



Researching on artistic education as an act of creative resistance

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Judit Onsès Segarra
Fernando Hernández Hernández
Mònica Ruiz Revuelta
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Dialectics of the Skin

Mário Azevedo¹
marioazevedo777@gmail.com

José Carlos de Paiva²
jpaiva@fba.up.pt

Bruno Pereira¹
brunopereira@esmae.ipp.pt

Paulo Nogueira³
pnogueira@fpce.up.pt

Margarida Dourado Dias²
mddias@fba.up.pt

¹ ESMAE – i2ADS (The School of Music and Performing Arts – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society), Portugal

² FBAUP – i2ADS (Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto – Research Institute in Art, Design and Society), Portugal

³ FPCEUP – CIIE/ i2ADS (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Porto – Centre for Research and Intervention in Education/Research Institute in Art, Design

Abstract

Dialectics of the Skin can be understood as work to be done on the *co-functional* relationship between body, sound, colour, form, line, and word.

It is a workshop, a summoning that rekindles and brings to the surface the sensoriality, vulnerability, and intimacy of human experiences, where the skin, the body, and the mind become instruments for reading the world.

The skin, as both a boundary and a connection between the inside and the outside, represents a kind of *poetic interface* that places us in direct contact with the World and with the Other.

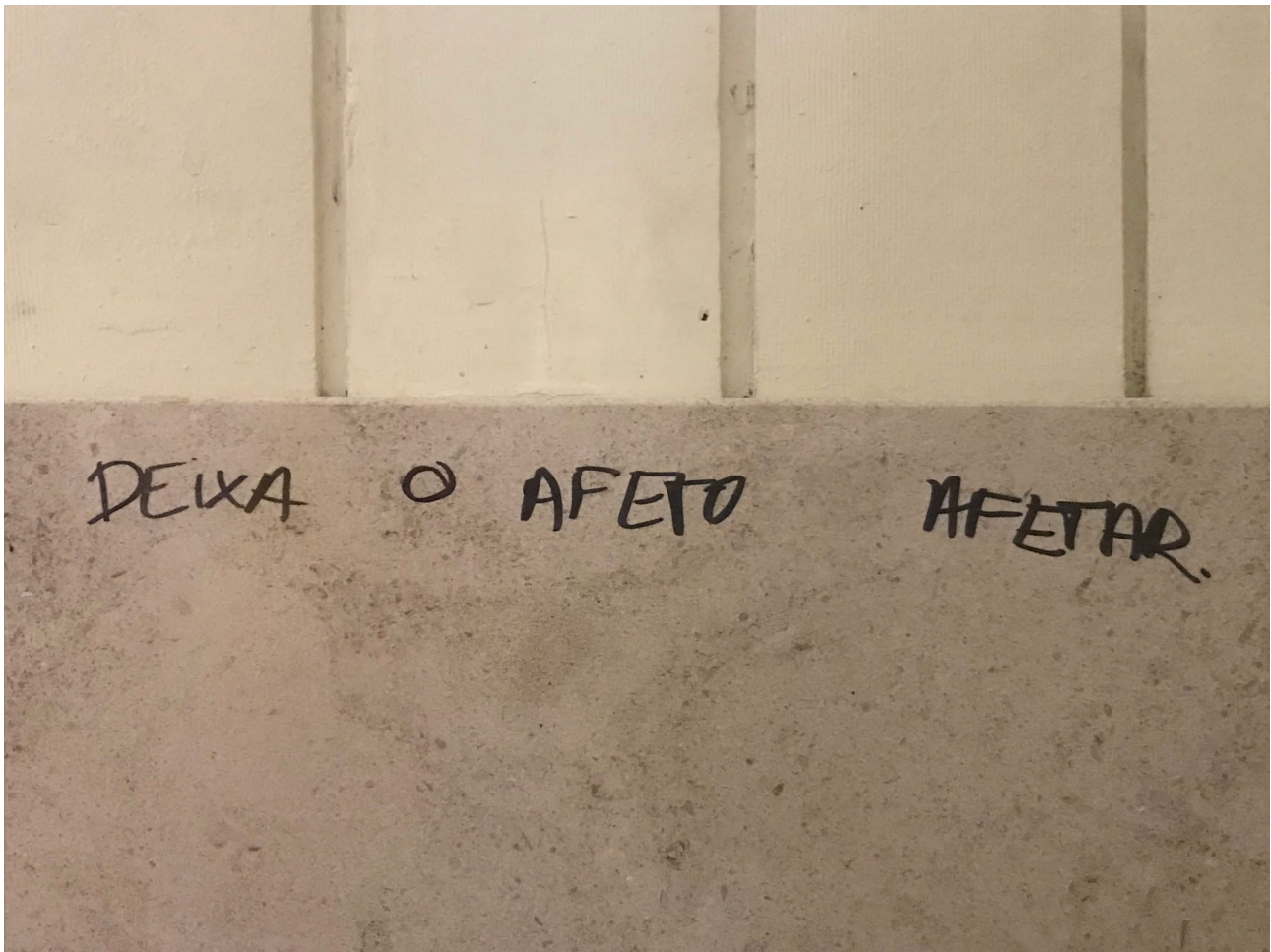
What does the title of this workshop evoke?

- Reconnection with the body: The skin is the organ that feels, that touches and is touched, symbolising a call to value the tactile and emotional dimensions often neglected by rationalism and analytical abstraction.
- Sensitivity to the other: As a surface of contact, the skin suggests openness to encounter, to exchange and receptivity, to giving rather than applause.
- The experience of limits: The skin is a porous boundary, allowing flows and exchanges between what is “me” and what is “other.” The metaphor leads us to consider the transgression of rigid personal and epistemological boundaries, exploring new possibilities for interaction and understanding.
- A critique of the analytical world: The metaphor can be read as a protest against excessive abstraction and dehumanisation in our modes of knowing and feeling.

Dialectics of the Skin is an invitation to rethink how we inhabit the world — reclaiming feeling as an essential element of human existence.

Keywords. Skin, Post-phenomenological sensoriality, Critical perspective, Group performative practice, Epistemology of the body

PART I. Presentation



🔊 Lips and tongues [loop]

On skin, words and poetics (dialectics)

Skin hums with memory. Every line, every crease, every scar is a syllable, a letter etched in living light. To touch it is to read a story written in warmth and pressure, in the soft brush of air across a shoulder, the rough imprint of years lived.

Words are like skin. They stretch, they fold, they shimmer in the light of perception. They can shield and reveal, conceal and expose, just as our flesh both protects and invites. Poetry is the breath that moves across them, the subtle friction that awakens meaning, the heartbeat beneath language.

To write is to bare one's skin, slowly, sternly, daringly. A word laid on paper is a touch, a mark, a trace of self. Poetry is intimate; it knows the body of language as it knows the body of touch. Reading it is like pressing a palm against a pulse, feeling the tremor, the warmth, the quiet insistence of life.

Skin and words are both porous. They let the world in and out. They bruise, they heal, they bear witness. They are surfaces and thresholds, the edge between what is hidden and what is shared. And in this

delicate meeting, poetics lives in the space where the hand meets the page, where breath meets sound, where heart meets the tender, ever-changing skin of the world.

Before time

There was a time once in this world
conceals, stretches, scars, heals
can the skin tingle?

the image within our images
we lie in the sternest layer of our skin
the skin lies asleep

...

ACT I. PRELUDE – Silent Vibration



details of a video (1:17:12)

Before naming, the body already felt.
Touch is not contact.
It is the world entering.
The skin listens.
The skin opens.
Silence is not absence.
It is vibration we have not yet learned to read.

ACT II. FREQUENT BODY – Skin as Antenna



details of a video (0:14:38)

It vibrates.
 The body vibrates.
 Every pore is a sensor.
 Every hair, a seismograph.
 Sound touches before the ear does.
 The word?
 The word pulses before it becomes sound.
 Vibration is an ancestral tongue.
 Skin is its dictionary.

...
 becoming flows, and with it, we tremble.

ACT III. REVELATION – The World in Me, in Us



details of a video (0:55:56)

The world passes through me, through us.
 There is no inside. There is no outside.
 There is flow.
 There is shared breath.
 The skin is not a border. Not a limit.
 It is the threshold through which the world enters.

(...)
 Touch is translation.
 Presence is impact.
 I vibrate with what touches me. So do we.
 And what touches me... what touches us
 Remains.

(...)
 (long pause)

(...)
 It still vibrates.

PART II. Skin as an inaugural gesture

The bodily experience that marked the second decade of the twenty-first century — in terms of the increasing containment of bodies, the restriction of touch, and the sensory distance imposed by health, technological, and socio-political crises — established a profound crisis in the way humans were and still are today. This distancing was not only spatial, but it was also ontological. In an incisive way, it reduced the body to the minimum function of the bearer of consciousness and left the skin, our great organ of meaning, border and mediation, in a kind of epistemological suspension.

This workshop was born precisely from the desire to reverse this suspension, the desire to restore **to the skin its power of knowledge** and to restore to the body its phenomenal and symbolic thickness, reopening the possibility of an experience of the world that is not diminished in life, nor abducted, but so simple and widely lived.

This workshop, constituted by sound, music, body, movement and word — perpetrated in a school and academic context of cancellation of these practices — constitutes a living laboratory in which these reflections are inscribed. It was not only desired as a space-time of artistic expression, but more as **an act of sensory restitution**, since its desire was, and is, to give back to the participants the right to touch and be touched, to listen and to be heard, to breathe together, to think and feel also with the body.

What we bring here observes, as if it were an otofiction, this workshop in the light of two traditions that, although distinct, produce a fruitful field of tensions: **phenomenology** and **post-structuralism**. And we do so because phenomenology allows us to understand sensory experience as an original form of knowledge, and post-structuralism shows us that the body has always been, and continues to be, inscription, language, play and surface of forces.

This workshop became, so to speak, the place where these two theoretical strands intersected in order to produce an **epistemology of skin**, touch, breathing, and listening.

The participants were invited to the following touching situations:

One. Resonant Body

“Try to feel your body as a big antenna. Focus on your breath and listen to all the sounds that surround and inside you.”

Two. Blind Vibrations

“Please use the blinders on your peer (or the peer closes her/his eyes) and use the time to make sounds with your body or other materials without touching. Each person has 1 minute to provoke and, after that, switch roles (and blinders, if used). During the activity, each person tries to perceive where the vibrations happen in the body.”

Three. Memory upon my skin

“Feel free to try to use your body to express a personal memory with gestures or with metaphorical words. You can choose to express yourself to one person next to you or with more people.”

||| Voice, larynx and chest

||| Releases

||| Collective voices

Unfinal performance. Vibration cartography

"We would like to invite you to perform all that you felt during the three activities."

PART III. Asides

The appeal to the skin as an appeal to the human

The return to the skin is a return to the world. It is not a nostalgic return, but a progressive one because rediscovering the skin is, in a way, rediscovering the possibility of creating worlds. The workshop described was/is a gesture of sensorial resistance against absolute abstraction and, therefore, it is a political act in the deepest sense, since it tends to restore to the human being his capacity to feel, to vibrate, to relate.

In this sense, the experience of touch calls for a poetics of immanence and for an *a priori* understanding of our relationship with oneself and with one's world. Yet this simultaneously requires the inseparability of the communal gesture that constitutes us as human beings. The poetics of immanence we wanted to bring to this workshop, therefore, understands touch as an artistic experience, grounded in the aesthetic reality of societies, whenever a sense of the common appears as care for oneself and for others. The skin can thus be understood as a site of art, though not in terms of discourse, whether spoken or written. What matters to us is the poetic threshold of the skin, and remaining at that threshold, as a way of encountering art in a sudden, silent and unmediated moment. For this reason, if we always stay at the threshold, in the immediacy of access, art can never be a form of translation. This is also true for poetry, whose possibility, as we noted at the beginning, exists before time in a form of *écriture*. This was one of the reasons why we chose to introduce touch as a transversal and transcultural phenomenon, moving against dominant frameworks of sensibility that are often reduced to a discourse on emotions. The possibility of the skin – of touching the untouchable – is therefore also the possibility of art, whose history lives on within us, embodied as both physical and figurative thoughtfulness.

The appeal to the skin, seen in this way, is an appeal to vulnerability, to openness, to the co-functionality of presences. At a time when the body is threatened by the logic of separation, Merleau-Ponty's fundamental intuition was vindicated here, pointing his thinking to the idea that **we are woven by the world, and the skin is the seam where the world touches us.**

The workshop, as we could imagine it as a practice and concept, became this **appeal to the skin**, as if we had been rethinking the *human in its sensorial and relational condition*, precisely to give back to the world the thickness that distancing has stolen from it.

porous... history... nomadic skin... trace... touch... perception... intuition

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