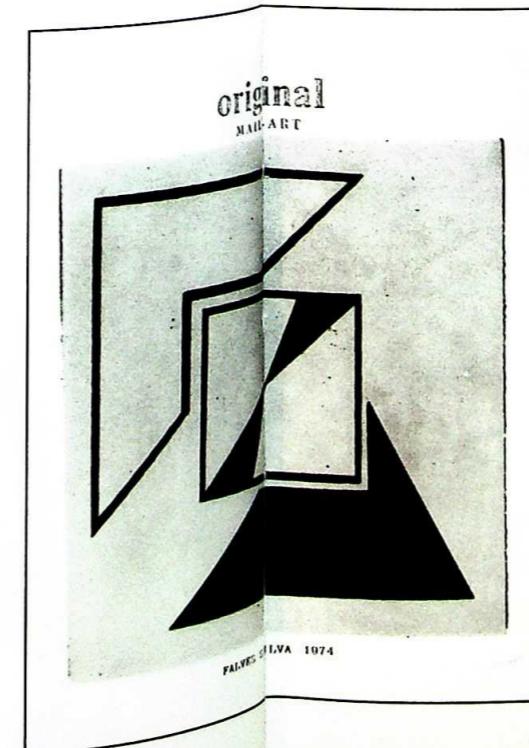
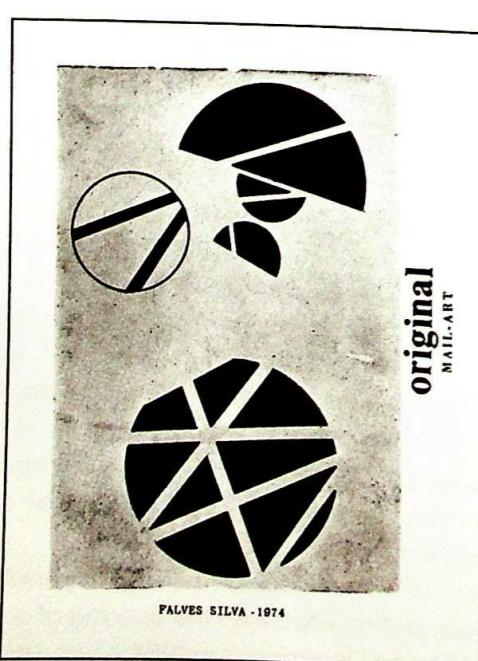
CF: To think about collective publication was something very common back then. Collaborative magazines, assembling magazines ...

FJ: Exactly. At that moment there was no Xerox yet, everything was still produced typographically. I myself worked in typography, and as much as I could I also made my aesthetic work using typographical means. There was no offset; it was proper letterpress.

CF: What's the difference?

FJ: It's just that typography uses the type and offset is not going straight to the point. Typography used the cliché, which was made of wood with a zinc plate on top with the image you wanted to reproduce. It was common in the newspapers of the period – only when offset appeared everything changed.

CF: And how did your work in typography connect to visual thinking in your own aesthetic work?



FS: By curiosity. There were no intellectuals in my family; my son is the first one, being a university professor. But I had this curiosity, intuition and the desire to participate. I always enjoyed seeing my work reproduced. I always thought that it looked beautiful. I remember that when I was a boy I looked at books and felt the desire to make such beautiful artworks, published artworks. And I grew up and managed, in a certain way, to do it.

Cf: And in relation to the poema/processo, what were the dynamics?

Fs: We worked collectively until 1972, when we decided to make a tactical stop. The idea was to make an assessment and analyze the status quo of poema/processo, what it had achieved and how it would continue. In fact it continued, as each of us continued to work on his own, in a free way, more individually. I continued working and began to correspond with other artists like Paulo Bruscky from the 1970s onwards. Many meetings were organized in João Pessoa. Also in the 1970s, I had a group here in Natal dedicated to mail art. And in 1974 we started, at the invitation of Clemente Padín, to send cards for an international exhibition that he was organizing in Uruguay. And there were other connections with artists: Joaquim Branco and his brother from Minas Gerais, Unhandejara Lisboa in Paraíba, Daniel Santiago, Leonard Frank Duch in Recife ... And the group from of Rio, Wlademir Dias-Pino, Alvaro de Sá, Neide de Sá was always sending letters to us. I have a huge amount of letters from them.

CF: So your mail art network was connected to poema/processo?

Ff: It was the poema/processo network that migrated into mail art. And through the mail art network I began to work more internationally, with people far away, though I never left Natal. Mail art is a very anarchic and free thing, without concepts of good or bad. And poema/processo already advocated this freedom.

CF: What else do you see in this connection with the network?

Fs: I think it's about exchange. My involvement with mail art began with poema/processo. I already corresponded before the advent of mail art and got to know many artists through poema/processo. Mail art as such would only appear later.

CF: And did you participate in exhibitions?

Fs: Yes, I would venture to say that I'm the guy in Natal who exhibited the most. Not only here in Natal, but also outside. I spent about 20 or 30 years corresponding with people

from everywhere, and during one year I participated in 20 exhibitions or more. I did an enormous number of exhibitions.

During the 1970s intercommunication already existed here in Natal: myself, Jota Medeiros, Carlos Humberto Dantas. And there were others that we ended up influencing. We organized meetings. There was a group in João Pessoa, there was Paulo Bruscky, Daniel Santiago and Leonard Frank Duch in Recife, and there were still others. We met in João Pessoa and created a magazine called *gaveta*. During the meetings we were deciding what to publish, and we produced a series of 20 issues.

CF: And the work was done in your printmaking workshop?

Fj: We did *gaveta* in Recife. I created the newspaper *A Margem* in the printmaking workshop. I began in 1986 and published it over the course of 15 years to promote mail art and the arts in general. In this publication I featured works from many different places, various countries and also published works from my archive. And of course when someone would send a letter, it was also published. There is someone in the US who has almost the entire collection of this material.

CF: Which international artists did you have contact with?

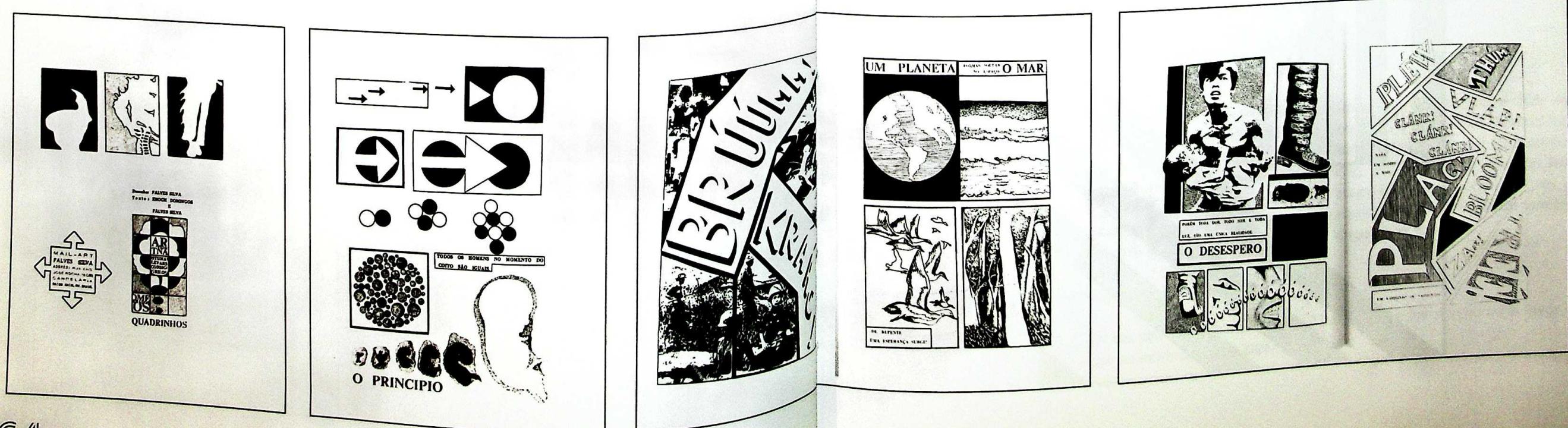
Ff: There was Jon Hendricks in New York, Clemente Padín in Uruguay, Julian Blaine in France, with whom I corresponded for many years, Angelika Schmidt in Germany, Robert Rehfeldt, who is quoted in this book (Silva refers to *Poéticas do Processo Arte Conceitual no Museu*, 1999) and Ruth Rehfeldt, Robert's wife. I corresponded with many people and I still have all that material. Anna Banana in Cleveland, USA. In the United States a very large number of people were doing mail art. Cavellini, from Italy, sent me almost all of his books ... There is this idea of interference; we send a work, it's interfered with and returns ... We kept on doing this for a long time.

CF: Did you have contact with Walter Zanini?

FJ: Yes, I have a letter from him when he organized a presentation on mail art. I have the catalog here. This was at the time of the Bienal de São Paulo with Julio Plaza.

CF: Did you know Julio Plaza?

Fs: No, no, it was all by mail. Personally I only met Álvaro de Sá, Neide de Sá, Décio Pignatari... They were the ones who came here.



CF: And you have noticed that in recent years there has been a resurgence of interest

around the 1960s and 1970s?

FJ: Exactly, there is a group of researchers from Rio de Janeiro, *Brasil Visual*, coming back here next week to do a film shoot. I've found some material for them on an international exhibition I organized in 1978, entitled *Olho Mágico* (Magic Eye).

CF: Can you tell me more about this exhibition?

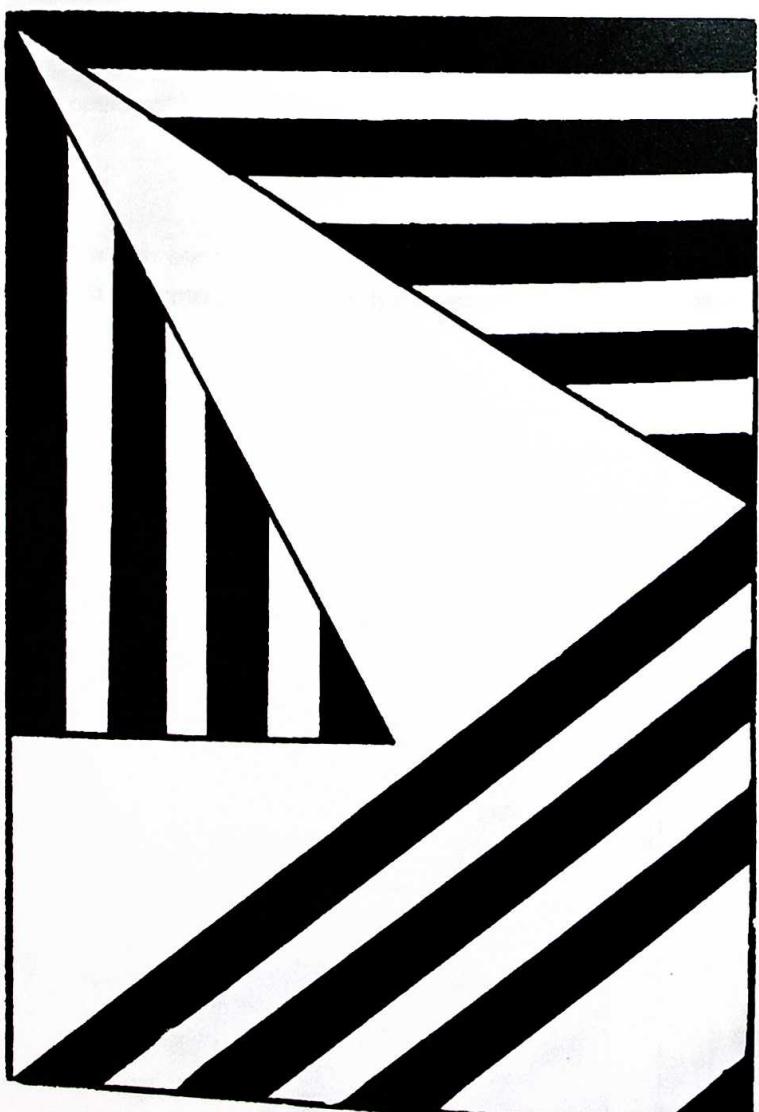
FS: The *Olho Mágico* was a postcard with a black circle in the center. And enclosed there was an invitation for you to interfere with the card and then return to sender. And people did that. It was excellent!

CF: And you mounted this exhibition somewhere?

FJ: I mounted it in Natal (1978) and in Recife during the winter festival (1979). Then we installed it in João Pessoa in 1980 and finally here in Natal again during 1982. And also in Mossoró. I have the exhibition here ...

CF: And in Natal where did you set up it up?

FS: First, through a personal friend at the journalist's cooperative, which was leftist. The exhibition had that spirit of insurrection. When I did the second installment of the show, during the winter festival, Regina Vater was there, and Hélio Oiticica, too. In the 2000s



Vater then organized the exhibition *Brazilian Visual Poetics* at the University of Austin. The show included 56 Brazilian poets. From Rio Grande do Norte alone there were 8 participants, so you see how much was happening.

CF: What were you reading at the time?

FJ: I always read a lot. The most interesting poet connected to *poema/processo* is Wladimir Dias-Pino, but I also greatly admire João Cabral de Melo Neto. I'm not a big fan of Drummond, but I respect him. I like Manuel Bandeira, and here in Natal there's a poet called George Fernandes, who was an early 1930s modernist. Edgar Allan Poe is another poet that I like, and I also enjoy the sonnets of Shakespeare. I'm a fan and admirer of Joyce, and I really like Kafka, Dostoyevsky ... I also admire the works by the Brazilians João Guimarães Rosa and Graciliano Ramos.

CF: And how do you see the work of the Natal anthropologist Câmara Cascudo in relation to Brazilian culture?

FJ: I think it's essential to study the tradition, but then when you take on the tradition you also risk forgetting that we are in progress. 100 years from now, who will be talking about what is happening today in 2013? This is the problem of Câmara Cascudo (1898-1986), and the problem of tradition. Here in Rio Grande do Norte literature is very tied to tradition. There are a lot of studies on genealogy, for instance. We suffer a lot from this here. My concern is to think about what I see today, in this time I'm living in. And I see morality, politics, politics of ignorance, the reactionary nature of the Brazilian people. I think that a lot of politicians are now using artists to connect to folklore. They romanticize folklore, which impedes research and the production of new knowledge. The effect is a blockage. Because when you are teaching a Festa Junina (June festival) group you are producing culture, but you're also producing a subculture. You are not discovering the language of that culture. I seek to discover languages, new languages to produce a pattern for someone to pursue something. This is what interests me a lot, the pursuit of new languages.

CF: You must have had a lot of trouble in developing these ideas, here in this arid territory.

FJ: Yes, here it's winter! It's difficult and I suffer, especially because I'm a guy from a lower class. I'm a worker. There is no way to enter the cultural elite. I keep doing my stuff without involving myself too much... So much so that I do not like to get involved with the open funding calls. Because we do the work but the government gets all the glamour. And the intellectuals don't dare to protest. You know why, because they all have projects paid by the government: "this guy is paying for my record, this guy is paying for my book, my presentation, I can't speak about this business, I have to keep quiet" ... This is why the intellectuals don't make a statement.

CF: I can see that you have started archiving your work. Is this a way to create your own narrative, your own history, a way of self-historicization?

FJ: Exactly. And this book... Watching the Coen Brothers' movie *Burn After Reading* (2008) gave me an idea. *Burn After Reading* is a reference to Russian Futurism. In Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh's 1913 pamphlet "The Word as Such" it is stated that true poets "should write on their books: after reading, tear it up". When I saw the film I found it a cool idea, because it begins in outer space and then the camera goes down, down, down, and ends filming a guy walking around. And I thought: I will do something like that with my feet on the ground using the language of comics.

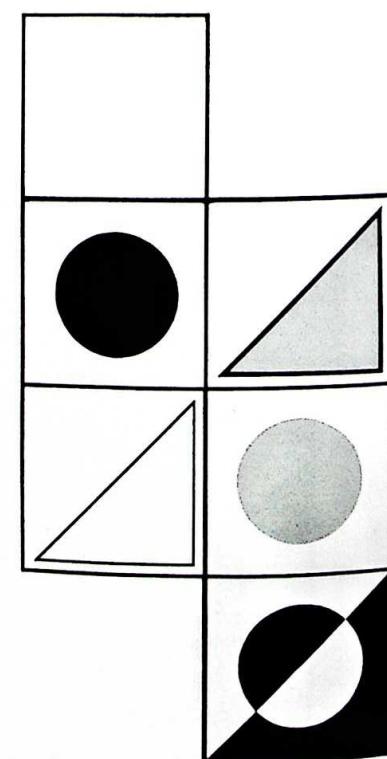
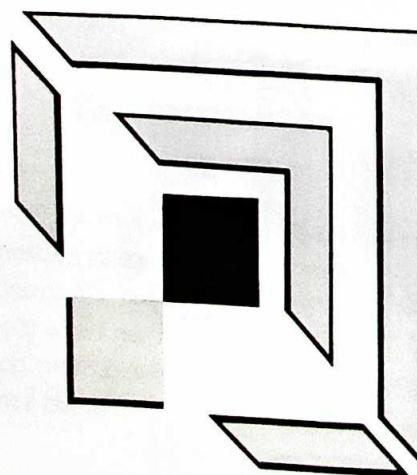
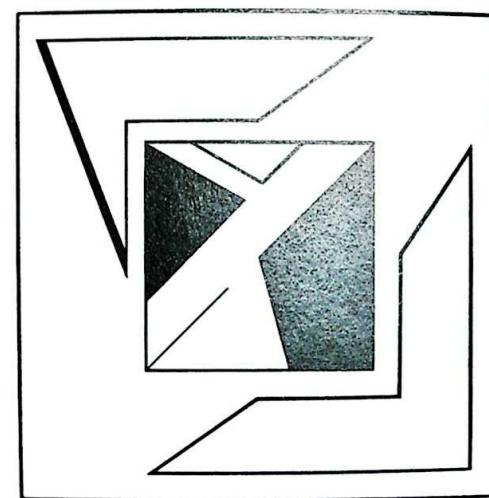
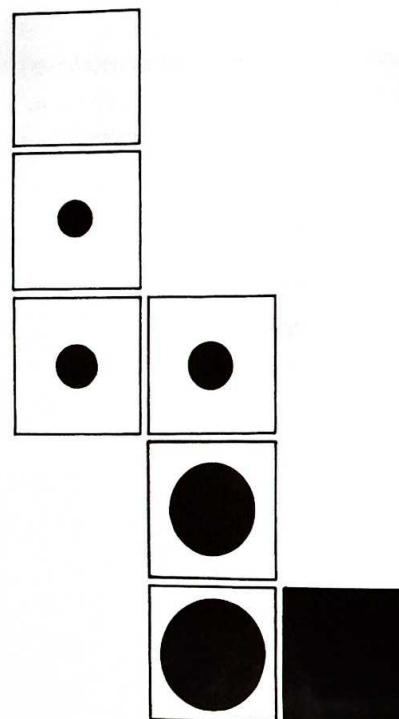
CF: History in comics is something that you like a lot.

FJ: Yes, and I even made a comic. I just don't like the storyboard in linear comics; I like comics more as a language.

CF: And how do you find your images?²

FS: Sometimes I go down the street and see a magazine, and it inspires me. Sometimes it's in a movie... the ideas appear in different ways. Some works, particularly my books, now contain the language of comic books and the language of cinema and visual poetry. It's a mixture of languages, of elements that I enjoy, actors or films that I admire.

Translation from Portuguese: Tobi Maier



To inform and stimulate procedures is what should interest the poem. This word-of-order. In the Falves Silva poem ["Ponto", 1968], the elements (seven squares, five circles, a rectangle and two empty internal spaces), in whole or in particular, are structured by creating images positioned in a dynamic geometric figuration of signs, whose field of reading is not presented as conditioned. The direction is free and may be triggering other codes, if the reader so desires, providing new language to be worked on.

Geometries are concretizing, searching or conducting situations of consequences and alterations of spaces and volumes. Conductions inherent to the process/poem and the prospected forms. The visualization enables the exercise and the study of the retina, the rupture of other open structures. The black and the white are interspersed, alternate volumes, shrinking or augmenting, in a space of different optics. The rectangle, square and circle function as vital, pulsating basic elements. Falves Silva opts for a vertical graphical presentation and, accordingly, starts to move spaces: the rectangle contains the quadrants and these black circles.¹

The constructivity of Falves Silva includes aesthetic concerns expressed in the achievements of the avant-garde in visual art – that run throughout the twentieth century, provoking new trends and research into form: De Stijl (1915), by Mondrian and Van Doesburg; Suprematism (1915), by Kazimir Malevich; Grupo Frente (1953), with Ivan Serpa, Abraham Palatnik, Aloísio Carvão and in particular by the geometrism of Lygia Clark and Franz Weissman; the concrete phase and the following, Wlademir Dias-Pino's poem/processo.²

Falves Silva's poem analyzed above has been published in different versions, with or without the mentioned rectangle. The version with the rectangle was printed in Álvaro de Sá's book *Vanguarda: produto de comunicação* (1977, p. 53) [cf. p. 217 in this issue of *OEI*]. Wlademir Dias-Pino, conceptualizing the creative gradations of forms, writes: "intelligent memory; geometrized".

Translation from Portuguese: *OEI*

NOTES

1. In the implementation of visual communication, whether realized in the form of the poster (celebrating "50 years of Bauhaus", 1968, created by Herbert Bayer and employing the basic elements square, triangle and circle), glass (see example Josef Albers), or painted canvas (Kazimir Malevich's "Black square"), one senses the very clear choice not to mimic aspects of natural objects. The poet Luis Ângelo Pinto created, as a part of his computational research in the sixties, a concrete poem consisting of ten circles and ten squares, all cross-linked. The

lexical key had the following equivalence: = the square = earth, the circle = man.
2. The German artist Gerhard Merz re-explored these limits of the square at a gallery in Zürich in 1989, exposing a double square measuring about ten feet. The examples in this exploratory field are numerous.

[This short text is a part of Dácio Galvão's book *Da poesia ao poema: leitura do poema-processo* (2004).]

A Falves Silva poem Dácio Galvão