



REVISTA
DE
**CULTURA
VISUAL**

No. 9 | 2022

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<https://doi.org/10.21814/vista.4046>

e022008

The Real on Stage: A Scenography Beyond Representation

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Abstract: This article intends to problematize scenography as a representation of other places for and inside the stage. Spatial and visual creations in the stage context are still systematically thought of as responses to a referent, establishing a tie to identification and reality as a model in the realm of scenography. The text seeks to analyse some models where this apparent natural relationship is discussed, observing the growth of non-referential reality in the contemporary scene. It is structured in three theses which consider the possibility of abandoning the concept of representation to inform the modus operandi of scenographic creation in the context of the performing arts. The first conveys set design as desirably realistic representations in the wake of the development of western culture so that the second can introduce the hypothesis of another understanding of reality on stage. This transformation, produced by a desire to give up the representation discussed in the second part, even shows a possible gap between the usual set design and another concept of scenography, based on tangible materiality on stage. The third approach, driven by challenges to normative models of understanding reality, suggests destabilizing semiotic models and leading the scenography to an interpretation based on the individual experience of corporeal places, thus promoting the rise of a certain type of real on stage beyond representation.

Keywords: scenography, referent, representation, reality, real

O Real em Cena: Uma Cenografia Para Lá da Representação

Resumo: Este artigo pretende problematizar a ideia da cenografia como representação de lugares para a cena e na cena. As criações espaciais/visuais no contexto do palco ainda são de forma sistemática pensadas como respostas a um referente, instalando no domínio do cenográfico um agrilhoamento à identificação e à realidade como modelo. O texto procura analisar alguns modelos onde esta aparente natural relação é discutida, comentando o crescimento da realidade

não referencial na cena contemporânea. Organiza-se em três argumentos, que conduzem à possibilidade de abandono do conceito de representação para informar o *modus operandi* da criação cenográfica no contexto das artes de palco. O primeiro veicula os cenários como representações desejavelmente realistas, na esteira do desenvolvimento da cultura ocidental, para que o segundo possa colocar a hipótese de um outro entendimento da realidade na cena. Esta transformação, produzida por uma vontade de abdicar da representação, comentada na segunda parte, evidencia inclusivamente um possível desfasamento entre os habituais cenários e um outro conceito de cenografia assente na importância da materialidade tangível em cena. O terceiro argumento, conduzido por desafios relativos a modelos normativos de entender a realidade, propõe-se destabilizar modelos semióticos e a conduzir a cenografia para uma interpretação assente na experiência individual dos lugares corpóreos, promovendo assim a ascensão de um certo tipo de real na cena, para lá da representação.

Palavras-chave: cenografia, referente, representação, realidade, real

Received: 30/04/2022 | Reviewed: 23/05/2022 | Accepted: 26/05/2022 | Published: 30/06/2022

Set Design As Representation

The author Barbara Bolt (2004), following the thought of the philosopher Bruno Latour, subscribes that in western culture, there have been two widely different regimes of representation:

in the first regime — a regime that he relates to early Christian and medieval understandings of representation — the re-presentation is presented anew as if for the first time. It involves presenting again and anew. In the second regime, which he equates with Cartesian understandings of representation, the representation stands in the place of an absent object... In the first regime, coinciding with early Christian and medieval painting, there is a sense in which representation is the thing. In the second regime of representation, there is an assumption of a gap between the thing or the referent and its representation (p. 15).

The author adds that this second regime of representation, where something stands in the place of something else, has prevailed in our concept of representation, producing a model that extends, for example, to the representation of a person by someone else. In this dimension, the work of art, analogously, is made present by something, by a certain matter, which takes the place of something else, which exists beyond that matter, but is not there. That other something is the referent of the representation.

The space of the stage, which is also the space of the bodies and dramaturgy, can be considered a place par excellence for this possibility/need. The fabrication of

substitutions (representations) for what cannot be there (referents of the representation) because, in fact, very few referents usually summoned by the theatre, in the most classical sense, can be on the stage (be they houses, landscapes, cities or gardens). However, the stage can and should fit all the required or desired spatial speculations, linked to the space of the text, the manipulation of the bodies, the imaginary or dramaturgy, coinciding with each other or not. That was perhaps the main problem of scenography for a long time, to multiply itself in the construction of evocative materials of a referent, and that has been answered over the centuries by different expressions, technologies and ways of doing.

The different historical phases scenography went through, in close relationship with the theatrical practices of each moment, had been testing this potential and its flexibility. However, the representation associated with the second regime,

conceived as a substitute for something else, first found its form in the Renaissance art with the conjoining of systems of perspective and mimesis. [Since the] perspective offered a window onto the world, whilst mimesis ensured that the view out this window corresponded with perceptual reality. (Bolt, 2004, p. 15)

The representation on the theatrical stage and the search for the utmost coincidence with what is not there, thus represented, was led by the centuries after the invention of perspective. The belief that the more the resemblance, the better the representation turned the perspective and the mimesis in central postulates for the stage, with due exceptions, of course. Such an approach led the scenographers to develop strategies closer and closer to reality. Its highest exponent is the naturalism of the late 19th century, in the creations of stage directors like André Antoine, who created the Théâtre Libre in Paris in 1887. The paradigm of photography, which is also a convincing substitution of drawings in perspective and product of similar motivations, is not alien to him.

When we consider how images were constructed before photography, pictorial or three-dimensional (for example, paintings or sculptures), reality as a referent was often underlying but unashamedly mediated by a fabricated composition. With the advent of the photographic image, this mediation moved towards its elimination. Photography was used as an empowered capture of truth by artists, historians and scientists, ensuring that by capturing reality, what was reflected in the photograph was the truth. It was thus essential to the allure of realism as a cross-cutting movement, the great aesthetic programme embracing the naturalist movement of which Antoine's creations were representative.

Reflecting on the approach to the problem of realism on stage, José Sánchez (2014) resorts to analyses of Antoine's stage photographs. They are documents of a striking theatrical and scenographic aesthetic, which sought the utmost coincidence between reality as referent and its representation in a theatre of raw observation, which intended to bring on stage the staging of authentic men and women.

The reality that the director Antoine sought subordinated to the stage territory, and its feasibility was, inevitably, haunted by the presence of an external referent. The creator wanted it to be recognized on stage through that same representation or, more intensely, to be believed to be present. The ultimate goal of that scenography was a form of simulacrum. However, even if these representations were made evident through concrete materials, often practical objects such as chairs, tables or doors rather than drawings in perspective, they existed to present an evoked reality, not the one there. Thus, the representation model inherited from the Renaissance was not challenged.

The construction of naturalistic spaces on the stage had technical contingencies difficult to overcome. Therefore, the front lighting (often due to a physical ceiling diminishing the overhead lighting), the new objects unworn out by time, the visibly less solid materials, the adaptations of perspective producing unnatural contrasts, and the incongruous scales exposing the physical limits of the stage, intensified, within a strategy that sought the supreme representation of reality, the evident effect of the fictional construction.

Despite the attempts at naturalism, the photographic records of these productions show a permanent double reality, proper to the representation. In other words, even if the material evidence were easily credible to the eye and identifiable with the referent, the paradoxes exposed on stage and evident in the immobility of its photographs show that it is only a representation. It inevitably keeps the scenography on the path of illusion and perhaps even in the territory of a certain fiction.

Unlike the painted backdrops, Antoine's stage establishes a change towards a tactile construction, three-dimensionally adjustable. However, it still sustains an idea of representation, towards identifying a particular space and not the "presentification" (being there for its own sake and not to represent something else, thus, without a referent). The term which is summoned by more recent artistic dynamics, mainly connected to performance, which, by inscribing itself in reality, keeps its sphere of existence within it, avoiding crossing the borders with fiction.

Despite these issues, for its continuity in the 21st century, we see that the strength of realism was a founding historical milestone with profound consequences in the conceptualisation of scenography as a mechanism of illusion. An important consequence of this lineage, which remains with a certain vigour today, was the expectation of identification. More than an operative tool within the projects, this expectation is still very present in how some professionals and certain audiences relate to the scenographic creations, subjecting the materials on stage to solving an enigma: what does this represent?

That model is rooted in an idea of realism that has its true seed in the naturalist project, in which "the complexity of human experience was reduced to forms understandable to the 'normal' citizen. As such, the relationship mechanism with the spectator was one of 'identification'" (Sánchez, 2014, p. 154).

On the other hand, such technical achievements, which intensified at the turn of the 20th century and did not leave the sphere of representation, had the seed of failure within them. The technical perfection of representation, pursued by directors like Antoine and Constantin Stanislavski, who aspired to a living stage, a slice of life, has as its ultimate (and utopian as we have seen) consequence the breakdown of representation itself. If representation becomes so credible and real that the viewer no longer senses or tastes its presence replacing its referent but instead believes it is before the referent itself, its awareness is eliminated. The peak of the representation virtuosity may lead to non-representation, where the simulacrum ceases to be recognized as representation and is understood as reality. In that case, what is the relevance of the simulacrum over reality?

Scenography Without Set Design

Let us then think of the realist movement as a broader breath seeking to eliminate the distance between reality as referent and its representation as much as possible. Where "realism [can be considered] more than just a style; it is an attempt to achieve coherence between the real and its representation: an undertaking to make objective reality the only acceptable criterion of truth" (Sánchez, 2014, p. 13). We can then wonder if realism, thought of as an undertaking, will not have, as a consequence, for the sake of the excellence of representation, its abandonment.

The Swiss theorist Adolphe Appia, in the wake of a quest for coherence, advocates objective reality as a criterion of creation for the performing arts and identifies as an emerging paradox, even under naturalist assumptions, the tension between the reality that bodies in movement emit and the artifice of the representation of the scenic space. Thus, he argues that "the human body does not intend to produce an illusion of reality; it is reality itself. Therefore, all that is required of scenography is a simplicity that highlights this reality" (Appia, 1921/n.d., p. 94).

The previous observation concerns productions he found — compared to the painted backgrounds representing certain locations — an obvious contradiction. Therefore, Appia's claim is that of a scenographic component without an illusory character. According to Appia, a factual stage, truthful in itself which abdicates a mimicked referent with plastic and spatial attributes based on real identity, is more founding of the theatrical space, in its primary meaning, than the mechanisms of representation used in the prevailing practices of his time.

For the author, this contradiction distorts the relationship with the nature of the theatrical work. Separating the real human presence from an enveloping scenic space without the same vitality forces it into a superficial reproduction state that does not accompany a relationship committed to the drama's inner experiences.

Appia's truthfulness is not Antoine's search for truth because, in Antoine, we

were still in the sphere of referentiality. Antoine sought the recognition of a real space, neglecting or manipulating the tangible materiality that constructed the stage space, between the real and the illusion, to accommodate the conceptual project. Appia sought to establish his conceptual project precisely from the tangible materiality of the stage. The abandonment of a referent is seen as the condition for living art, where movement and form are interconnected. This intention gave rise to proposals for abstract landscapes composed of steps, levels, platforms, and walls, which did not seek identification but composed realistic geography for the body of the actors to inhabit.

Along with these experiences, realism subsisted for a long time on a model of representation from a referent, which even left undoubted marks that are still recognizable today. However, the vanguard thought of the 20th century forced us to recognize that the premises on which realism on stage can be defined have changed a lot. The renowned stage director Bertolt Brecht, who advocated the complete collapse of illusion in the theatrical experience, using the deconstruction of the mechanisms of representation as to the engine for a conscious and critical viewer, is also impelled to reflect on the real dimension of the stage. "Brecht repeatedly insists that realism is not a matter of form, and that 'if we understand realism as a style and not an attitude, one is no more than a formalist'" (Sánchez, 2014, p. 20). Attitude is meant here not as a formal quality but as a way of thinking, a commitment towards reality and its summons. Style is employed as a norm of procedure, a precept of realization.

Thus, realism adopts a position towards reality in an ideological and non-formal sense, evolves with it, absorbs its multiplications and ways of thinking and is, therefore, free from unchangeable operative processes. "Realist" scenography ceases to be a "style" — composed of parameters of action previously defined and identifiable in naturalist or even Appia's images —, and it becomes an attitude, that is, a stance, a way of doing that seeks reality through the stage (or on the stage) and, therefore, tests different formats, forms and configurations of prompting it. For example:

the aim of the Brechtian interrupted scene, like Eisenstein's montage of attractions, was no longer the representation of reality but rather to offer the viewer the visual, verbal and gestural tools necessary to be able to understand it. The real becomes an object of knowledge. (Sánchez, 2014, p. 19)

Brecht offers the possibility of understanding reality not directly applied to the specific place of the scene but with the vocation towards which the scene tends. To that extent, one cannot think of reality as a motto for a scenographic application, in which the stairs and the scenario plans bring their dimension. Rather the desire pursued by all practices and within which scenography can use stairs and platforms, posters, paintings, papers, fabrics, drawings and images to summon the world's reality to the theatre. Both authors propose that the stage's universe abandon a referent, therefore, representation. However, the difference Brecht introduces compared to Appia, following the thesis presented

here, is that one begins to think not directly in the real set design (as a material construction fabricated on stage, tactile, palpable, measurable) but in the reality of scenography (as a set of materials at the service of a vision).

Following the Brechtian proposals, the German director Erwin Piscator also engaged in a project pursuing the real, moving away from manifestations coined by representing a referent and metaphysical scenarios for the stage play. Thereby, he intended to encourage the audience to look at reality subliminally rather than superficially and, therefore:

shared Brecht's aim of representing not the appearance but rather the structures and processes that constitute reality, even though they are often hidden by reality itself. According to Piscator, it was necessary to find a new material that would remove the complex structures of a society controlled by market interests, so that they could be observed, analysed and consequently revolutionized. (Sánchez, 2014, p. 18)

The diversion of the reproduction of reality and the cancellation of representation as a technique of scenographic work also intended to dismantle the structures on which reality is organized instead of mimicking it, exploring in scenography a critical dimension that encourages reflection. Thus, the scenography moves in the strict dimension of reality, offering, not being its materiality, a vehicle to convey a message or a recognition beyond it, a way to use its authenticity as a dramaturgical engine and to that extent:

this time is no longer a time of representation, but of remembrance or comprehension, a trait that can be found in the existentialist theatre of the 1940s, in the documentary theatre of the 1960s and in the contemporary reflectional theatre (...) [with] the pre-eminence of the corporal on stage. (Sánchez, 2014, p. 154)

Thus, Sánchez (2014) identifies a renunciation of the representation model in contemporary theatre, particularly in the one whose orientation he characterizes as reflexive and occupied with the appreciation of the presence of the body, thus placing it on the track of a previous path of referent's emancipation. This path found in materiality a vigour that ensures its independence, giving rise to what the author designated as a "realist objectivism" on stage.

This trend is also manifested in scenography without reproduction. It operates by "presentification" of a staged reality and proposes a free and open interpretation, antagonistic to this extent to a classic and semiotic idea of interpretation. The refusal of a representational scenario directs the blossoming of the real through scenography as a performance device.

In March 2022, the show *A Vida Suspensa dos Objetos Não Reclamados* (Suspended Life of Unclaimed Objects), a creation of the company Casear – Criação de Documentos Teatrais, premiered in Lisbon. The artistic project draws on an actual collection of lost objects from the Polícia de Segurança Pública's (Public

Security Police) lost and found section, where most of the lost objects in Lisbon are kept. For 1 year, the objects remain captive, available to be claimed by their owners, and after that, they are kept by the State, which sells, donates or discards them. The theatre company was allowed to interrupt this cycle. After that 1 year, they remained unclaimed, and before being sold, donated or discarded, the company was willing to be the temporary custodian of a collection selected for the production of a theatre show.

The theatrical project, the construction of its dramaturgy and the scenography of *A Vida Suspensa dos Objetos Não Reclamados* began with a direct relationship with the collection of objects. Everything stemmed from a commitment to this reality, and all the show's premises were created from these objects' use, manipulation, improvisation, analysis and speculation.

In this proposal between the object theatre, the documentary, the animated forms and the physical theatre, the objects of the initial collection are, in this creation, characters, props, actors, text, images and scenography. This project's scenographic strategy, coinciding with the dramaturgical strategy, is to show these objects. To show them in an artistic context where they do not cease to be them, but where questions potentially resonate about us, about the other, about loss, the city, our movements, time, or absence.

The reality of the scene is that these objects are categorically real. They are scenography because they are devices of action. They do not replace the presence of something; they are materials representing nothing but themselves but are not set designs housing the bodies in movement; they are mechanisms that trigger the theatrical action. Considering a scenography without set design allows drawing a non-illusionistic theatricality that is distinguished by linking the stage's matter to the real, privileging the truthfulness of the theatrical game's space and the authentic composition.

The expression "theatricality", often used to refer to any theatrical reality, acquires in this context a different depth. It can be conceptualized as the designation of a predominance of materials in a raw way — however aesthetic — aware of the presence of bodies and objects in a literal sense. Thus aiming to reconfigure canons and expectations reported to a naturalistic scenography. Theatricality establishes a look where the artistic construction of scenography is not in identifying the physical matter in the presence or in its ability to function as a sign. It is based on the experience of its concrete condition.

This reality, emerging in the "stage" space, differs from other states of daily life only by the stage context. It is absorbed as a theatrical play, and this acquiescence creates a mode of meaning production that, ultimately, descends from Duchamp's ready-mades. Matter and objects are presented in their rawness, and their aesthetic action derives from the context they are being presented. We infer in the space of the stage, a space designed by the staging of the objects/matter, the presence of theatricality and it is what establishes a poetic dimension through the presence of concrete, objective, reality-bound devices.

A Vida Suspensa dos Objetos Não Reclamados develops through the exhibition of many objects, not only with them but, above all, from them. It relies on a network of devices of concealment and revelation, ordering and cataloguing, storage and display or categorization and systematizing; processes that authentically take place on stage and not as manipulations that lead to a narrative to be demonstrated or made evident. It is a game without any possibility of identification with something that is not there. These actions do not produce that; therefore, this is far from Antoine's programme. However, and despite being in the wake of other proposals that claim the liberation of representation, it is also no longer about building a real space for the performers' bodies to function, as in Appia's proposals, in which a field of play can be detached from the play itself. Neither is it exactly coincident with the logic we could import from Brecht or Piscator, where, despite there not being a referent validating the construction of certain materialities, there is still the expectation of a certain interpretation. The scene's materials are meant to guide a presupposition and previous sense.

The visual creation of the show *A Vida Suspensa dos Objetos Não Reclamados* moves beyond the classical idea of the semiotics of representation. In the apparent rejection of any referent, its materiality produces a process of signification beyond the narrative, the characters or the theme, problematizing reality/materiality as a place of empathy and affinity. Here, the object, "in the artistic context to which it is displaced, becomes a representation of itself. It undergoes a process of re-signification and re-substantiation as an entity" (Capela & Pereira, 2022, para. 7). This scenography is the founder of the event it accompanies, just as its instigator; the outcome is creations rooted in a concrete and tangible materiality and not only accompanied by them. In these scenographic devices, which in José Sánchez's expression (2014) we could name as proposals anchored in a "realist objectivism", "the referent conquers a place of contact with the 'receiver' alongside the privileged place occupied by the representation. Conversely, representation sees its sufficiency put into perspective by the presence of the represented object which it is supposed to be able to replace" (Capela & Pereira, 2022, para. 9).

It is a scenography that contradicts the existence of set design if we understand them as materialities that strive to get dramatically close to a referent because "the emergence of the thing represented itself in the scope of representation disturbs the hierarchy inherent to that representation" (Capela & Pereira, 2022, para. 9).

This sphere of action, which is again that of non-representation, of multiple significations from the literal transformation of objects and atmospheres in the space of the scene — as in contemporary visual arts —, proposes the discussion of chosen themes by interacting plastic materials, generating temporal creations, like a text or a choreography.

What ties this peculiar plasticity (of the scenography) to the context of the stage is no longer a formal recognition of materials or strategies, nor work processes or techniques — as dance is no longer made of specific dance movements but of

all the others —, but a certain intuition and dramaturgical research in space and time, organizing and manipulating the sensory experience of the viewers. Scenography as an emancipated entity/place treads a path of openness that legitimizes by rescuing a certain alliance with reality/materiality without the need for referent because the "meaning is not established through signification; rather, it seems rooted in the affective impact of the performer's actions on the viewer's experience" (Edinborough, 2016, p. 11).

By emancipating its referent, scenography forgoes the set design as a model. That is the scenario as construction that communicates with a referent and meaning. It emancipates by occupying the stage space as a device of action, not as a representation product. This apparently small transfer is not just a change in the naming or the linguistic designation, not even a slight mutation. It is a transforming way of understanding the role of scenographic creation in the contemporary scene. It is the emancipation from classical and expectable procedures and possibly a way of describing and, theoretically, understanding a practice which converses with the viewer and with the event differently from models that have subsisted in the stage space for centuries.

The Real Beyond Representation

The possibilities of displacing and revisiting that reality, invested with a certain theatricality, can offer are countless, leading to the inclusion of the scenographic dimension in the hybridity of artistic fields, making them relevant to it and, simultaneously, making scenography a pertinent practice in the sphere of contemporary formats. The contemporaneity (or the modernity of the late 20th century) brought with these configurations the impossibility of the meaning presiding over the criteria of creation, in the sense that the semiotic interpretation of the materials and actions no longer constitutes the central barometer for defining the proposals. The stage creations, detached from the requirement of understanding themselves as metaphors of a dominant sense, also construct scenic realities that sustain themselves, whose legitimacy as a work of art comes from their theatrical reality, and the context of presentation re-signifies them.

In this transversal framework, by understanding realism not as a historical stage but as an encompassing and transversal movement addressing the instances of the real, we can conceive the steps of Appia, Brecht or Piscator not only as moments of opposition to aesthetics of representation but as a progression of the understanding of another real on stage.

The awareness of reality amplified this shift as something other than the real, which resists representations because it is much more than reality. Larys Frogier (2009) attributes to Jacques Lacan the reasoning that defends reality, or what we name as reality, as also an illusion — such as that experienced by individual gazes manipulated by the subjectivity of individuals — but a shared illusion, universally accepted as reality. Reality is part of social structures built from representations

because "reality is 'the universally guaranteed referent of a collective illusion' that serves as the criterion for the evaluation of other fictions. It is the representation or composition in which society is conceived (which includes the real)" (Sánchez, 2014, p. 18). Larys Frogier (2009) explains what distinguishes the real from reality:

reality is susceptible to discourse and symbolization, thus making it possible to create a world view. In reality, we perceive and construct the world with our senses, our capacity for language and our intelligence in imagining. With the real, it is something else entirely that manifests itself. Essentially, the real is that which fails symbolization: "The real, or what is perceived as such, is what absolutely resists symbolization [symbolic]. Is it not, after all, in the passionate manifestation of an unreal, hallucinatory reality that the real presents itself in its highest degree?" The real is what is captured by the manifestation. (p. 32)

Unlike the common illusion, designated as reality and agreed upon by the representations, "the real, however, escapes representation, as every representation is merely an illusion — more or less shared — of what we call reality" (Sánchez, 2014, p. 17). These convictions confirm, on the one hand, the connection of representation to the permanence of a certain character of illusion and, on the other hand, take even further, one might even say, beyond the idea of reality on stage.

The split between reality and real means, as a challenge for the context of scenography, that the scene possessed of its reality can still be representational because reality is. To ensure that on stage there are objects of reality, to treat the stage as a context to which banal matters of this reality are transported, even if this one intends to escape from a representation, may not be enough to shatter the aesthetics of representation. Moreover, according to Frogier (2009), through Lacan, it is in this shattering that the real may appear.

The real manifests itself in the cleft of the known universe, in the interval of the expectable, because it is an entity that does not express itself in direct contact. It cannot be named, presented, imagined or represented, "the real always remains wedged behind the network of signifiers or else it manifests itself in it [in representation] as a cut within the system of signs, language and representation" (Frogier, 2009, p. 33).

Set in an unfamiliar context, the matter of reality as a substance to be subverted, exposed in the questioning of its own substance, can be a process for the intimation of the real in the scenographic exercise. This logic determines some of the contemporary practices of directors such as Heiner Goebbels, who, in the path of transforming institutional theatrical norms, states that "theatre as a 'thing in itself', not as a representation or a medium to make statements about reality, is exactly what I try to offer" (Goebbels, 2015, p. 2).

Scenography, as a dramaturgical component of the scene, as a device legitimized

by "realist objectivism", researches the real as a form of knowledge and as thought, not as a formal context that drives a narrative, even if it is one that eventually seeks the unfolding of the real. The blossoming of the real in a scenic space does not occur through representational means, for then it will relate to reality and not the real. Perhaps even by establishing a deviated and modifying form of reality, which promotes a vision through parallel or crossed paths, but not mimetic ones, the real may manifest itself in it.

The consideration of the emergence of this real, disassociated from a state of shareable reality and the implication of the "realist objectivism" of contemporaneity is drawn in the performance *A Vida Suspensa dos Objetos Não Reclamados*. Although it presents objects that have actually been lost by someone, at a certain point, they do not come together in a configuration whose desire is the approximation to reality because this state is not a guarantee of the appearance of the real as a dimension that destabilizes and is capable of problematizing the human world view. The real only appears in the manifestation, in the moments of revelation undertaken by the viewer, which is not controllable by signs, language, or imagination. They cannot be manufactured or received because they cannot be symbolized.

In the scenographic field, it is not about conceiving the stage neither as a geography of the symbolic order nor assuming that by containing the material decisions within a certain reality, we are working outside a representational logic. The will to convoke the real may lead us to refuse or search for non-representation aesthetics that may "unearth" the real.

The real, which is beyond understanding, can only be recognized if, in the artistic process, the social structures of its formation are worked, thought and problematized, not the reality generated by them. That implies the need to suspend any illusion because "the real would be the thing that shatters illusion on any of its levels" (Sánchez, 2014, p. 17).

Retrieving the question suspended in the initial point about the pertinence of the simulacrum, we may declare that the simulacrum, as a point of ultimate skill of illusion, does not contribute to or is compatible with the manifestation of the real. Insofar as those who receive it take it as reality, neither does it, since by coinciding with reality, it remains in the sphere of representation.

Following the theses presented here, to make scenography is not to produce the form of reality but to create a particular and absolute truthfulness without referent, in which the real can emerge.

Barbara Bolt (2004) also notes that, especially in the visual arts, representation cannot be conceived so literally, for this norm "is not just concerned with realism or figuration, but rather, representation posits a particular relation to, or way of thinking about the world" (p. 12). From this analysis, we can infer that, as in scenography, representation as a model, apart from boycotting a relation with the real (understood as previously described), generates a level of implicit formatting in the scene that pre-formats the understanding of the world.

The linking of an entity to a referent, which is, in fact, the basic principle of representation and semiotics, entails a certain way of constructing meaning and, therefore, of constructing the world. This form, based on symbolic models of meaning, which phenomenology, for example, challenges with the validation of the experience of manifestation, has shaped the arts because, above all, "according to this Cartesian regime... representation is a model, not a re-presentation" (Bolt, 2004, p. 12). Bolt (2004) adds:

what is at issue is not so much representation in itself, but rather how, in the modern world, representation has come to be understood as the structure that enables representationalism to dominate our contemporary way of thinking. Representationalism is a system of thought that fixes the world as an object and resource for human subjects. (p. 12)

The objectification of things is the expression of a "regime or system of organizing the world, by which the world is reduced to a norm or a model" (Bolt, 2004, p. 18). From this stems a predetermination of what the world can or should be. This vision, in which the world can be looked at, contained, and maintained, anticipates its modelling and order by a human being scrutinizing it and is at the centre of all determinations and relations.

We might conceive an artistic project uninterested in the manifestation of the real. However, it will certainly be more difficult to conceive one for which the pre-formatting of the world and the reduction of possible relations to pre-established norms or models is consensually accepted because:

the technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important. (Shklovsky, 1965, p. 33)

If we set out to nurture a performing art free to challenge models and norms, the stage as a spatial and material manifestation will need to be envisioned beyond representation, beyond normative and familiar reality. Thus, producing, finding, selecting or composing scenography is no longer "a matter of the illusory, the mimetic, or the representational, but of a certain kind of actual, of having something before one's vision — and in the theatre one's hearing — to which we join our being" (States, 1987, p. 46). Barbara Bolt (2004) further comments that representation fabricates and intensifies a human being who

is no longer vulnerable or open to that which lies before and looms up to confront him, but instead, he secures himself as centre and takes precedence over all other possible centres of relationship. He is no longer looked upon by what-is, but is the one who represents what-is. (p. 20)

An individual who does not look at himself in the world is an individual who does

not need theatre and has no place for the stage because he does not know what to do with that immemorial particularity of stage arts, which is the susceptibility to the vision of himself in the world.

The scenography that elects a non-representation logic is thus a practice that does not entail an investment in credibility or recognition aiming at abandoning the expectable structures of reality to give way to the manifestation of the real. Because "above all, in the theatre, as in any art, there is always the need to defamiliarize all of the old familiar defamiliarizations" (States, 1987, p. 43).

Unlike the naturalist project, the scenography beyond representation refuses to limit the complexity of human experience to understandable forms. It declines symbolic meaning constructions because the reading of its material evidence is intricate in the manifestation of authentic matters, making operative the assumption that the "theatre (*theatron*, derived from 'to see') is a means of looking objectively at the subjective life of the race" (States, 1987, p. 39). Scenography, which is autonomous from "set design" because it stands as a device beyond representation, establishes and incites a re-education of the gaze on the real.

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Biographic Note

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