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Repetitions of Violence in the Works of Vitória Cribb and Welket Bungué

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The article describes three audiovisual pieces (*@Ilusão*, *Bustagate* and *Eu Não Sou Pilatus*, produced by Vitória Cribb and Welket Bungué, between 2019 and 2020). It discusses how they address, in their way, the repetition of violence against Black bodies in the digital environment of the web. As such, it invokes a qualitative and aesthetic analysis of the videos' features and the spaces where they were found. Following Hui (2021), the paper explores the assumption that art can shed light on the irrationality that algorithms enable and reach the sublime, the non-rational. In doing so, the creative minds behind the works cited forge more than escapist perspectives from reality to offer antiracist angles about the explicit irrationality of violence — like in Bungué — or to model deformed algorithmic systems — like in Cribb. Thanks to the recursivity turned into artifacts, interpreting phenomena such as beatings and barbaric executions gains complex meanings: repetitions found in social life meet their audiovisual counterparts and create discourses via digital sharing. Besides holding accountable those who allow and disseminate such representations — in and out of the web —, the paper makes a case that the artists appropriate both in form and content certain social manifestations which perpetuate types of violence so that the online environment can also feature more reflection and dialogue.

Keywords: antiracism, algorithms, audiovisual, representations of violence, recursivity

Repetições da Violência na Arte de Vitória Cribb e Welket Bungué

O artigo descreve três obras artísticas audiovisuais (*@ Ilusão*, *Bustagate* e *Eu Não Sou Pilatus*, produzidas respectivamente pelos artistas Vitória Cribb e Welket Bungué, entre 2019 e 2020) para debater como elas tratam, cada uma à sua maneira, o tema da repetição da violência contra corpos negros no ambiente numérico das redes; invocando uma análise qualitativa e estética dos procedimentos empregados nos vídeos e também dos locais em que eles foram disponibilizados, explora-se a hipótese, seguindo Hui (2021), de que a arte joga luz sobre a irracionalidade do racismo viabilizado por algoritmos e assim pode constituir uma necessária aproximação ao sublime, ao não-racional. Ao exercitar tal movimento, os criadores propiciam mais que discussões de temática escapista da realidade, pois instauram perspectivas essencialmente antirracistas, ao denunciar a irracionalidade explícita da violência, como em Bungué, ou ao modelar a deformidade dos sistemas algorítmicos, como em Cribb. É na recursividade transformada em artefato que as possibilidades de interpretação de fenômenos como espancamentos e execuções bárbaras ganham complexidade: as repetições do social encontram materialidade no audiovisual, em novos discursos sobre o espalhamento digital. Além de se apontar para responsabilizações daqueles que permitem violências e replicam suas representações — dentro e fora das redes —, conclui-se que as implicações sociais derivadas do uso das redes, a perpetuar certas violências, são apropriadas pelos artistas em forma e conteúdo, e assim podem habitar espaços mais abertos à reflexão e ao diálogo.

Palavras-chave: antirracismo, algoritmos, audiovisual, representações da violência, recursividade

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Introduction

Among the numerous contemporary artistic interventions that deal with the problematics of digital practices and the internet's massive, social and informational aspects, some deserve special attention: those that debate violence, particularly against Black bodies. Rowing against the tide of stigmas linked to Black ethnicities in online spaces — and in a different context or even countries, two artists will conduct this paper's reflection from now on. Both Vitória Cribb and Welket Bungué have been able to articulate, in audiovisual form, sophisticated propositions to question violence represented in the digital sphere. One experienced indirectly by themselves, as artists of African descent, or by the people or situations that inspired them. Establishing concepts and practices that touch on painful histories, even to general audiences, their art pieces described here (*@Ilusão* [@ Illusion], *Bustagate* and *Eu Não Sou Pilatus* [I am not Pilatus]) will approach (from contingency to universal) an ever more complex mechanic of violence-sharing. To do so, they ask the questions: is it possible to interrupt the flow of images, videos, and violent allusions afflicting peoples of the Black diaspora? Is there any justifiable sensibility articulating the aesthetic world when the topic is aggression to the Black body?

Assuming such issues pertain to manifestations both in the surface (materiality) of the videos and the political and socioeconomic universes they evoke, there is an adjacent element that should not go unnoticed: the role of the algorithms and digital systems in the violence denounced by Cribb and Bungué named here as "repetition". That facet will be investigated in the next topics so that three levels become apparent through the three artworks: (a) the social and political dimension, stemming from the (b) aesthetical arrangements, via (c) algorithmic systems. Detecting all nuances in this fine web of repetitions cannot be exhausted in one article. In the best-case scenario, mimicking the proposal of the artistic works here could be a reasonable response to the violent cycles found online: producing manifestos that engage with repetition might turn violence tangible and rational or non-rational expressions to combat it.

A Deadly Repetition in @ Ilusão, by Vitória Cribb

Conceived in 2020, thus during a COVID-19 lockdown, the video *@ Ilusão* (total duration of 6 minutes and 47 seconds) is part of a creative experiment that involves 3D modeling, moving digital avatars, soundtrack, and a voice-over by the visual artist Vitória Cribb, born in 1996, based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It clearly touches on the pandemic situation ("we cannot ignore that, in the last four months, the global attention has focused on the curve"). With that pointing at the primacy of digital communication regarding data and narratives about the virus that spread from 2019 on, some cues indicate that Cribb engages in the racial debate motivated by the brutal killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, echoed months later in Brazil, upon João Alberto Freitas' execution by Carrefour security guards, in Porto Alegre.

The video opens with capitalized letters typing over black background in a sort of prologue to the reflection in voice-over: "on repetition/lives conditioned to repetition/face death in a loop". The narration that follows, then, is immersed in a digital environment, in which a metallic rumble reverberates, and bit-generated curves transform into a strangely natural and futuristic setting. The uncanny waves support screens and mobile devices, over which codes and terms such as "uninterrupted programming" scroll. In an intimate voice, Cribb reveals: "I am not feeling well. I have been wanting to leave this spiral that consumes me". Black avatars come up, surrounded by digital circles and spirals — and a certain "sinuosity" in the space criticized by Cribb hides that rigid racist hierarchy, through which the exploitation of violent narratives about Black lives goes on in a continuous flow. Suddenly, the avatar's face starts to distort, as if it can subtly reveal other components of its identity, and over repetitious moves that imprison it in the algorithmic space (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3).

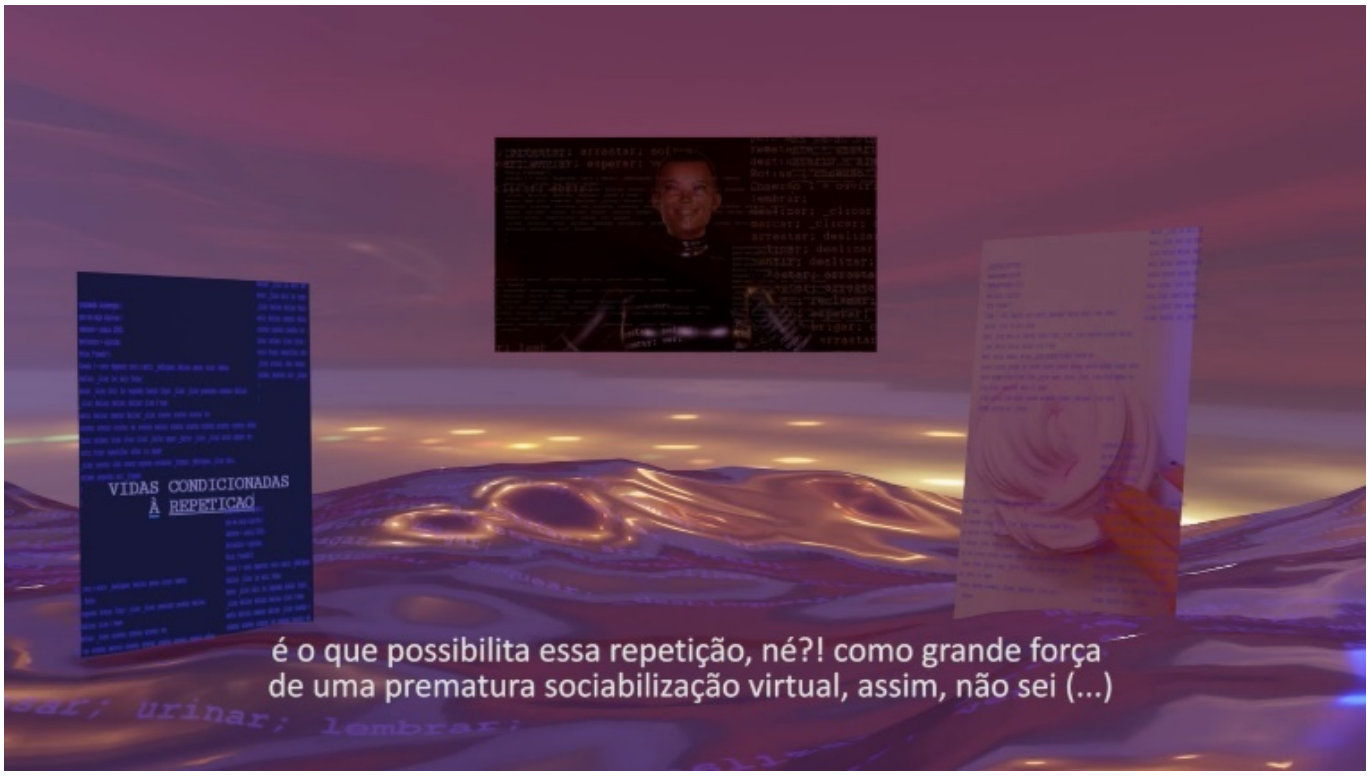

Figure 1. *Still from @ Ilusão: waves of digital repetition Source.* From *@ Ilusão* (00:02:19), by V. Cribb, 2020. Copyright 2020 by Vitória Cribb.

Figure 2. *Still from @ Ilusão: loops and spirals describe the Black body Source.* From *@ Ilusão* (00:03:03), by V. Cribb, 2020. Copyright 2020 by Vitória Cribb.

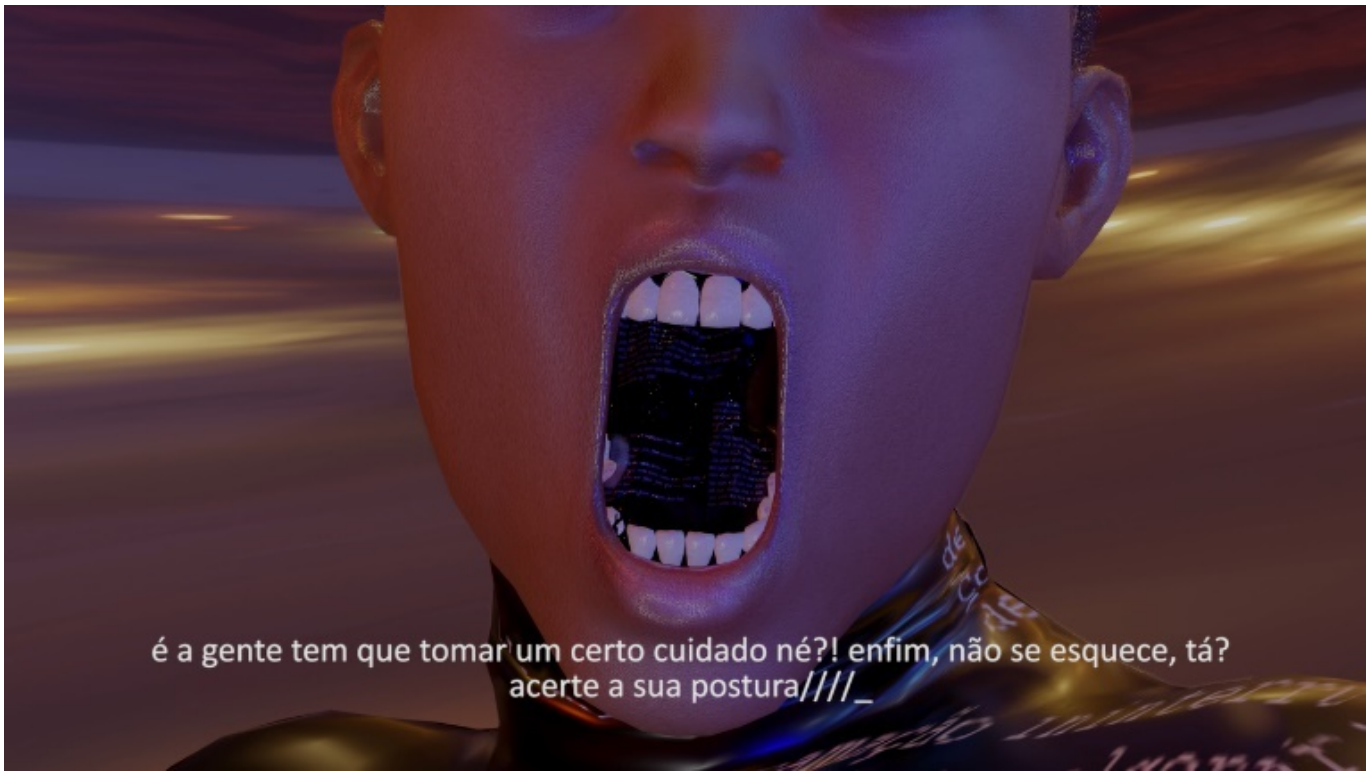

Figure 3. *Still from @ Ilusão: the scream and the digital inside Source.* From *@ Ilusão* (00:06:11), by V. Cribb, 2020. Copyright 2020 by Vitória Cribb.

The metaphor about curves that constitute the digital system gets a political expression when the artist asks, as though she speaks out loud or to a virtual friend: "how much do you bend (curve) to the machine?". At this point, the avatar's face opens its mouth consumed by digits and repetitive images — in the same way, that the terms which seem to condition any action of choice by the avatar float in the back, bringing us awareness about the human limitations in this environment: "to click; to open; to read; to slide; to drag; to suffer; to look; to share, etc.". The multiple layers in Cribb's work are resolved visually and in her intimate conversation with the conditioned avatars: the intriguing repetition gains audiovisual form while her voice-over changes tones, from intimacy to provocation. The human-machine relationship, this way, does not seem inescapably doomed to repetition: "fix the posture", to Cribb, indicates that to be conscious towards a space which exhibits deaths in an eternal loop is also to be aware of extreme individualism, or of self-centered reflections that get lost in the digital rhythm. Thus, the meta procedure observed in her self-critique ("I hope I am not being too repetitive and getting into an absurd, reflexive looping") is more than an account of a hypothetical young social media addict. Vitória Cribb, showing the deformation of her avatars and denouncing the deadly loops surrounding a Black body, finds a unique description of the algorithmic recursivity employed in disseminating violent content.

In *@ Ilusão*, a structure involving repetition can be observed in three main layers: (a) the aesthetics, which propose a reflexive feed through Cribb's deformations, digital loops, and conversation with the spectator so that (b) social aspects become apparent in the way (c) computational experiences have been changing human life. The terms "loops" and "spirals" found in Cribb's work curiously resonate with the violence critique proposed by cultural criminology. For theorists that deal with manifestations of violence in culture,

> to understand the power of representation is to appreciate the loops and spirals by which image and experience intertwine – and to realize that those who claim otherwise, who claim to present the un-mediated truth about crime, are mostly marketing delusion, diversion, or ideology. (Ferrell et al., 2008, pp. 196–197)

The coincidence should be taken seriously. Criminologists understand the importance of reflexive relations between crimes and their representations, rejecting directly caused effects by the media or interpretations based solely on numbers and statistics. Such entanglements that tie image and experience have gained prominence with the surge of the internet, personal computers, and mobile devices: spectacles of violence that used to be created, broadcast, and shared by modern institutions of communication (television, radio, cinema, the press) can now find digital expressions to reach new audiences — see the cases of Floyd and Freitas, in which the sharing of videos took over the web through apps and platforms at dramatic speed. It is talking about this context in which one experiences the death of an "other" within a space designed for prediction (through data collection and interaction) that Cribb retrieves violent circularities, loops that represent the Black body in vicious manners, numbers, and digits that suppress her avatars. In the video, "facing death in a loop" is a direct expression of cultural constructs, insofar as the mediations promoted by informational companies ranging from CNN to personal blogs or WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, among others, do not necessarily provide a critical or civil experience when it comes to criminal events. In fact, given the logic of quick sharing, primordial issues that underpin democracies can be left off of the public discussion — hate crimes such as those mentioned before are not always part of context-based explanations or pedagogical efforts to situate crime and culture — which renders graphic content empty of meaning. Such phenomenon can be linked to what media researchers identify as desensitization (Edwards, 2020, p. 287): although violence attracts the attention of many audiences, if there is no meaningful content (forged by fictional elements or not) combined with quiet moments, it is possible that spectators or users simply become bored or numb towards such violent matter.

Once the viral spectacles are replaced by other forms of grabbing one's attention, the representation of the affected Black body will not always lead to emotional refuge or stimulate social change. In the sea of deadly replicas, Cribb admits to being exhausted. The turmoil of digitally designed social catastrophes made even more evident by the pandemic does not resort to crime news for the lack of other subjects. It is a feature proper to cyberspace, recursivity, which characterizes de circulation of violence online. About part of the computational epistemology, Yuk Hui (2019) says that

> recursion here means that a function calls itself in each iteration until a halting state is reached, which is either a predefined and executable goal or a proof of being incomputable. This notion of recursivity has to be further extended from mathematical proof to wider applications. This can be a mathematical proposition, software or a system like Google, or even a living being recurrently interacting with its living milieu. The realization of this general recursive thinking is the rise of what I term algorithmic thinking. Contrary to automation considered as a form of repetition, recursion is an automation that is considered to be a genesis of the algorithm's capacity for self-positing and self-realization. (p. 127)

The author himself posits that the feedback system, made possible by the Turing machines, is a primordial form of recursion (Hui, 2019, p. 136). However, if Hui differentiates repetition from recursivity, what would give the artist a sensation of loops and spirals? It is possible to integrate the concepts of loops and spirals also to recursivity since the cartesian sense of automation can no longer describe digital technologies in networks. "Recursivity" can be taken as a general term denounced by Cribb, but spiraling events and not merely repeating them, in other words, applying contingency to each calculation. Then, the criminological terms comprehend the production of violent meanings not only by traditional media but also by new technologies. Loops and spirals create mirrored content that becomes ever more plausible in the day-to-day life that is so affected by mediatized information through machines whose epistemologies adapt feedback to contingencies so that users simply engage and interact[1]. The worrying devaluation of critical dialogue about productions involving graphic and real violence through various media sheds light on an important issue: the discussion of hate crimes and racist problematics from and for the Black

peoples — without cooperative efforts, the violent circularities that stigmatize[2] Black complexions might persist in the communication in general.

One of the video's strengths lies in the boundaries between the algorithmic use of a critique to violence and some traditions of representing the Black body[3]. In fact, if Cribb's creative use of the digital to suggest exhaustion, horror to violence against Black lives (and inaction towards injustice), it would be inadequate to imply a complete closure, in the digital space, to the intellectual or social transformation towards progress. Cribb's repetition hints necessarily at the sinuous algorithmic recursivity but emphatically portrays repetitions that are not automatized only, as one could think: broader cultural structures are in play, preceding even the computers. Thus, the digital arrangements[4] adjusted to linking violence to Black peoples retrieve crime spirals with perennial roots observed in different societies, stigmatizing and downgrading Afro-descendants — not by coincidence, Vitória Cribb opts to show the deleterious effects of the violent loops in her avatars only, without specifying which crimes/images affected them. Delicate, this audiovisual work presents a rebellious alternative in light of the racist stasis — designing a space where algorithmic recursivity should operate verbs, terms, and functions with personality, rightness, and social responsibility.

Black Re-Existence in Eu Não Sou Pilatus and Bustagate, by Welket Bungué

The artistic manifests produced by Welket Bungué (1988), a Luso-Guinean actor and director with relevant stays in Brazil and Germany, find the perfect expression of the critique to the irrationality[5] of racism in the short film. In *Eu Não Sou Pilatus* (2019, duration of 10 minutes and 59 seconds), cellphone-captured images counter each other: denouncing footage of police brutality in the Jamaica neighborhood, in Portugal, lives in the same world of a video recorded live (and retrieved on Facebook) showing antiracist protests at Avenida da Liberdade, as a response to the former (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

Figure 4. *Still from Eu Não Sou Pilatus: police violence Source.* From *Eu Não Sou Pilatus* (00:06:54), by W. Bungué, 2019, Kussa Productions. Copyright 2020 by Welket Bungué.

Figure 5. *Still from Eu Não Sou Pilatus: the transparent racist discourse Source.* From *Eu Não Sou Pilatus* (00:07:58), by W. Bungué, 2019, Kussa Productions. Copyright 2020 by Welket Bungué.

This way, managing sources of opposing discourses, the film's bases are found footage whose contradictions materialize through juxtaposition. In one of them, with an evidently racist undertone, shot and narrated by a White, adult Portuguese woman, it is possible to hear insults to the protesters, revealing ethnic differentiation. She alludes to when Portugal was grand and praises the police force. According to the grotesque video chronicle, this institution, the "pride of the country", quickly stumbles on a recording that shows the beating of a Black person, repeating images from the beginning of the film. The line "why don't they send these negroes to their land?", while Avenida da Liberdade is seen at night, finds new rhythms through editing done to the voice, image (negative filtering, color change, rotation), and speed (speeding up and looping). When the woman repeats the typical racist and xenophobe idea which impacted movements across the globe (such as Brexit) for which Blacks "are taking over", the screen shows, emphatically, the message: "Black people rexist" (Figure 6).

Figure 6. *Still from Eu Não Sou Pilatus: the textual intervention on the video Source.* From *Eu Não Sou Pilatus* (00:09:44), by W. Bungué, 2020, Kussa Productions. Copyright 2020 by Welket Bungué.

Bustagate (2020, duration of 13 minutes and 11 seconds) is another combative production from the same period, which employs similar aesthetic procedures to *Eu Não Sou Pilatus*. Still impacted by the episode in the Jamaica neighborhood, plus paying tribute to Luís Giovani Rodrigues, a Cape-Verdean man who was fatally assaulted at the end of 2019, the director focuses on the case of Cláudia Simões, a Black woman beaten up by police officers and whose recorded images guide Bungué's short-manifesto. Like *Eu Não Sou Pilatus*, the work impacts with the use of images captured on the internet, proving the police aggression against Simões — choking, screaming to the insensitive security force — combined with textual interventions to denounce and call for change. However, *Bustagate* particularizes itself in the use of images recorded by Bungué himself, describing a late afternoon in a mostly Black neighborhood, valuing the life of the place, and above all narrating spaces and sounds of everyday urban life (Figure 7).

Figure 7. *Still from Bustagate: one day in the neighborhood Source.* From *Bustagate* (00:03:10) by W. Bungué, 2020, Kussa Productions. Copyright 2020 by Welket Bungué.

The rhythm in a neighborhood of Amadora then suffers interference from the editing with repeated sequences, as if to put down roots in the trivial but human, valuable day-to-day movement that escapes the Portuguese authorities who have immobilized Cláudia Simões on the ground. In addition, silent clips contrast with the urban noise and show actresses Isabél Zuaa and Cleo Tavares in delicate movements of encounter to each other (Figure 8).

Figure 8. *Still from Bustagate: Zuaa and Tavares touch each other in silence Source.* From *Bustagate* (00:01:47), by W. Bungué, 2020, Kussa Productions. Copyright 2020 by Welket Bungué.

The three visual narratives complement each other to impose rhythm or slow down the terrible violent event — above all, the location from which the images and sounds were produced gains relevance here. The conception of the everyday Amadora and the performance of the female duo seem to distend the obscene chaos of Simões' images. It suggests a control to speech, a claim of permanence and resistance of the Black population in the midst of contexts in which racism is not even recognized in Portugal (Figure 9).

Figure 9. *Still from Bustagate: the assault on Cláudia Simões Source.* From *Bustagate* (00:04:39), by W. Bungué, 2020, Kussa Productions. Copyright 2020 by Welket Bungué.

In the works highlighted and compared to the processes observed before, in Vitória Cribb's, the sociopolitical layer is made more obvious by manipulating found footage — the violence cases are enunciated textually or audiovisually. Bungué's aesthetic vision grounds the critique of irrationality through procedures of repetition — as if to give new directions to the very dissemination of violent images found on Facebook and YouTube. Eyewitness (and mobile, connected) videos showing police brutality have become a new tool for confronting institutionalized racism, and the cases of Floyd and João Alberto fall within this era of online revolt. However, Bungué is aware that the sheer exposure of violence is insufficient. On the one hand, a certain apathy[6] takes hold of entire

populations, impacted by the inhuman volume of information, much of it overwhelmingly graphic. On the other, the internet has also been the stage for denialism of all kinds, creating obstacles for recognizing and repairing inequalities[7]. In the articulation of militant and emphatic verbs, therefore, the Black director finds the means to take up the sequences of shocking hate crimes, in an intentionally uncomfortable way. The distortions present in the voices, colors, and pixels previously captured by mobile devices reveal intense creative energy concerned with exposing the social paradoxes still faced by the Black population in Portugal: whether in the form of discourse or physical violence, the country provides examples of hostility that cannot be rationally[8] sustained in a Europe that is supposedly democratic. The big-sized terms quoted in red over the images of Simões' choking join dialogue (Figure 10), silence, and commentary, giving us clues that the rhythm of the short film was made for reflection — something sometimes hindered by the incessant flow in the digital space.

Figure 10. *Still from Bustagate: the textual interventions, in red Source.* From *Bustagate* (00:11:34), by W. Bungué, 2020, Kussa Productions. Copyright 2020 by Welket Bungué.

Then, the artistic process tells us of tragedies and crimes to build forms of political resistance and affections to Black populations and highlight absurdities observable in the current spaces of coexistence, both physical and digital. Again, without the rhythm inducing criticism and contextualization, not even the images of denunciation can establish some coherence — on the contrary, they end up repelling spectators by fatigue, exhaustion. Through uncomfortable repetitions and against the numbness in social media, Welket Bungué's cinematographic work intervenes at the crucial moment, keeping not only the pain of violence footage but proposing a re-existence as a Black African in Portugal, in the digital environment and outside of it.

When Digital Repetition Accesses the Non-Rational

Let us go back to the idea that the levels of repetition (aesthetic, sociopolitical, and algorithmic) present in the three analyzed works articulate themselves to respond to the racist violence observed in the world and the platforms. Yuk Hui (2021) brings an important contribution on this subject, putting to the fore the essentially privileged point of view of the artist[9], since

> if we say art consists of an epistemology of the non-rational, it is because art wills to know beyond both the phenomenal world and the ultimate reality subordinated to the world of

> forms, which, since Plato, has been called metaphysics. (p. 124)

Now, if we take the phenomenological world rearranged by the expressive and interpretive capacity of audiovisual art, it is possible to say that the violence that drags us to the unequal and racist reality is one layer of existence among others. The sensorial access that reflections like Cribb's and Bungué's give to their audience invokes the recognition of the world of forms, no doubt, but the non-rational[10] (connected to the unknown, to the emotional, to the unpredictable fates of people) comes to exist in close contact (hence the sophistication of the artifacts) with the irrationality of violent acts. After all, as the given examples bear out, democracy is not in full effect — although, in the digital space, there are attempts, as in the physical and social ones, to disguise society's own repugnant reflection. It seems to be, then, the tool of aesthetic repetition to counterattack the recursive irrationality of social media. If Black bodies are vilified even in the digital sphere — whether through the optics of denunciation, the avalanche of negative information, or explicit racism, the creative operations exposed here make the antiracist endeavor, first of all, a collective act, of mutual recognition of pains, rights, and duties. Furthermore, attentive to criminal events that are not only news but also mobilize attention around the world, the three videos deeply understand the digital experiences in their most diverse capacities: on the one hand, they materialize through digital manipulation, and on the other, they make themselves available not in the ephemeral conditions generally proposed by the large platforms.

One of the most distinctive aspects of *@ Ilusão* is its trajectory of exhibition and contact with the public. Acquired by several virtual museums, the work was, as of August 2021, in the catalog of the new art city website (https://newart.city/catalog/illusao-vitoria-cribb), host to 3D installations and several digital works. Not only does Cribb's video inhabit a space whose intellectual elaborations are contained in its discourse[11], but it also makes it possible to expand the universe of traditional video — pieces and models that compose *@ Ilusão*, for example, are presented in isolation. Moreover, the works are curated and often dialogue with various pieces worldwide, inducing similar conversations. The free but niche access of the art installation yields the reflective space that Cribb's video and avatars deserve. Social media, it must be said, would hardly invite the necessary pace of appreciation for *@ Ilusão*[12]. That being said, entering the elitist arena of contemporary art (Oliveira, 2020, p. 97), even if suggesting other views and modes, takes place in the same computer-based habitat whose system is very exclusionary. After all, it is never too much to remember that the platformization of society operates through a predominant strategy (van Dijck et al., 2018, p. 38): advertisements target users in exchange for data and free access. Thus, more than a dissolution of the class separations observable in the access and enjoyment of art, the virtual museum gives Cribb's work the necessary conditions to investigate the digital ontology, with experiments on curves and distortions — but it is also through attempts that make repetitive patterns visible that new consciousnesses about the use and consumption of information via platforms can emerge.

Bungué's films, despite being part of traditional film festival circuits, such as DocLisboa, Caminhos do Cinema Português, and CineBH found themselves online due to the COVID-19 epidemic and the alternatives proposed by cultural organizers. That was the case of the "14th Cine Esquema Novo", held completely remotely and screened several of Bungué's works as a guest artist. When the same computer or smartphone that accesses the images of violence contained on Facebook or YouTube can recreate the time and space of a film festival, with the curating of the works, conversations with directors, workshops, and retrospectives, it means that the digital space also has exits from the very barbarity it massively shares. The appeal to the non-rational of artistic works, then, can be found by the recursion of digital experiences — even if traditional events and institutions (museum, film festival) are emulated in the practice of fruition and sharing. Is it not seeing beyond the forms (including numerical ones) what the public actually seeks? To be conducted by a particular aesthetic into a cognizable world, but to reach the unknown. The return to the unequal and unfair physical world, we hope, constitutes resignification through the (artistic) repetition of digital violence.

Final Remarks

How to deal with the increasing attempts to delegitimize antiracist protests and demonstrations worldwide, inside and outside social media? The article's purpose was to demonstrate how creative articulations can shed light on painful and long-lasting social problems with arrangements of the same system that perpetuates the violence disseminated on online platforms. First of all, one should consider the structures that enable the fragmentation of discourses via networks and commonly rely on free speech, on the one hand, to evade responsibility and, on the other, normalize privileges that divide society. The emergence of groups transmitting information "opaque to the knowledge of the general public" (Ramos, 2020, pp. 54–55) is crucial in the digital hierarchizations of the discourse on violence to the Black body because even though antiracist agendas have gained space in the public debate, they are often minimized in importance by algorithmic recursiveness based on mass reach (by which user data contingent suggestions). Therefore, it is fundamental to think of multiple and unorthodox strategies for using cyber tools since ingrained vocabularies about the social and historical problems afflicting Black people persist. Given that the recursiveness peculiar to software has also taken over social dynamics, hyper-connected to the media (Couldry & Hepp, 2016, p. 250), making the repetition of violent stories visible via social media also touches on the issue of the agency of viewers and users, commonly thought of as independent and endowed with free choice in the digital environment. Media corporations and news companies frequently resort to click-baits and sensationalist headlines whose impact on disseminating violent events today is difficult to measure. In such a way, when art engages in algorithmic materiality intending to make itself a body of study and ponder what is real, even macro-structures may be questioned. In addition to denouncing and reporting crimes, to the transparency in mediation processes, and the parties involved in communication, spaces for reflection and connection between people need to be created — and this can be done, of course, in digital contexts as well.

Whether through the depiction of the 3D repetition of deadly numbers and sinuosities, as in Cribb, or the uncomfortable distortions in found footage, as in Bungué, the artistic manifestation opens spaces for critique and new subjective existences of African descendant populations. The cases of racial violence against George Floyd, João Alberto, Cláudia Simões, Luís Giovani, and many others stand out from the gory and spectacular news in order to guide, in the works cited, the non-forgetfulness of inequalities and the appropriation of the generators of information and emotion. Even if in their artistic niches (the virtual museum, the film festival), the artists express the ability to manage the digital contents endowed with recursion and repetition of stigmas and explicit violence to bring out the non-rational, the sublime, the collective spirit. That this comes exactly from the painful research and contact with the racist irrationality present in different societies is admirable and courageous. A sign that the repetition of violence, in certain cases, can indeed open discussions and volunteer for the next iteration of the world of audiovisual and media human forms to be, at its base, antiracist.

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Biographical note

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Notes

1. Which reflects, by itself, power dynamics that tend to dilute responsibilities — given the platforms' "black boxed" characteristics — and model cultural texts (Ramos, 2017, p. 5). Thus, the importance of asking for transparency and social responsibility both from developers and the companies that nowadays function as mediators of countless activities.

2. Part of the problem resides in the features of the far from diverse informational and technological systems, which, in the end, perpetuate differences and "victimize disadvantaged populations" (Silva, 2020, p. 445).

3. See hooks (1992, p. 117), who elaborates on an "oppositional gaze" in the USA, where representational underpins in mass communication reproduce and maintain white supremacy.

4. In other words, "transduced", or coded by software (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011, p. 73). The sets of problems to be solved by the algorithms have their analog counterparts, no doubt. But in the online space the scale is much bigger — on one hand, there is a hard-to-be-broken amplification of unfair patterns (for example, the racist ones). On the other, there is the unpredictability of meanings generated by transduction from infinite databases.

5. This paper uses the term in allusion to Grada Kilomba's (2008) impressive text, to whom many of the psychological effects and traumas that afflict black populations stem from the "unreason of racism that places us always as 'Other'/ as different, as incompatible, as conflicting, as strange and uncommon" (p. 20).

6. Recent studies already relate the classic model of psychology studies also known as "bystander effect", or bystander apathy, with violent practices in online environments. Although anonymity sometimes protects victims of violence and offers more conditions for reporting abuse, what often characterizes the apathetic attitude towards violent news and events is the disbelief in effective action — given the young age of the internet (Lytle et al., 2021). Add to this the lack of regulation and the oversight of platforms in cases that exploit profiles of vulnerable people.

7. We cannot ignore that much broader societal movements of modernity are in effect. The aforementioned Brexit and the elections of "anti-politics", such as Trump and Bolsonaro highlight a disengagement observed by theorists such as Giddens (1990/1991, p. 24), for whom economic relations in the axes of space and time have undergone profound changes. The alienating and social fragmentation-inducing processes permeate the use of technologies — not surprisingly, the success of the politicians cited involved adaptation to the fast, individualizing, and poorly controlled language of social media.

8. In July 2020, the death of Black actor Bruno Candé generated a series of anti-racist demonstrations in Portugal. It was also notorious the counter-offensive of far right-wing groups (including the presidential pre-candidate André Ventura, whose slogan is "for Portugal, by the Portuguese") displaying banners saying "Portugal is not racist". Public Prosecution disagreed, including in the proceedings that Candé was killed "for vain reasons" and "for his color and ethnic

origin" — thus rectifying the first communication from the police commissioner (Marcelino & Câncio, 2021, para. 1).

9. About privileged points of view and black women, like Vitória Cribb, it is essential that we consider new perspectives not only in art, but in all production of knowledge (Corrêa, 2020, p. 830) as far as cultural analysis goes. The possible and desirable anti-racist epistemologies may have more nuances than one imagines, and although artistic sensibility brings more questions than solutions, undoubtedly the understanding of social dynamics also relates to what can only be translated in a non-rational, unspoken, non-scientific way.

10. Transcendent, mystical and subjective — countering the irrational exclusionary, massive, homogenizing discourse about Black bodies found in news portals, police and official inquiries.

11. Because to think about the digital environment is to think of its design and the interface that provides Cribb's reflections in the virtual museum, in the exploration of a cultural habitat (Ramos, 2015, p. 56). Such critical viability, the result of the artist's choice in both making the work and exhibiting it in a singular context, meets our separation into levels of repetition: to manipulate numerical content is to make visible its own recursiveness, and therefore to critique the damaging potential of repetitions of violence, in culture and via algorithm.

12. Although, it should be noted, there are infinite possibilities of creating right out of the excess and plain repetition that cannot be contained in the platforms, escaping from the cultural and technological mechanisms of containment. See the article by Paula Davies Rezende (2020) about the potentialities of images-simulacra in the digital environment.

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