

and exchanges, until the point where a group effect can be noticed. From this moment on, everything that is produced is group action, multiple choreography. What we do is to determine our own rules, according to each place, exploring its surroundings. Pronouns are excuses for the games, bordering the areas of agreement and disagreement, places for relationships between the you and the I, with all their symmetries or asymmetries, producing chains of synchronized movement and also mismatches. It is a relief to know that the proposition might not work. It is a comfort to consider the possibility of imminent failure and to try to avoid it collectively, to move on the borderline between 'almost nothing' and the chain of successive and multiplying encounters.

Ricardo Basbaum was born in 1961, in São Paulo. He lives and works in Rio de Janeiro. He is an artist, a professor, a curator and a critic, investigating art as an intermediating device and platform for the articulation between sensorial experience, sociability and language. Since the late 1980s, he has been nurturing a vocabulary specific to his work, applying it in a unique way to each institution.

Renata Marquez is the curator of the Pampulha Art Museum.

#### **Pampulha Art Museum**

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#### **Pampulha Art Museum**

Contemporary Art Project 2011

From December 17, 2011 – March 4, 2012

## **conjs., re-benches\*: exercises&conversations**

**RICARDO BASBAUM**

**Renata Marquez** – When we walk in the Museum, we see a sort of exercise room: training machines waiting to be used in sequence. But where are their instruction manuals or their operators? Then we notice they are right there, in the form of language (written and spoken): they are moving codes that can be heard using the audio sets or taken home on posters. The mass production of structures (*conjs.*) constitutes a game open to programmed variations on how to use it. The operator's role is offered to the exhibit visitor who can accept the invitation or not, follow the instructions and work out or not. "I expect a curious visitor", you once said, trying to attract those who are out of shape. Does the creation of an absurd image of social conditioning lead to non-conditioning elsewhere? Does the museum become a laboratory?

**Ricardo Basbaum** – You have touched the crucial point: the acting reproduces automatism rituals that we program ourselves to carry out on a daily basis, not being completely aware of the implications. It is in a capture mode that we follow our routines thinking we are exercising our liberty: "in the comfort of the shelter, I recover the plans of action that interest me". The invitation to exercising is made as through a park because one is never alone and the meaning appears namely in the group dynamic: watching the other move calls for repositioning; but it is especially when one is seen that the required movements irradiate to the strange and chimerical collectiveness of the social choreography. I also believe in the unwillingness, the scape: here also there are "programmed variations"; but in the immediatism of repulsiveness the unknown is recognized - the one that is familiar, unbearable, and we want to modify. To establish the "outside" and the "shadow" is a unique task of art, of the artist (as far as these terms can be recovered) - today, they are images of logical impossibility, symptoms of global forgetfulness in the mind's ecology.



**Renata Marquez** – The itinerary proposed in the exhibit is a choreographic one, a visitation where there is passing through doors, jumping obstacles and break time on benches, a choreography to be spontaneously performed by the visitors as they move along. There is room for movement only, since there isn't a specific place to be or objects to be seen. It is a restless, intermittent, instigating space. The choreography, which requires a minimum planning or previous notation, is distinct from the idea of appropriation, which would be the unexpected use...

**Ricardo Basbaum** – There is no room for spontaneousness and this must be clear to the visitors facing a space full of constraining tools, coercing instruments. The intention is to have them accept a different pact, the confrontation of automatisms, the 're-design', to the extent possible, since this would have to be carried out together with other equally important agents from the fields of thought and culture. This is a small contribution, a modest impelling movement towards the construction of willingness to act. The task here is to make each one see themselves as a vehicle with a low drift rate: in the exhibit there is a small chance of deviation, which can be minimum but intense (if it happens, it is a big deal).

**Renata Marquez** – On the Mezzanine, we find an incomplete place, a kind of meeting point, like a city park (*re-benches*), an empty area to be filled spontaneously. The space in the building is presented as a deaf echo of other places that can suddenly become resonant. It is a representation of public spaces' fragments that are activated from inside the museum by a random line drawn on the city map. Strategic project, company acronym, group dynamics and synthetic equations, which are recurrent in the economically driven corporate world, are removed from their original context and objective to become tools of other contact possibilities or New Basis for Personality (NBP). Both projects, *re-projecting (belo horizonte)* and *Would you like to participate in an artistic experience?*, make the Museum echo in the world, and vice versa, involving other artists and partners. NBP is a banner that advances guiding new actions and occupations that can be defined under it. Facing the evidence, we tend to suspect the conventions we are submitted to and the power flow behind the scenes. But re-projecting always concerns you and me, it is a polyphonic act, an agreement between parties, a design created simultaneously by those involved.

**Ricardo Basbaum** – The repertoire belongs to the world and we should make it ours. If I present a repertoire built along the time it is because I have brought to the project topics that are the keys to some issues. What matters is grabbing hold of it, not to keep it to oneself, but as a possibility of producing actions. That's how my work comes together in a very particular way, 'almost specific'. There is the possibility of making things happen, so strategy, group, exercises of power, conventions, etc. must all be aligned. Little is known about how these terms can be arranged, impelled by interest communities. Here lies the need for the polyphonic act, multinationalism, improvisation, soundscapes and textures, the possibility of a 're-project'. I bring to the Museum the recent interest in recording voices reading, vocalization of texts and refrains, investing in a sort of choir composition that states dictions, fictions and discursive strategies elaborated by various agents. Formalizing the exhibit is a gesture of rhythmic pulsing and power: it is to make the space renegotiate its lines so that they can be owned by anyone, beyond rhetoric and statistics.

**Renata Marquez** – In *me-you: choreographies, games and exercises* we see how difficult it is to play roles that are interrelated to spontaneousness. The rules of the game become a fun solution, at the same time unexplainable and unquestionable. It is made clear that social rules are established in an abstract and distant place, a place of power. But in the videos, the choreographic actions are collectively built by the groups that constitute the two sides of a possible relationship: the *me* group and the *you* group. Small relational rehearsals, awareness of each one's role, practical critical anthropology: the games spread out through the world and express themselves as strategy or tactics, instruction or experience, ironically mixing up these concepts. Happiness invades this temporary place collectively installed in the relationship. To watch ten years of *me-you* videos is to glimpse at the web present in the double meaning of the word *we* (pronoun and interlacing, as you say). Is the repetition (and differentiation) fundamental to this work?

**Ricardo Basbaum** – I usually say that *me-you: choreographies, games and exercises* is a person-specific proposition, quoting the influential minimalist jargon that relates the work to the specificity of its location. The success of this activity is achieved through the heat of collective contact facing choices and decisions. It is necessary to lead to group construction, through presentations and talks, experiments