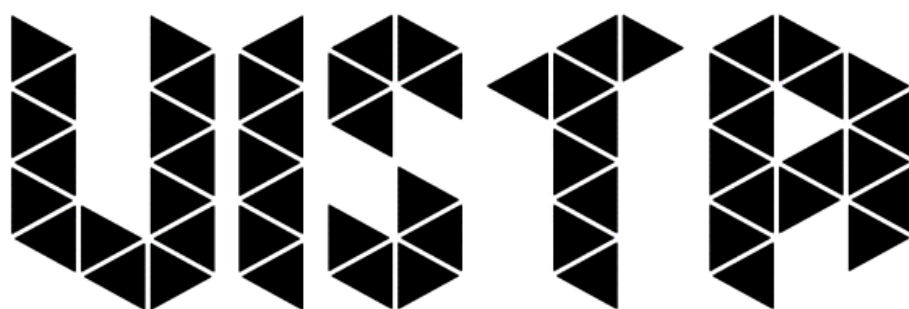




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Fotografia, Corpo e Memória em Taguatinga (Distrito Federal), Brasil

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THE DIALECTICAL IMAGE AND COUNTER-HEGEMONIC GESTURE: PHOTOGRAPHY, THE BODY, AND MEMORY IN TAGUATINGA (FEDERAL DISTRICT), BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the photographic work of Ivaldo Cavalcante, focusing on Taguatinga, a satellite city in Brazil's Federal District, during the 1970s and 1980s. The study proposes a methodological reading through the dialectical image: images that enable — like a flash rather than a system — understanding past events, people, dates, and moments, revealing the counter-hegemonic cultural insurgency that flourished on the margins of modernist and segregated Brasília. The analysis centres on the visual documentation of the artistic vitality of Teatro da Praça, a venue that served as a hub for counterculture and resistance during the military dictatorship. The study draws on theoretical frameworks such as Raymond Williams's "structure of feeling", Tina Campt's "listening to images", and Marie-José Mondzain's "the butterfly's cry". The examination of the photographs highlights bodies as acts of political freedom and the strategic use of shadows and ephemeral materials, such as leaflets and posters, as tactics for survival and visibility. The article concludes that Cavalcante's work constitutes a vital counter-archive for historical reparation, evidencing a radical artistic avant-garde on the outskirts of the Federal District and challenging dominant urban historiography.

KEYWORDS

photographic counter-archives, Ivaldo Cavalcante, Taguatinga, Brazilian counterculture, dialectical image

A IMAGEM DIALÉTICA E GESTO CONTRA-HEGEMÔNICO: FOTOGRAFIA, CORPO E MEMÓRIA EM TAGUATINGA (DISTRITO FEDERAL), BRASIL

RESUMO

Este artigo realiza uma análise da produção fotográfica de Ivaldo Cavalcante, centrada na cidade-satélite de Taguatinga, no Distrito Federal, Brasil, entre as décadas de 1970 e 1980. O

estudo propõe uma leitura metodológica por meio da imagem dialética: imagens que possibilitam — como num relâmpago e não um sistema — o entendimento de eventos passados, pessoas, datas e momentos, capazes de revelar a insurgência cultural contra-hegemônica que floresceu nas margens da Brasília modernista e segregacionista. O foco recai sobre o registro visual da efervescência artística do Teatro da Praça, espaço que funcionou como lugar de contracultura e resistência durante a ditadura militar. Mobiliza conceitos como “estrutura de sentimento”, de Raymond Williams, “ouvir as imagens”, de Tina Campt, e “o grito da borboleta”, de Marie-José Mondzain. A análise e a descrição das fotografias mostram as potências dos corpos como ato de liberdade política e o recurso expressivo às sombras e ao efêmero (panfletos, cartazes) como táticas de sobrevivência e visibilidade. Conclui-se que a obra de Ivaldo Cavalcante constitui um contra-arquivo essencial para a reparação histórica, comprovando a existência de uma vanguarda artística radical na periferia do Distrito Federal e desafiando a historiografia urbana hegemônica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

contra-arquivos fotográficos, Ivaldo Cavalcante, Taguatinga, contracultura brasileira, imagem dialética

INTRODUCTION: THE DIALECTICAL IMAGE OF THE COUNTER-HEGEMONIC GESTURE

The construction of Brasília, one of the key founding myths of Brazilian modernity, operated under an ordering rationality that, in designing the future, simultaneously produced its margins of exclusion. The federal capital, designed as the epitome of progress and equality, revealed itself from its inception as a territory fractured by socio-spatial segregation. Within the fissures of this monumental project, specifically in the satellite city of Taguatinga, a vibrant, disobedient, and fundamentally counter-hegemonic cultural production emerged. This study proposes an immersion in the work of photographer Ivaldo Cavalcante — who documented the cultural production scene in Taguatinga from the late 1970s to the early 1990s — through the Benjaminian “dialectical image”, capable of interrupting the continuous flow of official history and revealing the subterranean tensions of an era.

The central objective of this investigation is to analyse how Ivaldo Cavalcante’s photography, combined with the theatrical and performative effervescence of Teatro da Praça, between the 1970s and 1980s, constituted a “structure of feeling” — a concept developed by Raymond Williams (1973/2011) — specific to peripheral youth. These youths, heirs of the *candangos* (Brasília’s pioneer builders) and Northeastern migrants, forged an identity of their own in opposition to the exclusionary formalism of the Plano Piloto (Pilot Plan). Through an examination of visual archives, staged bodies, and ephemeral materials (leaflets, posters), we seek to understand the strategies of visibility adopted by subjects who, faced with the invisibility imposed by the civil-military dictatorship and urban hierarchy, chose the aesthetic cry.

This study is relevant because it calls for decentralising urban historiography and turning attention to productions that emerged outside major centres and legitimising institutions. Ivaldo Cavalcante’s work offers an entry point into this discussion, capturing the period’s contradictions: political repression *versus* sexual liberation,

material precariousness *versus* symbolic sophistication, institutional silencing *versus* the visual noise of the margins. Drawing on theorists such as Rita Velloso (2022), Marie-José Mondzain (2014/2025), Tina Campt (2017), and Raymond Williams (1973/2011), this article not only describes Taguatinga's vernacular and artistic photography but also theorises it as an act of political survival.

By generating knowledge about a particular photograph, it is possible to construct what Walter Benjamin (1928/2011) called the “dialectical image”, a gesture that became a symbol of radical change and whose liberating reading makes it possible to grasp people's physical movements and their concrete, material actions. If the idea of dialectics is the sum of thesis and antithesis, culminating in a synthesis, the idea that a dialectical image can be constructed through photography is itself contradictory, because photography, that mobile object, captured transformative movement, froze it in time and space, and continues to await a concept that will liberate it from its immobility, giving rise to an even greater and more radical transformation of society through its understanding.

Dialectical images are those which, according to Walter Benjamin (1928/2011), make it possible to narrate the past through the present, as an index, a trace of historical events, sometimes concealed, at other times erased, obscured or opaque. These images make us understand certain events, dates and objects through a hiatus, a pause, a moment of rupture that illuminates the past, and through the extent to which the present and the past recognise one another simultaneously by means of the void that separates them. Dialectics, as an instrument that cuts across conventional modes of representation, makes it possible — like a flash, rather than as a system — to reconstruct the meaning of images (Galuppo et al., 2025).

Walter Benjamin (1928/2011), who comes from a tradition of messianic philosophy, draws on the “image of salvation”; this salvation arises from the idea of breaking with the linearity of history, in this case, of the city as it is usually narrated. Images are constructed twice: first through description, and then through photography, that is, through visual grammar.

According to Seligmann-Silva (2023), a historian whose aim is to halt the traditional continuous flow of history seeks to gesture towards another way of fixing images of the past and, therefore, of constructing possibilities for the future. This interpretation of Walter Benjamin's concept identifies the dialectical image as an object of historiographical study, capable of destroying an apparent, yet falsified, idea of totality concerning a given history regarded as hegemonic.

The dialectical image is an instrument, an effective tool capable of making a cut in the movement of thought; it is a sum of tensions, arrested between constellations of thought; it is an object which, when constructed through a materialist historical exposition, has the power to approach the historical event as it occurred and, therefore, to wrench the supposed uninterrupted flow of history from an apparent immutability. In other words, when attempting to describe a structure of feeling through the dialectical image rather than through literature, the aim is to transform the previously constructed understanding of a particular topic of historical knowledge by understanding which values and discourses made that photograph possible, but also which constellations of thought that photograph is capable of circumscribing in terms of time, space and discourse.

In *Origem do Drama Trágico Alemão* (The Origin of German Tragic Drama), Walter Benjamin (1928/2011) constructs an analogy between the production of knowledge and a constellation: the stars would be equivalent to phenomena, the extremes of the constellation, which correspond, in a certain sense, to raw elements, such as historical facts, works of art and objects of human experience. Phenomena alone cannot produce knowledge; they remain isolated and dispersed points. However, to understand these stars, we need lines of thought to connect these phenomena. The idea should not subsume the phenomenon, just as the phenomenon itself does not possess the power to generate ideas on its own — the ideas are the configuration formed by the phenomena, the pattern that makes it possible to connect these isolated points, that is, the constellation that forms a unity of meaning.

The concepts used to interpret phenomena, in turn, remove them from isolation and transform them into smaller elements. The idea, or structured constellation, will organise these conceptual elements. According to Walter Benjamin (1928/2011), phenomena can only be saved when they are integrated into a constellation, because they are thereby removed from their meaningless isolation. Thus, the constellation can itself be understood as a way of producing knowledge about these phenomena, about this particular object.

By considering photography as a possible means of reading the city and, through it, reaching the structure of feeling present in that place at the time, we seek to understand which people, values and ideas were constructing the city at that moment and what material culture emerged from this. Photography, the structure of feeling, the city and the image are all stellar objects, phenomena in themselves which, with the appropriate assistance, can explain and express concepts. However, when interconnected, they can generate a range of new interpretations and be read as a constellation.

To unveil this counter-hegemonic narrative, the research articulates the city's memory with Raymond Williams's (1973/2011) concept of "structure of feeling" and employs photography as a fundamental "grammar" of analysis. This methodological approach allows us to investigate Teatro da Praça as a space of cultural insurgency and examine how this cultural production and the photographic counter-archives redefined the agency and memory of the Federal District's periphery.

Raymond Williams's (1973/2011) concept of "structure of feeling", as elaborated in *O Campo e a Cidade* (The Country and the City), discusses and encompasses the conscious or unconscious expressions of everyday life and circumstances, manifested through art, literature and culture produced in a specific place and at a specific time. Drawing on the duality between country and city, the author develops an analytical method through English literature and the changes it undergoes as industrialisation and impending urbanisation advance, demonstrating, through literary writing, that this relationship between country and city is established simultaneously as a problem and an experience. This experience, in both spheres, is always in motion; this movement affects the past and the present, and this transformation manifests in the history of families, a community, or a people. These stories move through feelings and ideas, shaped by networks of relationships and decisions. At the centre of the structure of feeling are material forms of evidence that refer to specific places and people, and, when speaking of them, whether in praise or otherwise, certain social and moral values are expressed.

This theoretical conception expresses the idea of a cultural production still on the rise, in an emergent process. The structure of feeling shows that, in a certain sense, certain generations and social groups share a common collective experience of a specific historical moment. Long before these experiences can be named, before they are formalised by institutions, before there is an artistic record or a vocabulary of their own, there is a shared human experience of a cultural nature. A shared perception of a way of thinking and doing that has not yet been properly categorised or ideologised, but which permeates behaviours, bringing people together or driving them apart (Williams, 1973/2011). Williams (1973/2011) links the structure of feeling more to lived experience than to ideology, because it is not an organised system of beliefs but an affective response linked to social change. In other words, it constructs in a way that prioritises understanding the process.

Art and culture produced in a particular place and time have the power to construct images and associations. Raymond Williams (1973/2011) proposes analysing the images constructed of the country and the city, as his book's title suggests. This study, in turn, aims to analyse the city alone, drawing on some of the author's reflections and developments. This image of a city is composed of feelings invested long before any argument about it began.

THE TERRITORY AS DESTINY AND CONSTRUCTION: THE GENESIS OF THE PERIPHERAL GAZE

MIGRATION AND UPROOTING: ARRIVAL ON THE PLATEAU

Ivaldo Cavalcante's biography is inseparable from the social history of Taguatinga and, by extension, from the Federal District's demographic formation. Born in Crateús, in the *sertão* of Ceará, Ivaldo migrated to the central-west region at the age of four, in 1960, the year of Brasília's inauguration. His account of the journey in a "pau de arara" (makeshift truck), accompanied by his parents and eight siblings, situates his trajectory within the broader collective narrative of northeastern migrants who formed the core workforce — and, subsequently, the marginalised population — of the new capital.

This geographical displacement was not merely physical, but also ontological. Growing up "amidst Praça do Relógio", as Ivaldo himself mentioned in an interview with Keyane Dias (2023), the central symbol of Taguatinga, meant that Ivaldo and his generation experienced an improvised, dusty, and vibrant urbanity, in stark contrast to the planned asepsis of the superblocks of the Plano Piloto. Dias (2023) describes Taguatinga in the 1960s and 1970s as a hybrid territory, predominantly inhabited by northeastern migrants, but also by Indigenous people and Roma encampments. This ethnic and cultural diversity formed the fertile ground in which Ivaldo's identity would be forged. From a humble family, the future photographer worked in various occupations (ice-lolly seller, shoe-shiner), activities that kept him in direct contact with the street and the city's popular dynamics.

The formation of Ivaldo's gaze, therefore, predates his mastery of the camera. It took place through his everyday observation of the struggle for survival and his enjoyment of accessible leisure spaces. This early experience of the city as a space of dispute and encounter indelibly shaped his future photographic aesthetics, marked by an empathetic proximity to the subjects portrayed and by a valuing of subaltern narratives.

MERCADO SUL IN THE FORMATION OF IVALDO

If Praça do Relógio was the nerve centre of public life, Mercado Sul became Taguatinga's early underground hub. Ivaldo lived and worked at Mercado Sul during his adolescence, residing in the former Sorveteria Polar (ice-cream parlour), owned by his brother-in-law. In this space, he began his visual experiments, opening a screen-printing workshop and, later, a photography studio, prompted by a gift from a friend — a photographic laboratory kit — that would seal his professional destiny (Dias, 2023). For the young photographer, living at Mercado Sul meant “witnessing the cradle of the underground culture that was growing before their eyes” (Dias, 2023, p. 1). The site (Figure 1) was a point of convergence for a heterogeneous human fauna: nightclubs, prostitutes, thieves, pimps, drunks and idlers coexisted with artists, musicians and poets. This continuity between art and social marginality was decisive for Ivaldo's aesthetics.



Figure 1. Location of the spaces for counterculture events in the territory of Taguatinga
Credits. Author's illustration, with the collaboration of urban planner Rayelli Bárbara

Deeply influenced by beatnik aesthetics, marginal culture and the visceral nature of rock 'n' roll, Ivaldo absorbed references from global counterculture and reprocessed them through the local reality. His early screen-printing work reflects this connection: he printed screens featuring revolutionary and cultural icons such as Che Guevara, Bob Marley, Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, Jimmy Page, John Lennon, and Jim Morrison (The Doors). These images, which circulated globally as symbols of rebellion, took on a particular resonance in Taguatinga: they became the banners of a youth that refused to accept the fate of servile labour reserved for the children of the *candangos*.

THE PERIPHERY AND THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE GAZE

Ivaldo Cavalcante was a passionate observer who wandered through the city deciphering its signs. Ivaldo was a great subversive *flâneur* of a satellite city under construction. He became a central figure within the community, to whom people turned to document their social events, whether the dances of the Black scene or the concerts of the emerging punk-rock scene and popular culture (Dias, 2023).

This constant presence and his ease of movement between different urban tribes and social classes gave Ivaldo an organic legitimacy. The nickname “Kabeça” (head) gained media attention, marking the beginning of a 33-year career in the press. During this period, Ivaldo operated as a double agent: while fulfilling official assignments, he continued to document the “visual structure of feeling” of his own community, accumulating a personal archive that would culminate in the publication of the books *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura* (Taguatinga, Two Decades of Culture; 2003) and *Brasília - 25 Anos de Fotojornalismo* (Brasília - 25 Years of Photojournalism; 2011).

Ivaldo's self-taught training is crucial to understanding his poetics. His formal education was brief, marked by restlessness and a lack of focus. By contrast, his technical education was rigorous and inventive: he learnt photography through a correspondence course offered by the Brazilian Universal Institute and developed his skills through daily practice with “chemicals, basins, tweezers, sodium”. Improvisation was the rule: he used bridal veils, sewn by his mother, to make screen-printing screens. This do-it-yourself aesthetic, characteristic of the punk movement he documented, imbued his images with a raw authenticity and tactile materiality (Kauim, 2023).

BODIES OF TEATRO DA PRAÇA: PERFORMANCE AS INSURRECTION

THE POLITICAL BODY ON STAGE

This study's visual analysis focuses on a series of photographs from the book *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura* (2003), which it categorises as “bodies of the Teatro da Praça”. Captured predominantly during the first half of the 1980s, the images document a moment of political and cultural transition in Brazil, marked by the slow decline

of the military dictatorship and the process of democratic opening. However, more than documents of an era, these photographs constitute evidence of a bodily insurrection. Looking at the photographs reveals the body's recurring presence as a central element of the composition.

BODIES OF TEATRO DA PRAÇA

At the global political level, it is necessary to understand the historical context in which these photographs of Teatro da Praça are situated. In 1981, the year in which the first photograph of the theatre appears, the world was immersed in the Cold War. The immediate consequence on the national scene was the civil-military dictatorship that immersed the country. According to Marcelo Ridenti (2022), in *O Segredo das Senhoras Americanas* (The Secret of American Ladies), the war was also taking place in the cultural sphere. The aspirations of Brazil's intellectuals before 1964 — and Brasília has everything to do with this — were related to the so-called “base reforms”, which included agrarian, urban, constitutional, university and educational reforms, among others. This was driven by the intensification of class struggle in Brazil and the fight against inequality, as 21 years of military dictatorship helped explain why these reforms never took place. The cultural war is directly related to this historical process.

The cultural effervescence of 1968, along with the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the Vietnam War, youth rebellion, the construction of youth as a force capable of transforming reality, the Black Panthers, and the impact of these theories on everyday life (Ridenti, 2022). But also in Brazil, what helps to define “counterculture” is opposition to repression and the intensification of AI-5, the questioning of models of family and society, tropicalism, with Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso, Leila Diniz, Glauber Rocha's Cinema Novo — all of this set to the rhythm of national and international hits that questioned traditional models of being and existing in the world (Zuenir, 2021).

It is worth acknowledging that, during the Cold War, some Latin American communist authors benefited, through the Soviet network, from the dissemination of their works in various countries and languages. The most emblematic Brazilian example is Jorge Amado, who was actively financed by the Communist Party as early as the 1950s, during the Estado Novo dictatorship under Getúlio Vargas. Nevertheless, despite all the persecution he suffered because of his political position, Jorge Amado, through his relationships with other artists and intellectuals, managed to overcome the stigma and establish a way of looking at Brazil fundamentally grounded in a vision devoted to popular culture and realism. The space opened up by the Communist Party was one in which the gaze valued artists with a socially and politically engaged perspective, who valued popular culture and the national values of that same culture; the intention was precisely to contrast this with cosmopolitan formalism and with the way imperial culture was reproduced (Ridenti, 2022).

The idea of seeking a local identity, within the paradigm of art history, is much older, as it was already present in Romanticism and in the emergence of the idea of

the “nation-State”. But at this time it would be reinforced by the dissemination of Jorge Amado’s work, which would inspire a gaze directed simultaneously towards the country’s unromanticised ills, in keeping with a search for a “Brazilian popular culture” as a way of countering North American cultural imposition and, consequently, this domination in Latin America. Thus, the quotation included in Ivaldo’s book *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, in which he explains why he chose the people of Taguatinga and their cultural production as the subject of his photographs, is from Jorge Amado (1982):

what have I been but a novelist of whores and vagabonds? If there is any beauty in what I have written, it comes from these dispossessed people, these women branded with iron and fire, those who stand on the brink of death, at the lowest level of abandonment. In literature and in life, I feel increasingly distant from leaders and heroes, and closer to those whom all regimes and all societies despise, reject and condemn. (pp. 58–59)

Counterculture in Brazil was characterised as a set of political, behavioural, and cultural manifestations that challenged society’s traditional values. In the Brazilian context, opposition to AI-5 and the military dictatorship was one of its first banners, but it was not the only one. It also involved rejecting patriarchal and family values and the very concept of authority. This was evident both in private life and in the demands placed on institutions, particularly within student and intellectual circles. What counterculture established in Brazil was not limited to behavioural values; it was grounded in a political existentialism that sought escape from a single discourse, bringing art, sexuality, and ideology together in a collective search for the new. Counterculture was fuelled by a global dream that the great utopias could become concrete realities (Zuenir, 2021).

It is within this political, social, and cultural context that Ivaldo captured these photographs. However, it is also within this context that this first generation of young people born and/or raised in Taguatinga produced this culture. In search of an identity of their own — not one inherited through imposition and with which they did not identify — their quest for ancestral ties to the Northeast and the *sertão* asserted itself on the cultural scene. But also the desire to speak about themselves, to exist on their own terms.

When looking at the first block of photographs, the bodies are what fall from this surface, strongly accentuated by the positioning of the light: at first, the audience stands out — the gathering of people together around a stage — and then the bodies on the stage, semi-nude bodies, at times static, at times intertwined, and at times in motion, interacting with the public and the audience, in a clear breaking of the “fourth wall”, highly characteristic of the theatre of the oppressed method¹, which was also prominent in the theatre avant-garde of the period.

¹ The theatre of the oppressed is understood, in the reading of Debus and Balça (2022), as a complex and coherent dramaturgical method that organises theatrical games and exercises to transform the spectator into the protagonist of the dramatic action (“spect-actor”), creating a space for reflection, action and collective experimentation with alternatives in the face of situations of oppression and aiming at the autonomy and emancipation of those involved in teaching and learning processes. Conceived by Brazilian playwright Augusto Boal through the articulation of theatre and critical pedagogies, this method holds that anyone can be an actor. It proposes that actors and non-actors develop dramatic trajectories based on their own realities, not merely to interpret but to seek to transform society.

The first photograph (Figure 2), taken from right to left, reveals Teatro da Praça in Taguatinga filled with people, so many that at the back and in the right-hand aisle people watch the performance standing. Seeing the theatre packed, one would not imagine that a public theatre with such demand would close in the following years, but it was precisely because it had such a large audience that its activities would be made increasingly difficult, to the point of being brought to an end: the contradiction, which appears like a “flash” in the dialectical image, is that such a large and regular audience lost an urban cultural facility precisely because it worked (and not because it did not work). This peripheral population, eager for theatre, ceased to have a theatrical space in its own territory and became, in many respects, dependent on this type of public facility in Brasília’s Plano Piloto.



Figure 2. Audience at Teatro da Praça in Taguatinga (1981)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 10

Because an engaged audience interested in other forms of theatre existed, Teatro Rolla Pedra and Invenção Brasileira emerged in Taguatinga, at Mercado Sul, in the following years. The dialectical image of salvation in the contemporary world consists precisely in understanding that this audience still exists, that this same collective of artists would mobilise the popular and heritage listing of the so-called “EIT Complex” (Taguatinga Industrial School), and that even this would not guarantee the operation of this urban cultural facility in the present. Yet this image shows that it is not too late to claim the right to autonomy and a cultural avant-garde in Taguatinga, because this was possible at the beginning of the 1980s.

The second photograph (Figure 3), meanwhile, presents the actors in a theatrical performance in two distinct planes in the middle of the stage. In the foreground, in the right-hand corner of the image, a man in dark overalls stands with his arms crossed and

an imperious gaze, almost like a *sertão* Peter Pan about to fly. In the background, five actors — two women and three men (shirtless, with one of them wearing only underpants) — look towards the man in the foreground on the right-hand side of the stage.

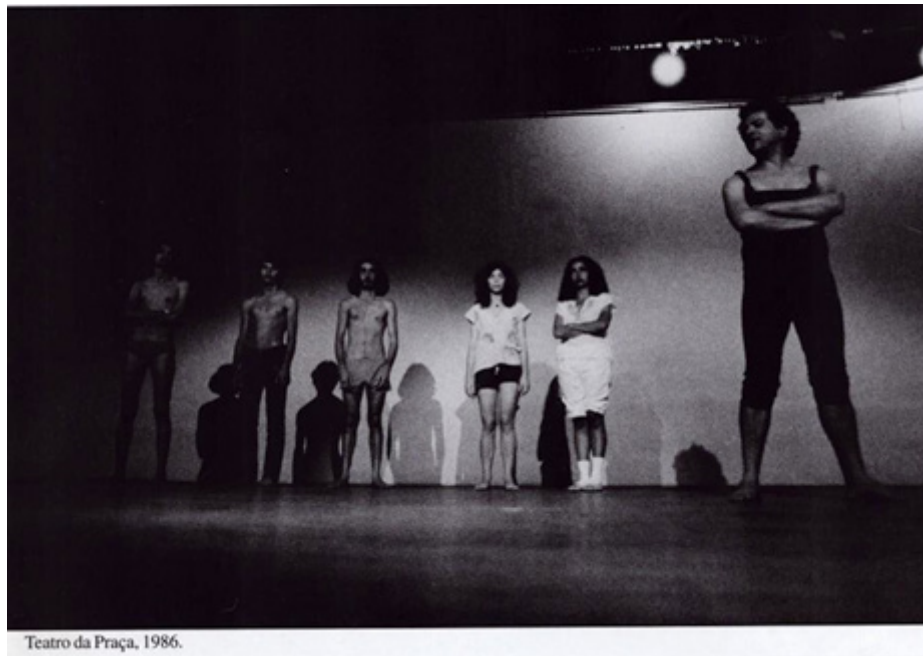


Figure 3. Theatrical performance staged at Teatro da Praça (1981)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 10

At the time, Taguatinga did not clearly distinguish between those who performed and those who watched the show. These were the young people other young people encountered on Comercial avenue; they held ordinary jobs, such as primary and secondary school teachers, and used their formal employment to sustain Taguatinga's cultural scene through sheer determination.

With the “idols” on stage so close to the city's everyday life, the atmosphere around theatre, music, and the arts in Taguatinga was that “everyone” who wished to could act, sing, play an instrument, paint, or perform. The artist did not acquire an aura of otherness in relation to the other members of the city. They were the neighbour, the teacher, the baker. This proximity, in many respects, ceased to exist when the theatre stopped operating. Art became something done by others rather than by themselves. Something escaped and remained in the city, enabling the emergence of other theatres.

The photographs contribute to the formation of constellation thinking by showing how naturally art is integrated into people's everyday lives in the city, and how theatre played a fundamental role in this dynamic. Elements that appear disconnected — such as the body, the teacher, the student, full or partial nudity, patriarchal values, conservatism, freedom of expression and the limits of art — cease to be distant. By narrating the structures of feeling of the time and by visualising the photographs, it becomes clearer that, for 1980s Taguatinga, art and counterculture were close at hand. Questioning the world and how it functioned was natural, and both then and now this was precisely

the danger, which makes this dialectical image a vestige of an everyday insurgency that Brasília's official and hegemonic history attempted to erase and silence.

In the figure below (Figure 4), a semi-nude couple is embracing at the centre of a circle of people lying on the floor. Within the photographic framing, the semi-nude couple is positioned on the left, the centre is filled with fragments of the legs and arms of the people lying below, and on the right-hand side of the stage there is only emptiness and darkness.



Figure 4. Semi-nude bodies intertwined on stage (1985)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 13

By mobilising the dialectical image, this spatial opposition functions as a visual flash that reveals the period's political context and what counterculture symbolically sought to achieve. The two semi-nude bodies on the left can be interpreted as a representation of the political spectrum, establishing an opposition to the emptiness and darkness on the right, as a field represented by military political repression, precisely in the year in which the corporate-military dictatorship comes to an end. This photograph conveys a clear message that cuts through the continuous flow of history: it reveals an awareness of which social project it sought to put in its place. The proposed replacement was based on the body, its freedom, and a confrontation with patriarchal society, transforming this scene not merely into a theatrical record but into “an authentic the cry of the butterflies” (Mondzain, 2014/2025) for freedom of expression and existence.

The final photograph in this first block (Figure 5) shows a bare-chested man in the middle of the audience, appearing to dance — his arms suggest movement — and looking at someone in the audience, smiling. However, his face is not fully visible. At the same time, many people in the audience are also looking at him and smiling. The technique of breaking the “fourth wall” from the theatre of the oppressed is documented here: the actor is not someone who performs in isolation on stage; he is part of the audience and

interacts with it as though he were one of its members. Read as a dialectical image, this photograph reveals the constellation of an era: performative and theatrical art was not something strange in the everyday lives of the city's inhabitants; it was something commonplace and part of their lives. The boy's gaze on the right side of the photograph toward the actor conveys enchantment, but also recognition, serving as a material vestige of the "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1973/2011) latent in Taguatinga.

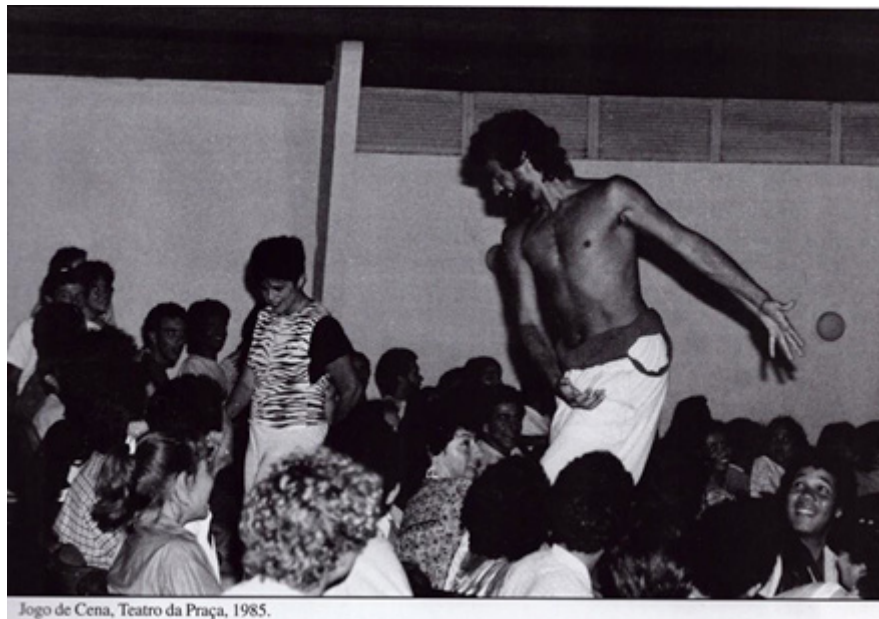


Figure 5. Actor with bare torso interacting with the audience (1985)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 13

The following photograph (Figure 6) depicts a woman, with her torso completely bare, lifted into the air by a group of people. The way the light crosses the scene from right to left, amid the stage's darkness, makes this photograph profoundly disruptive. It acts as a true Benjaminian flash, illuminating the tensions of the past in a moment of danger: one year after the end of the dictatorship, at Teatro da Praça, a woman with her own body and will dares to resemble a Baroque painting before an entire audience. This collective bodily exposure embodies "the cry of the butterflies" (Mondzain, 2014/2025), materialising the insurgency of a political and living body that challenges the constraints of patriarchal modesty and hegemonic silencing.

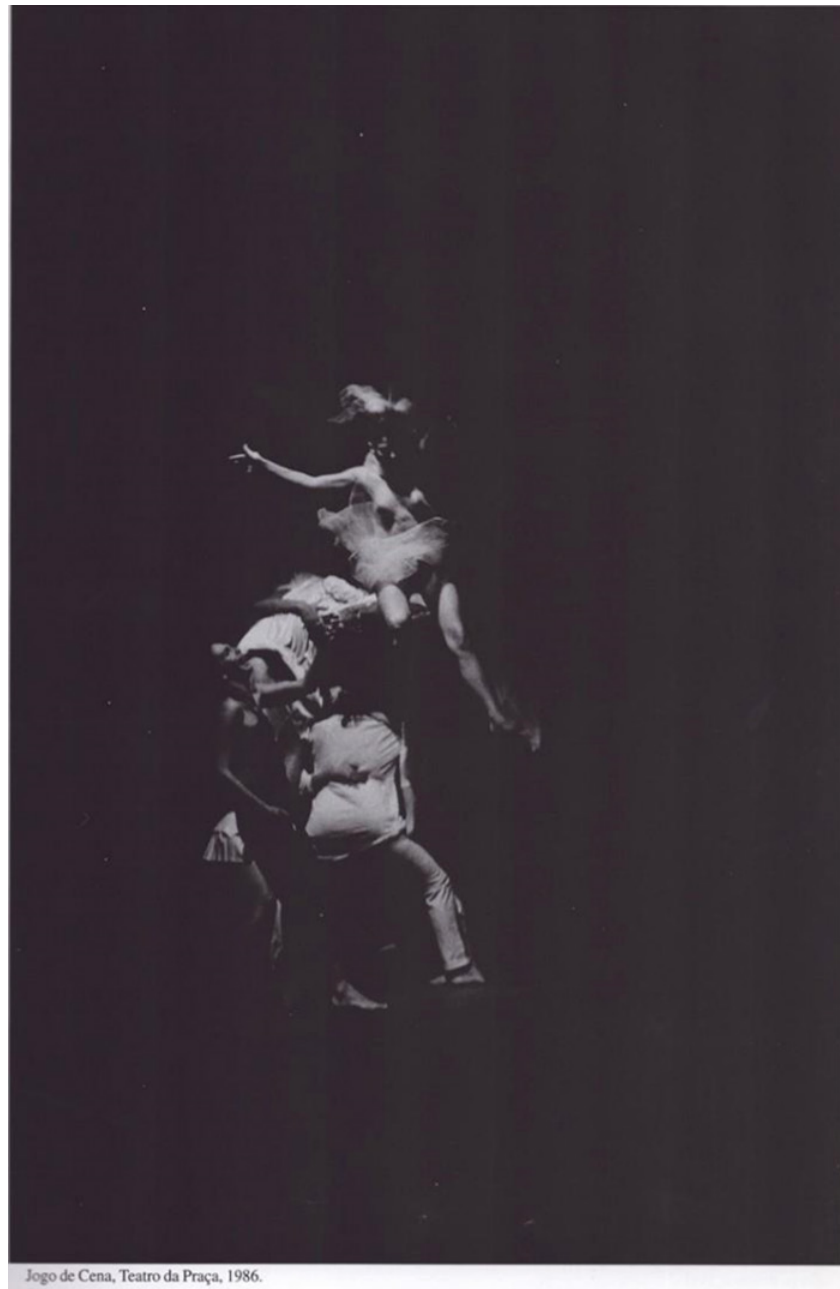


Figure 6. Illuminated bare-torsoed woman lifted by a group of people (1986)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 11

In turn, the following two photographs (Figure 7 and Figure 8) depict two bare-chested men at the centre of the stage. The first shows a body in motion, arms in full flight and head thrown back, illuminated by two spotlights directed specifically at his figure. In the second photograph, the man looks at the audience and the shutter at the same time; his body is rigid and tense.

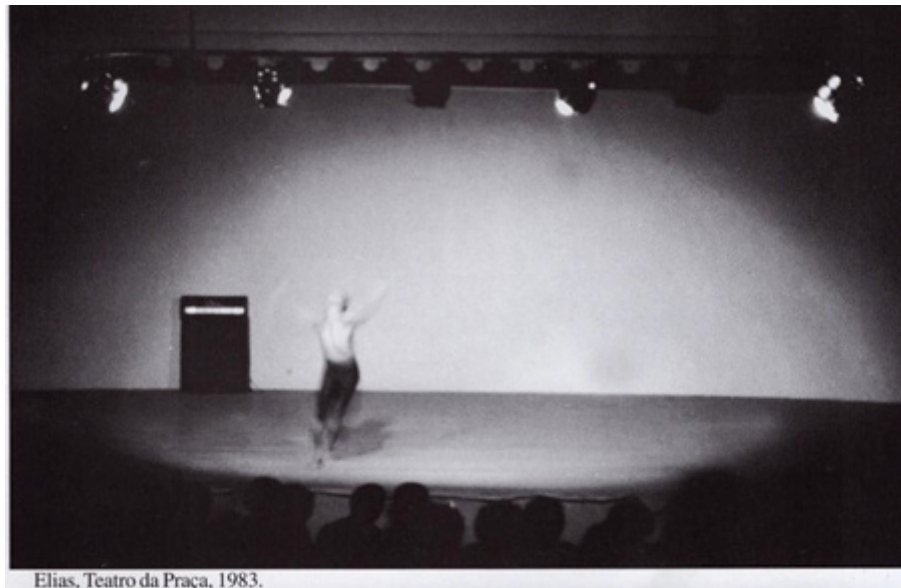


Figure 7. *Elias, Teatro da Praça (1983)*

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 16

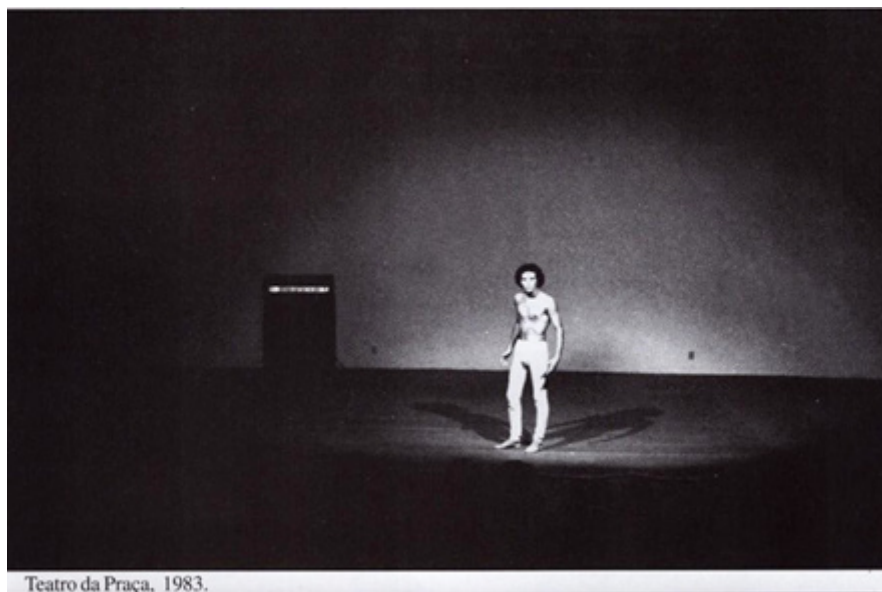


Figure 8. *Teatro da Praça (1983)*

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 16

Next, in the photographs showing Pezão (Figure 9, Figure 10 and Figure 11), the man moving across the stage, with a drum kit in the background, makes it difficult to know what the play is about. Still, we can see that he later undresses. When the body enters the scene and becomes an indelible manifestation of the spirit of the age, operating as a true Benjaminian flash and a material constellation, it is necessary to ask: what was on the agenda of the avant-garde of the time? And how does this resonate with the idea of the body as a personal instrument to be explored collectively?



Figure 9. Theatrical performance staged at Teatro da Praça (1982)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 14



Figure 10. Theatrical performance staged at Teatro da Praça (1982)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 14



Pezão, Teatro da Praça, 1982.

Figure 11. Theatrical performance staged at Teatro da Praça (1982)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura*, by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 14

The dialectic lies between the rapid movement captured through Ivaldo's lens in the first photograph and the paralysing tension of the second. Elias's trousers are black, while the trousers of the second man are white. The tension exists between the observed and the observer. A dynamic not entirely different from that between the Plano Piloto and Taguatinga: while the former is constantly observed and read through the various scholarly lenses examining the contributions of modernism, the latter, stuck and static in the middle of the stage, awaits a moment of action, a concept that will free it from its immobility.

Finally, Pezão undresses on stage — an intentionally naked body, voluntarily naked — it is an invitation to look, a provocation in a prudish and conservative society. More than skin and sexuality, reading Taguatinga requires removing the labels and trappings of the periphery — such as precariousness, satellite status, subalternity, and the working class — attributed to it. By undressing on the stage of a theatre that no longer exists, the sequence of photographs of Pezão is an invitation to attempt to read the city in all its creativity and inventiveness, an invitation to look at Taguatinga beyond the surface and, perhaps, to discover it, even if only four decades later. In years of political repression, censorship, and prohibition, Taguatinga seethed with freedom in a peripheral theatre, which was later closed and, once again, covered with garments attributed to it by others so it would never be seen again. Taguatinga naked is potentially dangerous, potentially incendiary.

When reconsidering the concept of “structure of feeling”, introduced by Raymond Williams (1973/2011), at that time in Taguatinga, the gesture did not necessarily have the name “performance”, as this was an emerging cultural production that, in everyday life and in the arts, fulfilled the functions of entertaining, doing something beautiful, marking or changing identity, and creating or stimulating a community. Visually, the images show a collective artistic and countercultural experience at a national level, of which Taguatinga

was part, constituting a vivid experience that called for collective freedom of the mind and, as the photographs show, also of the body.

On the other hand, the image marks a contradiction: those capable of reading the avant-garde are on the periphery of the officially planned city. In the wake of expectations, Taguatinga points imagistically toward a rupture with the prevailing hegemonic system. But precisely because it was on the margins of the central urban territory, this avant-garde was never fully seen or recognised as such. Consequently, its artists were also never fully seen, recognised or celebrated as readers or creators of an era distinct from that experienced during the period of intensified repression and, subsequently, democratic opening.

Thus, when considering the urban and the city, in the case of Teatro da Praça in Taguatinga, the form of relationships materialised, was felt, and was created in the bodies of its inhabitants. Finally, the following sequence shows the archives of the original leaflets for the theatrical production *Uma Satélite Fora de Órbita* (A Satellite Out of Orbit; Figure 12, Figure 13 and Figure 14), by Grupo Retalhos, as well as some photographs by Ivaldo of the same production (Figure 15 and Figure 16). At that time, Grupo Retalhos was composed of numerous people, among whom it is possible to highlight names such as Futuka Ferreira, as director; José Regino, Elizete Góes, Paulo Kauim and Chico Simões, responsible for costume and make-up; José Regino, responsible for lighting; Miquéias Paz, responsible for sound design; Rose Nugoli, as assistant stage manager; music by Alexandre Luiz; and a cast that included Alexandre Batista, Carlos Augusto (Cacá), Edivaldo Rodrigues (Miltinho), Edilene Alves, Eliane Araújo (Lia), Mércia Rosalia, Nilson Rodrigues, Raimundo Nonato (Natinho), Ricardo Castro and Wagner Ayala (Pito).

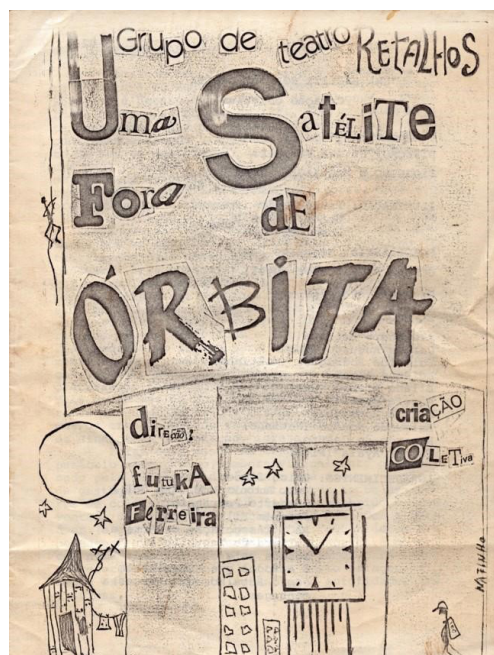


Figure 12. Leaflet for the theatrical production: *Uma Satélite Fora de Órbita*
Credits. Grupo Retalhos, 1983, from the personal archive of Paulo Kauim

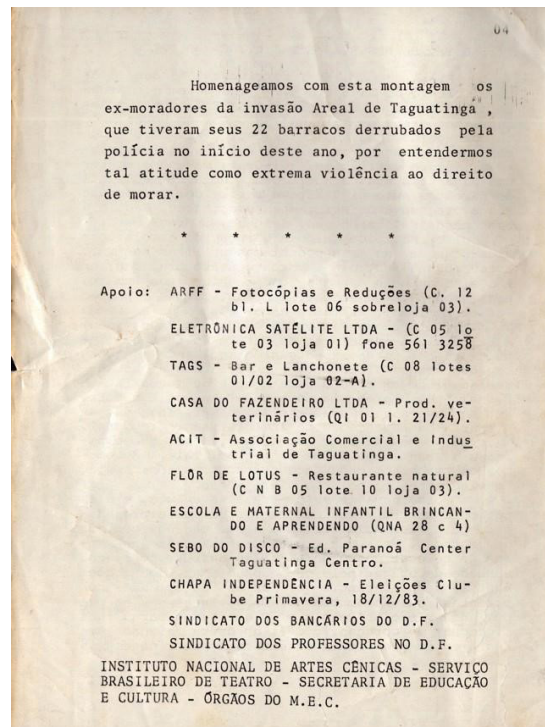


Figure 13. Leaflet for the theatrical production: Uma Satélite Fora de Órbita
Credits. Grupo Retalhos, 1983, from the personal archive of Paulo Kaumim

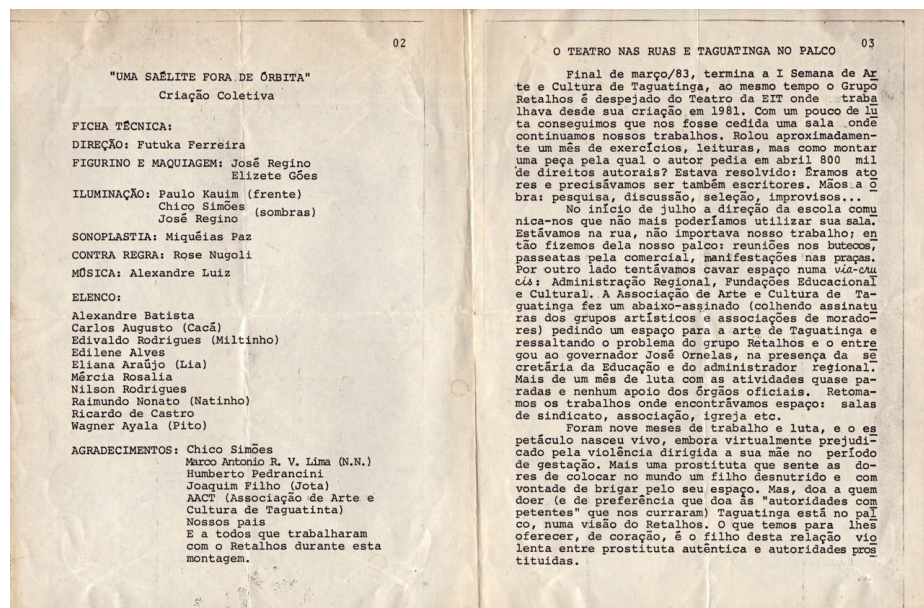
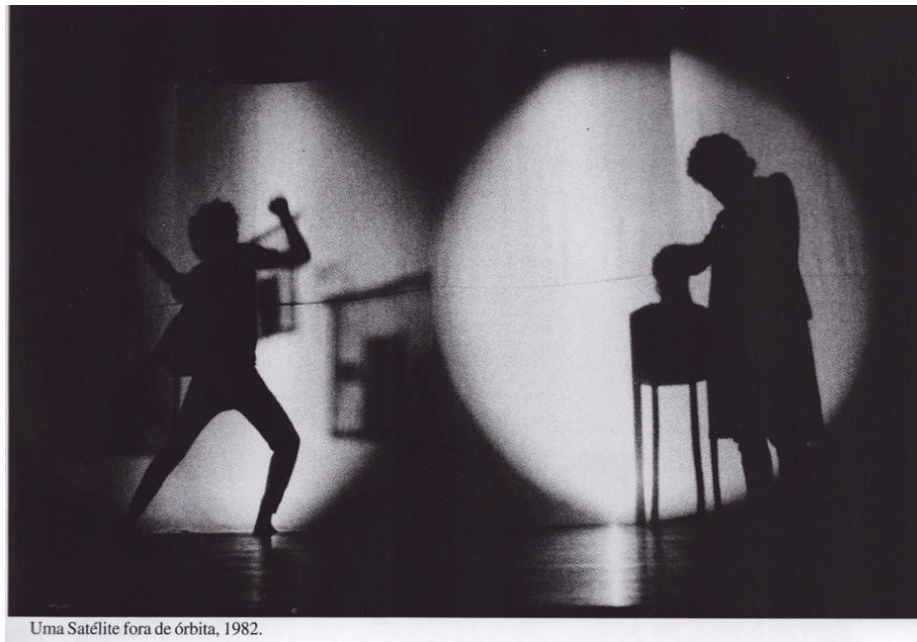


Figure 14. Leaflet for the theatrical production: Uma Satélite Fora de Órbita
Credits. Grupo Retalhos, 1983, from the personal archive of Paulo Kaumim



Uma Satélite fora de órbita, 1982.

Figure 15. Theatrical production *Uma Satélite Fora de Órbita* (1982)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura* (Taguatinga, Two Decades of Culture), by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 15



Uma Satélite fora de órbita, 1982.

Figure 16. Theatrical production *Uma Satélite Fora de Órbita* (1982)

Source. From *Taguatinga, Duas Décadas de Cultura* (Taguatinga, Two Decades of Culture), by I. Cavalcante, 2003, p. 15

The acknowledgements are addressed to Chico Simões, Marco Antônio R.V. Lima, Humberto Pedrancini, Joaquim Filho (Jota), Associação de Arte e Cultura de Taguatinga (Taguatinga Association of Art and Culture), the parents, and everyone who worked with Grupo Retalhos during the staging of the play. In the description on the play's insert, it is possible to see the city's symbol, the clock in the square, as well as several buildings in the background of the drawing. On the left-hand side of the leaflet, one can also see

a shack with clothes hanging on a washing line and the moon as an enormous satellite illuminating the city. On the following page, the former residents of the Areal settlement in Taguatinga are honoured through the staging of the play; the police demolished their 22 shacks at the beginning of 1983, an action widely understood as an extreme violation of the right to housing. This was a landmark in the violent housing policy that shaped the Federal District's territory as a whole.

On the following page, we read that, at the end of March 1983, the “First Taguatinga Week of Art and Culture” came to an end, and Grupo Retalhos was evicted from the EIT Theatre, where it had worked since its creation in 1981. The group says that, through their struggle, they managed to secure a room so they could continue their work. Meanwhile, they spent a month on exercises and readings. They hit an impasse because they could not pay the play's copyright fees, which at the time cost Cr\$80,000,000.00, equivalent today to approximately R\$48,000.00. In terms of purchasing power, this was a considerable amount of money at the time for young independent artists working in the performing and visual arts.

Consequently, they became writers so that they would not have to pay for an already-written play. Meanwhile, they conducted research, held discussions, and engaged in numerous improvisations. At the beginning of July 1983, the school administration informed them that they no longer had authorisation to use the room. They were therefore expelled from the rehearsal room at Teatro da Praça, regardless of all the work they had developed. Grupo Retalhos took to the streets and made the city its own possible stage, holding meetings in bars, marching along Comercial avenue, and staging demonstrations in the squares. At the same time, the group went from one regional administration office, educational foundation and cultural foundation to another. Associação de Arte & Cultura de Taguatinga even organised a petition, collecting signatures from artistic groups and residents' associations, requesting a space for artistic production in Taguatinga and highlighting Grupo Retalhos' situation. The petition was delivered to Governor José Ornelas in the presence of the Secretary of Education and the regional administrator.

Grupo Retalhos states that it has struggled for more than a month without support from official bodies. Thus, it found space wherever possible — in union halls, associations, churches and elsewhere. The group worked and fought for nine months to bring the production to life. However, the play was virtually undermined by the violence that the group claims its “mother” (the cast of artists involved in the production) suffered during the gestation period.

For the artists, this theatrical production was a prostitute who had experienced the pain of having to bring into the world a malnourished child determined to fight for its space. According to them, as written in the leaflet, “come what may” (and, above all, their wish was that it should hurt those in authority with rank — in this case, the military, who, in their view, had violated them), Taguatinga is on stage, in Retalhos's vision. They end the manifesto by saying that the play is from the heart — the daughter of the relationship between an authentic prostitute (Taguatinga's cultural production) and the prostituted

authorities (the military of the civil-military dictatorship), who made it difficult for them to gain access to a space in the city that would provide them with a place to work.

What flashes as a dialectical image at the moment of danger, in relation to the leaflets, is the false impression that the precariousness, territorial exclusion, fear, and violence inherent in the dictatorial period were left in the past. That these same characteristics have somehow not resurfaced and become worse under neoliberalism and late capitalism, given that, “in theory”, anything can be said, but no one appears to care. Consider, for example, the project of making the arts, culture and leisure increasingly precarious as human rights regardless of territory, and the current erasure of the theatre as a cultural facility belonging to the people, to which they have nevertheless had no access for many years.

These leaflets therefore operate as material traces of an era: a profound relationship remains between a peripheral youth producing promising art and a range of prostituted authorities that weaken policies for access to culture; the two seem inseparable, revealing the constellation of a project of continuous erasure.

In the final two photographs (Figure 15 and Figure 16), what falls from the images are shadows projected onto the fabric of the bodies of those who dared to rise amid the civil-military dictatorship, operating as authentic traces of a presence that hegemonic history attempted to erase. It is emblematic that the outlines of the bodies — which gave meaning to an entire generation of artists — are the element that escapes the image, with their faces unidentifiable. When looking up the Michaelis dictionary (Michaelis, n.d.), the meaning of “shadow” is given by the following definition: darkness produced by the interception of rays of light by an opaque body or a less illuminated space, upon which direct light does not fall. In this sense, the shadow is the material constellation of those upon whom the “light” of Brasília’s central project refused to fall.

An interesting dialectic emerges between the final two photographs, while the first photograph is divided between two spotlights — in the first, the body seems to be fighting or dancing; in the second, it resembles a magician taking something out of a top hat. In both cases, the bodies actively move. In the second photograph, however, the shadows of the bodies appear lined up, still, almost as though they were showing bodies being led to slaughter — as though human beings were treating them as human beings treat animals. Almost hidden among the spotlights, there is someone — judging by the silhouette, possibly a man — with a raised finger, shouting at these people as though commanding and subjugating them.

Since the play deals with the history of Taguatinga, it is not difficult to consider the process of continuous dehumanisation involved in the construction of Brasília, to which these bodies are subjected and subjugated. But these are also the bodies that act, that rise, that fight and that also invent, that “pull a rabbit out of a hat”, that create a city on the margins of the main city, the Plano Piloto of Brasília, and place it at the centre of the protagonism of its own theatrical production. Together, these two photographs form a dialectical image grounded in the movement, action, and inaction of bodies in the city. A

Benjaminian reminder that every monument of culture is also a monument of barbarism. *Uma Satélite Fora de Órbita* would not exist, nor would the photographs of it, without the construction of Brasília, nor without the *candangos* who built it and were expelled from it.

Through a harsh vocabulary of aggressive words, Grupo Retalhos, through its shadows, sheds light on an entire obscure context of the exclusion and erasure of the art and artists of Taguatinga as part of an institutional project of the Federal District government that has never ended. The same *modus operandi* has been followed for 40 years and shows no signs, however minimal, of recovery. Teatro da Praça has not been fully operational since 1997. The photographs of Grupo Retalhos and of the theatrical production *Uma Satélite Fora de Órbita* are visual reminders that the absence of infrastructure and urban facilities dedicated to art and culture is not merely an absence; it is a government project for the Federal District.

IMAGE THEORY: LISTENING AND THE BUTTERFLY'S CRY

LISTENING TO IMAGES OF SILENCE

Revisiting Tina Campt's (2017) theoretical framework, the author asks whether images without faces produce sounds and, if so, what auditory frequency they record. If not, how can we apprehend this and move beyond their silencing? The researcher explains that she listened to images for years and that "reading images" means paying attention to the musical patterns, rhythms and registers ordered by vernacular photography of Black European communities. Her practice focused on the affective photographic records of Black families; on how and why these photographs touch and move people, both physically and affectively; and on excavating and bringing to light the gendered narratives captured in the diaspora, contained in images of communities that have so often been overlooked in academic studies.

In the case of Teatro da Praça in Taguatinga, racism operates through denial; that is, it is concealed, its presence denied even when it is present. In the theatre, there is a profusion of voices — voices that supposedly should not be speaking — that speak at the same time, producing an indistinguishable sound.

THE BUTTERFLY'S CRY: THE POWER OF THE EPHEMERAL

This sound is what Marie-José Mondzain (2014/2025), in *O Appetite de Ver* (The Appetite for Seeing), calls the "butterfly's cry". The author says that there are two political forms of action and resistance against oppression. Both can become real propositions; however, one form is more metaphorical, while the other is imbued with the capacity to become viable, constituting a combination of actions and struggles.

To configure the metaphorical form of resistance, Mondzain (2014/2025) uses the image of saxifrage plants². This image evokes the possibility of breaking through stone or asphalt and growing despite all obstacles and forms of domination. In the second case of resistance to oppression, the word used to materialise the concept she advocates is “butterfly”. The author states that, although its meaning may seem metaphorical, this is not the case because, in French, the original language in which the text was written, “butterfly” and “leaflet” are designated by the same word: “papillon”. And *papillon* does not mean only leaflet, but every kind of real object made of paper (flyers, zines, posters, crumpled napkins, rags, stickers) — everything that may or may not be used on the body by those who want the clamour of a choice, cause or demand to be heard. The butterfly is therefore a material sign of the resistance and insurgency of those who actively refuse to let their voice be crushed by a power that seeks to assert itself as the sole owner of visibility. For Mondzain (2014/2025), the cry comes from the butterfly or the leaflet, and, in this case, photographic images too possess the power of a highly expressive force and will.

This cry is also a social and political body that has historically been popular in producing the people’s very existence. It is the butterfly’s cry that makes visible those who, by nature, do not exist for the powerful. The leaflet and the butterfly are the product of a popular democracy because they require a singular gesture from each subject involved in the act. Because it is plural, it is composed of an assemblage of bodies and voices that take the floor. Speech that is neither fully articulated nor spoken in unison is precisely constituted by conflict. Because the people, as a political body, are made up of living bodies, and the butterfly is attached to the uniqueness of living bodies in the course of their constitution as a political body, using their shared signs (Mondzain, 2014/2025).

The most important aspect of the butterfly’s cry project is using its ability to restore the political dimension to social struggles. To carry the butterfly, a leaflet, or a photograph on one’s own body is to produce sharing and, consequently, the common. At this moment, what is held in common is a power that removes freedom and disparages the rights and achievements of historical struggles. The butterfly’s cry concerns the voice, the sound produced by claims that are shared within a democratic space given to living and speaking bodies that wish to make themselves heard (Mondzain, 2014/2025).

Thus, while Campt (2017) listens to images produced from an open and explicitly violent form of racism and therefore composed of silent photographs, here listening seeks to distinguish and give singularity to the fluttering of the wings of countless small butterflies and, amid the profusion of voices, to make some of the countless demands distinguishable.

² A type of plant with rootless fecundity, which the wind can disperse.

CONCLUSION: THE PERSISTENCE OF THE GESTURE IN THE CITY'S MEMORY

Studying Ivaldo Cavalcante's archive, in light of contemporary theories of image and culture, leads us to conclude that Taguatinga's artistic production in the 1970s and 1980s constituted one of the most radical experiences of counter-hegemony in the Federal District. Ivaldo's legacy is not restricted to the aesthetic quality of his photographs; rather, it lies in his ability to have constructed a "visual grammar" of his own, and to have recorded a period, its values and discourses in the image. Ivaldo constructed a visual structure of feeling of Taguatinga's counterculture for a territory and population that had historically been rendered invisible. By recording the naked bodies at Teatro da Praça, the shadows cast by Grupo Retalhos and everyday life, Ivaldo did not merely document the past; he created a counter-archive of possibilities for the future.

There was, in fact, a superabundance of culture, a culture of survival and invention that flourished in the cracks of the concrete. Ivaldo Cavalcante's photographs are material evidence of this existence. After 40 years, they let us hear the butterfly's cry and see, in the shadows cast over history, the clear silhouette of a city that dared to dream of itself. The research demonstrated that the absence of cultural infrastructure was not an accident, but a government project aimed at maintaining segregation, the effects of which still reverberate today. Nevertheless, Taguatinga's artistic response — embodied in Ivaldo's photographs of his fellow artists' work — transformed precariousness into aesthetics and exclusion into political potential. By systematising and theorising this archive, this research hopes to contribute to historical reparation and to the definitive recognition of Taguatinga as a centre of avant-garde production and critical thought in the heart of Brazil.

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