REVISTA DE CULTURA VISUAL
e-ISSN 2184-1284

No. 18 | 2026

An Entire People Emerges From the Threads of Memory: Archive, Ancestry, and Existence in *Parede da Memória*

Dos Fios da Memória Nasce um Povo Inteiro: Arquivo, Ancestralidade e Existência em *Parede da Memória*

https://doi.org/10.21814/vista.7456
e026017

Vinicius dos Santos Moreira

Vanessa Séves Deister de Sousa

Adriana Barin de Azevedo

© Authors

Vista, No 18, 2026, e026017
https://doi.org/10.21814/vista.7456

An Entire People Emerges From the Threads of Memory: Archive, Ancestry, and Existence in *Parede da Memória*

Vinicius dos Santos Moreira
Centro de Ciências Humanas, Letras e Artes, Departamento de Psicologia,
Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Maringá, Brazil
Conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, writing – review & editing

Vanessa Séves Deister de Sousa
Centro de Ciências Humanas, Letras e Artes, Departamento de Psicologia,
Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Maringá, Brazil
Conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, writing – review & editing

Adriana Barin de Azevedo
Centro de Ciências Humanas, Letras e Artes, Departamento de Psicologia,
Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Maringá, Brazil
Conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, writing – review & editing

Abstract

This article examines Rosana Paulino's (1967) *Parede da Memória* (Wall of Memory; 1994–2015) as an aesthetic-political dispositif that challenges regimes of visibility and memory in contemporary Brazilian art. Rather than viewing the artist's practice as limited to reconstructing silenced narratives, the article proposes engaging with the work as a field of forces in which memory, materiality and ancestry converge, establishing a co-presence between the living and the dead. Through poetic dispositifs that bring together family photographs, stitching, repetition and montage, Paulino shifts the archive away from its traditional function as a static repository and towards a regime of contestation. In other words, Paulino's poetic practice allows the work to be understood as an archive in action, capable of reactivating traces and forging connections between individual and collective experiences, particularly in the context of the diaspora in Brazil. Incorporating elements associated with diasporic displacement, such as *patuás* (protective amulets), further extends this dimension by transforming them into dispositifs of memory and protection, in which ancestral images act as agents of continuity and belonging. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) and Vinciane Despret (2015/2023), the article approaches the work as a territory and an assemblage, showing how it generates modes of existence by bringing material and sensory elements into relation and sustaining the presence of the dead in the present. Finally, the article argues that the installation's power lies in its capacity to bring a living memory into being — a memory that does not remain fixed in the past but is continually actualised through relationships, taking shape as a space of cohabitation in which memory, art and existence remain in process.

Keywords
memory, ancestry, archive, territoriality, contemporary art

Dos Fios da Memória Nasce um Povo Inteiro: Arquivo, Ancestralidade e Existência em *Parede da Memória*

Resumo

O presente artigo investiga a obra *Parede da Memória* (1994–2015), de Rosana Paulino (1967), como um dispositivo estético-político que tensiona os regimes de visibilidade e memória na arte contemporânea brasileira. Partindo da compreensão de que a produção da artista não se limita à reconstituição de narrativas silenciadas, propõe-se caminhar junto à obra como um campo de forças, no qual memória, materialidade e ancestralidade se articulam, instaurando uma co-presença entre vivos e mortos. Por meio de dispositivos poéticos, que articulam fotografias familiares, costura, repetição e montagem, Paulino desloca o arquivo de sua função tradicional de repositório estático para um regime de disputa. Ou seja: no fazer poético de Paulino, a obra pode ser compreendida como um arquivo em ato, capaz de reativar vestígios e produzir vínculos entre experiências individuais e coletivas, especialmente no contexto da diáspora em território brasileiro. Dessa forma, entende-se que a incorporação de elementos provenientes do deslocamento diaspórico, como, por exemplo, os patuás, amplia essa dimensão, ao transformá-los em dispositivos de memória e proteção, nos quais as imagens ancestrais operam como agentes de continuidade e pertencimento. Mobilizando referenciais de Deleuze e Guattari (1980/2011) e Vinciane Despret (2015/2023), o artigo apresenta a obra como território e agenciamento, evidenciando como produz modos de existência ao articular materiais sensíveis e sustentar a continuidade dos mortos no presente. Argumenta-se, por fim, que a potência da instalação reside em sua capacidade de instaurar uma memória viva, que não se fixa no passado, mas se atualiza nas relações, configurando-se como um espaço de coabitação onde memória, arte e existência permanecem em processo.

Palavras-chave
memória, ancestralidade, arquivo, territorialidade, arte contemporânea

Introduction

In recent decades, Brazilian contemporary art has been shaped by practices that challenge historically established regimes of visibility, memory and representation. In this context, Rosana Paulino's (1967) artistic practice has gradually emerged as a particularly fertile field of aesthetic and political enquiry, mobilising material forms and sensitive poetic dispositifs to interrogate how Black bodies have often been erased from Brazilian history. Her work is not limited to recovering silenced narratives; rather, it creates the conditions for images and forms of existence that have been historically erased to return to the present as active presences, capable of affecting, narrating and generating new relationships.

This article stems from an undergraduate research project in psychology[1], jointly supervised by scholars in psychology and art, that examined how *Parede da Memória* (Wall of Memory; 1994–2015) engages with Vinciane Despret's (2015/2023)[2] concept of the

[1] Research conducted at the State University of Maringá, with support from Araucária Foundation/Secretariat for Science, Technology and Higher Education of Paraná.

[2] Vinciane Despret (1959) is a researcher trained in philosophy and psychology, whose thinking spans these and other disciplines. In recent years, she has devoted herself to the transdisciplinary study of relationships between the living and the dead. This in-depth exploration opened the possibility of expanding the scope of the present research, which itself seeks to move across disciplinary fields and spaces of thought.

"biographical supplement". The research traverses multiple disciplines, including psychology, art, philosophy, and ancestry, to investigate diverse interpretative possibilities, without reducing the artwork to a mere conceptual illustration. Accordingly, this approach lets the work itself guide the exploration of its potential meanings.

In this sense, we will allow ourselves to be instructed[3] by the work. This epistemological stance enables researchers to be guided by wandering lines of thought that lead us to "be mobilised by the particular kind of understanding that the situation requires" (Despret, 2015/2023, p. 27). The premise of allowing ourselves to be instructed by the research process itself suggests that the analytical journey must begin by welcoming enigmas, understood as "beginnings of stories that set those whom the enigma summons to work in a very particular way" (Despret, 2015/2023, p. 27).

This approach lets the artwork transcend its material fixation and engage broader fields of force, where art, memory, materiality, and ancestry intersect. The analysis considers how the work destabilises boundaries between the intimate and the collective, the archive and lived experience, and the past and present, ultimately forming a relational territory in which the living and the dead coexist.

By treating images as fragile yet persistent traces and working on them through poetic procedures and dispositifs, such as stitching, repetition and composition, Paulino effects a significant shift: the archive ceases to be understood as a static repository and instead functions as an active field of reinscription and contestation, within which *Parede da Memória* can be understood as an archive in action.

This understanding of the archive as an active field of reinscription and contestation resonates with Amaral's (2021) formulations, particularly in rejecting the archive as a mere passive repository of traces. In doing so, the work invites viewers to join a network of relationships that extends beyond the individual to encompass collective diasporic memory.

The analysis also addresses how the work produces territories. Specifically, it considers how the installation, through its various configurations and exhibition contexts, generates variations in meaning and experience, functioning as a mechanism of "territorialisation" and "deterritorialisation" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). This examination aims to show that the strength of Paulino's work lies in its ability to sustain memory as a living force, continually actualising it and establishing continuities between what has been interrupted and what may yet emerge.

The Artist

Rosana Paulino is now regarded as "the spearhead of contemporary Afro-Brazilian art" (Oliveira, 2025, para. 1). Born in the city of São Paulo, she is a Black Brazilian artist and researcher who trained in printmaking at the School of Communications and Arts of

[3] The idea of being "instructed" by the work is closely related to the methodological approach developed by Vinciane Despret (2015/2023). For Despret, "researching" does not involve applying pre-existing categories to an object, but following how the object itself prompts thought, feeling, and the formulation of questions. It involves sustaining an attentive relationship with the problems, affects, and memories the artwork calls forth, allowing its "regimes of existence" to guide the investigation.

the University of São Paulo and holds a PhD in Visual Arts (Graichen et al., 2021; Paulino, n.d.). As this article was being finalised, we learned of another pioneering achievement by Paulino: her selection to represent Brazil at the 2026 Venice Biennale[4], alongside Adriana Varejão. Her presence at one of the most important international events in contemporary art highlights both the wide critical circulation of her work and the central place it occupies in contemporary debates on memory, racialisation, coloniality/decoloniality and the image.

In an interview with *Arte!Brasileiros* magazine, Paulino reflects on her pioneering role and the poetic significance of her work in the Brazilian context: "I consider myself a highly technical artist who researches areas that were not present in the construction of visuality, Black representation and Brazilian artistic production" (Simões, 2022, para. 10). The technical experimentation underpinning her poetic practice is evident in her work through her use of a range of artistic media and materials — including paper, fabric, photography, stitching, embroidery, printmaking and collage — all brought together to create an interplay between different forms of expression and prompt reflection on the artistic construction of memory and the denaturalisation of the gaze (TV Brasil, 2019).

Paulino's artistic practice has focused on re-signifying visual codes and activating memories erased by the hegemonic traditions of art history. Her works intertwine racialised, class-based and gendered experiences, critically reconfiguring historical images in an effort to reveal what has been obscured beneath successive layers. This tension and reconstruction dynamic opens new possibilities for the visual presence of subjects previously rendered invisible. These are bodies that were subjected to violence and captivity but which, in the artist's work, are reconnected to the fabric of the present.

As Amaral (2021) observes, "in the artist's lines, guided by the piercing needle, the reality of the fabric is penetrated by time. Stitching connects times and bodies, but not before reminding us of encounters and continuities that are coercive" (p. 15). This aesthetic and political practice turns artistic creation into an act of care. In Paulino's case, this care extends beyond the self to encompass the memory of the nation and community, reaching beyond the individual biographies in her compositions.

Paulino's artistic production can be understood as an intimate and collective reliquary. Using materials associated with the domestic and feminine sphere — threads, needles, fabrics, everyday objects, and others — she critically reconfigures an artistic language historically shaped by hierarchical distinctions. Her works prompt reflection on how Brazilian history has constructed Black bodies, showing how this narrative has often been sustained by images that crystallised stereotypes before they could be fully understood (Oliveira, 2025). Paulino engages with images as though excavating layers of silence, repositioning, reclaiming, and expanding their possibilities of existence. This (re)organisation takes place not only at the formal level but also at the symbolic level, allowing the worlds contained within the images to be reinscribed within a new order.

[4] Entitled *In Minor Keys* and conceived by the late curator Koyo Kouoh, the 61st international art exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia will follow the project she devised in its entirety, with the aim of honouring her vision. The exhibition thus proposes a reflection on memory, listening, relationships and forms of existence that are frequently marginalised by the dominant regimes of visibility in contemporary society (La Biennale di Venezia, 2026).

The Work

Parede da Memória (1994–2015; https://35.bienal.org.br/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/06/rosana-paulino-2-scaled.jpg) articulates material and sensory elements that run through the life and work of the artist Rosana Paulino, particularly her family memories, conveyed above all through inherited photographic images (which bear traces of broader historical conditions). The work produces a kind of montage in which the intimate and the collective cease to be separate spheres. *Parede da Memória* is an art installation, a visual work that unsettles the traditionally established boundaries between two-dimensionality, three-dimensionality, exhibition space, the body, and experience.

According to Michael Archer (1997/2012), art critics coined the term "installation" in the 1970s to describe "the increasing frequency with which spectators found that they had to be in an artwork to see and experience it" (p. 83). In line with Rosalind Krauss's thinking, Archer (1997/2012), an important contemporary art critic, understands installations as works that are difficult to describe and categorise because they belong to what is known as the "expanded field" of international contemporary art. As the image shows, photographs are one of the installation's principal elements. Here, we can read the photographs as unsettling the traces of a history shaped by regimes of visibility that determined who could appear and how. The photographs thus carry the idea of a "trace" — a material trace capable of (re)affirming the existence of everything represented within them.

In an interview with TV Brasil on the occasion of the exhibition *A Costura da Memória* (The Stitching of Memory; 2018–2019), the artist states: "I work with photographs that have already been taken because they carry a great deal of emotional significance" (Antonacci, 2017, p. 281). Photographs can therefore be understood as relational agents in Paulino's practice. Amaral (2021) reinforces this interpretation by noting that her work not only consults the archive but also engages the affective charge of historical objects that call forth remembrance.

The recurrent use of portraits of Black people becomes an act of recovery and identity reinscription, directly challenging the foundations of official history. By exhibiting her family members, the artist enters the field of collective production, not simply by repeating images but by expanding the ancestral network of those who have been unable to access their ancestors.

Paulino's work therefore lies in its capacity to revisit history and reconfigure narratives (Oliveira, 2025). By confronting colonial violence directly, she turns artistic objects into territories of contestation and recognition. Paulino does not soften the edges of pain; instead, she stitches with the needle of truth and affection, interweaving times and bodies. The result is a work that, although personal, is inevitably political. In her own words, Paulino states: "from where I stand (...) I go in search of other memories, and that is where the memory of the ethnic group comes in" (Amaral, 2021, p. 9). This group forms a vast mass, a yellowish trace visible from afar in every exhibition, yet also looking out from a distance.

Through this interplay of distances, the work takes shape as an archive. Not a static archive organised by rigid institutional criteria, but an archive in action, woven through

the repetition, deterioration, and reinscription of images and familiar techniques. By mobilising photography and stitching, Rosana Paulino shifts archiving away from control toward summoning: the question is no longer what should be preserved, but how to bring forth what has been partially erased. In doing so, the work challenges the very notion of "archive fever"[5], poetically exposing the constitutive violence of preservation and forgetting without seeking to resolve it.

At the same time, by bringing these fragments together and reinscribing them within an exhibition space, the artist produces a different archival regime, one that approaches what Mbembe (2002) understands as the archive as a dispositif that articulates memory, materiality and power. Here, however, this dispositif is diverted from its conventional function: it no longer serves to stabilise an official narrative but instead exposes its failures and gaps. The artist's everyday images function as sensory evidence of a history that persistently resists erasure.

Through this shift, the work can be understood as a "Nagô archive" (Amaral, 2021): a diasporic archive constructed from remnants, survivals, and gestures of recomposition. Unlike the State archive, which organises and closes off, this archive expands, multiplies and summons. It does not seek an origin but sustains the continuity of a memory shaped by violence and resistance. In this way, the work reactivates images, transforming the archive into a living field in which the past is not concluded but remains subject to constant reinscription.

It is important to emphasise that creating the work does not simply involve taking photographs out of a box of keepsakes and placing them on a wall (https://35.bienal.org.br/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/06/rosana-paulino-1-scaled.jpg). The process draws on a body of knowledge specific to creative practices in the visual arts, shaped by sensitive poetic experimentation. In this particular case, such experimentation lies at the intersection of so-called "everyday" elements and other technologies, including the necessary processing to which the photographic images were subjected before reaching their final form.

The artist herself explains:

> *Parede da Memória* is made using digital photocopying, which is interesting because I am very fond of technology. I have no problem with technology; quite the opposite, I love it. At the time, for example, digital photocopying was a sensible option because it let me manipulate the images (change their format and size) — there were no scanners or Photoshop back then. (Paulino, 2018, p. 10)[6]

The artist needed image-editing software to digitise and standardise the photographs to an 8 × 8 × 3 cm format (Graichen et al., 2021; Paulino, 2018). Paulino (2018) goes on to explain:

[5] The concept of "archive fever" was developed by the philosopher Jacques Derrida (1995/2001), most notably in his work *Mal de Arquivo: Uma Impressão Freudiana* (Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression). Amaral's (2021) article centres on this concept, proposing an alternative reading of the archive.

[6] The definitive version of the work is held by the Pinacoteca de São Paulo. In this version, the artist recreates the *patuás* through digital printing; the pilot version is no longer in circulation.

> it is not printmaking; I do not make an engraving, nor is it a photogravure. What matters here is the printmaker's way of thinking, the way of looking at the material. That is why I always talk about the material, because this question of reproducibility, this way of approaching the work, comes from a printmaker's mindset. (p. 11)

In her creative process, Paulino explored the intrinsic potential of the materials available to her. Thus, after receiving the desired photographic prints — with some images later modified with watercolour — the fabrics were no longer merely "fabrics"; they became talismanic artefacts and protective amulets, *patuás*[7].

Despite the borrowed name, this element is common in Afro-Brazilian culture and is associated with Candomblé; *patuás* are made in various ways. According to Alex Swander Martins (2014), a *patuá* may consist of a small piece of fabric worn close to the body. Aquino (2014), meanwhile, notes that it may also be made of leather, often in colours associated with the wearer's orixá, and may contain herbs, substances, and inscriptions connected with the spiritual entity invoked for protection.

The use of *patuá* as protection extends beyond the individual. In Paulino's case, she encountered this amulet-talisman in her own home. As Paulino (2018) explains, "you cannot pass by an object for ten years without being touched by it, without wondering what might be there" (p. 15).

We can therefore observe that the entire creative process behind *Parede da Memória* is permeated by memories and by the technical, sensory and affective experiences that have shaped the artist's life, which she revisits and periodically re-signifies. The work weaves together images of relatives (ancestors), the stitching Paulino learnt from her mother, the materiality of the *patuá* and numerous other elements of her lived experience, drawing viewers into a singular visual narrative that emerges from the archive.

These archives are constructed within a territory of poetic freedom, where the freedom to use materials directly informs the making of the *patuás*, which are transformed into works of art. Unlike religious *patuás*, Paulino's do not use coloured fabrics or leather, nor are they filled with herbs, stones, bones, or glass beads (Lago et al., 2022). Yet these materials' absence does not diminish the objects' protective value. In *Parede da Memória*, this protective function expands: by stylising her *patuás*, Paulino assigns her ancestors — the people depicted in the photographs — the role of protectors. These images transform a small, foam-filled fabric cushion into a protective *patuá*.

Paulino's *patuás* therefore operate differently: they are not religious amulets associated with Candomblé magic but have been transformed into artistic supports for identity through photography. The photographs of the ancestors fulfil this role by preserving histories and affirming belonging, transforming the small, amulet-like *patuás* into an artistic installation and dispositif of memory that connects the body, the past, and lineage (Aquino, 2014).

[7] The word "patuá" is said to derive from the Tupi-Guarani word "patauá", meaning basket, box, coffin or woven straw basket. A *patuá* is commonly worn on the chest to "close the body" of the person carrying it (Léxico, n.d.).

This memory is at imminent risk of being forgotten and disappearing, and the artist somehow incorporates it into her work. The choice of microfibre fabric is not arbitrary: when printed, this material does not guarantee the images' perpetual durability. A closer look at the installation's photographs reveals differences: some are clearer, while others are more worn. The work conveys a sense of fading and the disappearance of images, just as memories disappear when they are not revisited.

In this way, the *patuás* in *Parede da Memória* reinforce both their protective function and their role in remembrance, while also accounting for the time over which the work was developed. The *patuás* become sites of contact and circulation between times, cultures, and affects, giving rise to a corporeality that is simultaneously container and content: vessels of Afro-Brazilian memory and resistance.

The protection the ancestors bestow allows us to approach the work as a large reliquary (Rendeiro, 2010), capable of emanating protective power toward those who view it. This protection, or rather this "closing of the body", renders us invulnerable and keeps our mirror intact.

The combination of materials in Paulino's poetic practice, together with the range of techniques she employs, constitutes the "breath of life" (Bottene, 2014, p. 118) bestowed by contemporary art. This art has freed itself from constraints and follows a wandering, uncertain, undefined, and unfinished path (Cattani, 2002). According to Bottene (2014), "to address contemporary art is to address a succession of phenomena of disorder and the uninterrupted; it is to distort the figure of art and challenge a linear history" (p. 118). It is to become an antithesis, interrupt a flow, remove the boundaries between the meanings of objects, and seek new ideas about art itself, whatever it may be, and its relationships with the whole (Rajchman, 2011).

By allowing herself to invent her own techniques and materials, Paulino transforms what some consider "banal" into material for artistic creation, valuing an aesthetic rooted in everyday Brazilian life, even beyond the official cultural system. Her work is therefore not limited to representation or symbolisation. Instead, it engages with Suely Rolnik's (2002) critique of the uncritical incorporation of erudite repertoires from "hegemonic centres", establishing an artistic practice that develops its own modes of thought from situated historical experiences and materialities.

To allow oneself to be guided by this work, one must be open to a "reading against the grain" of official history. Each photograph in the installation asserts presence and resistance, confronting the forces of erasure and silencing. Here, the artist and her work make their mark on contemporary art. This art follows neither a linear nor an orthodox path (Bottene, 2014), but is marked by discontinuity, hybridity, and a challenge to art's narrative of progress.

The Territory

The encounter with *Parede da Memória* (1994–2015) did not occur as initially anticipated, as direct engagement with the work's material presence was not possible. Instead, the work was accessed through its circulation in academic and digital images. While

preparing this text, we encountered the installation indirectly through photographs in catalogues, institutional documents, and digital records distributed across various platforms.

This way of accessing and viewing the work particularly shapes our experience of "seeing it through the eyes of others"[8] — or, more specifically, through another's record of it. We are unable to examine the work on our own terms, from the angles we would have liked to explore, under the lighting conditions we would have chosen, at the distance we would have preferred, or by experiencing the exhibition environment in which it was displayed. We also couldn't observe those who were observing it, or experience the moment of physical encounter, whether positive or negative. Losing the anticipated opportunity to stand before the 1,500 *patuás* forced us to find another point of entry — undoubtedly a more distant one, yet still a close encounter in its own way — and intensified our desire to trace the records through which the work circulates.

Through this imposed distance, we came to understand that the work had broken free from the fixed objectivity of an "object" and had begun to operate precisely through the capacity for reconfiguration that had drawn us to it. In other words, what might previously have (perhaps) diminished our interest in the work also opened up possibilities for investigation and curiosity about these other modes of access.

This alternative experience of and engagement with the work offered clues about its own process of territorialisation. After all, as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) suggest, a territory is not merely a bounded physical space, but a set of relations, rhythms, forces and expressions capable of producing modes of existence. *Parede da Memória*, therefore, does not inhabit a single place: it continually reterritorialises itself through the spaces it circulates, the dispositifs that reproduce it, and the bodies that encounter it.

Approaching the work, by whatever means are available, means opening ourselves to its "assemblage" and to the ways it acts on researchers, even as we seek to grasp what we perceive as the assemblages acting on the artist throughout her creative process. Ultimately, we are always both assembled and assembling, co-agents, since nothing exists in isolation.

In the case of works of art, their existence depends on encounters between materials and forces that articulate with one another. This heterogeneous composition can provisionally organise chaos and produce a particular form of expression (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011) — a form that lends consistency and existence to something previously dispersed in the virtual[9].

[8] This formulation recalls Roland Barthes's (1980/1984) analysis in *A Câmara Clara* (Camera Lucida), in which he problematises the experience of being photographed and the reception of one's own portrait as an act of alienation and externalisation. For Barthes, the photographic image establishes an ontological split between the portrayed subject (*spectrum*) and the spectator's gaze (*spectator*), meaning that apprehending the self (or the beloved object) inevitably involves mediation through another's gaze. In photography, the object's presence is, in a sense, deferred: we see ourselves transformed into someone else.

[9] The concept of the "virtual" in Gilles Deleuze (1968/2006) refers to a field of potentialities, intensities and multiplicities that cannot be exhausted by their empirical actualisation. Unlike the possible, which is realised through resemblance, the virtual is actualised through differentiation, producing new configurations without ever being reduced to a fixed form. It is therefore an ontological dimension that coexists with and traverses the actual, constituting its problematic and generative ground. From this perspective, the dead can be understood not as nonexistent, but as virtual: their existence no longer operates under the regime of biological presence, yet persists as a field of forces, memories, affects and effects that continue to be actualised through the practices of the living. The dead, as virtual, constitute a potential for relational actualisation — that which, though not actual, remains operative in the folds of the present, as do the images Paulino uses.

To approach *Parede da Memória* as an assemblage-encounter involving the materiality Paulino has worked with poetically requires us to move beyond a purely objectified understanding of materials and enter the relational field between them and everything that surrounds the construction and conception of a work of art. Paulino, for example, produces an aesthetic, political and affective field in which memory functions as an active force, establishing narrative continuities.

This other poetic field, composed of photographs, fabrics, threads, and memories, allows the materials (bodies and territories) to coexist relationally. Paulino also says the artwork emerges from a presence kept in her wardrobe: a box of photographs. In other words, an assemblage of ancestral beings works through Paulino's discourse, material practice, and creative process...

Ancestors are present in her poetics[10], whether through transgenerational learning or through photographs and material forms. In this sense, the dead are present too. This parallel between ancestry and death can be understood through Leda Maria Martins's (2021) statement that "ancestors are born from death" (p. 139). The dead thus cease to (re)appear in the work merely as figures represented on the *patuás* and instead become agentive presences that traverse the work and contribute to its expressive force. At this complex intersection, the installation can be understood as a means of dialogue between the living and the dead, generating encounters, affects, and continuities.

This dynamic closely aligns with Vinciane Despret's (2015/2023) notion of the "biographical supplement". For Despret, "supplementing" means allowing the dead to continue to exist in a register beyond physical and biological existence[11]. Paulino presents this possibility in her work: her dead cease to inhabit only her psyche and memories and come to inhabit an expanded poetic space, where they act as protectors through the *patuás*.

Despret (2015/2023) and Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) thus illuminate this (other) dimension, which exceeds the isolated singularity of movements and takes shape as a single body in bodily, affective and material dynamism[12]. Within this plane, different gestures, forces and presences are not organised according to a hierarchical or subordinating logic; rather, they form a relational unity in which each element contributes to the constitution of the whole without losing its own potential. Neither matter, affect, nor action takes precedence. Instead, a field of immanence emerges in which movements

[10] Among works produced between 1994 and 2015 — the period during which *Parede da Memória* was also being created — works such as *Bastidores* (Embroidery Hoops/Backdrop; 1997) and *Assentamento* (Settlement; 2013) likewise incorporate photographs, thread, and fabric. Taken together, these works reveal a consistent use of these materials in conjunction with messages that predominantly seek to expose the suffering inflicted on Black bodies, including their losses and the violence to which they have been subjected.

[11] In her book *Um Brinde aos Mortos: Histórias Daqueles que Ficam* (The Happiness of the Dead: Stories of Those Who Remain), Despret (2015/2023) shares several examples of life's supplementation, including the narratives she created for her uncle Georges. For Despret, some forms of the supplementation of existence are entrusted to music, gardens, works of art and books, but also to the continuation of struggles, work and thought initiated by those who have died.

[12] When we refer to the bodily, affective and material dimensions, we are indicating the concrete conditions through which the work comes into being within the artistic field: "bodily", because every artistic practice involves a body that acts, whether that of the artist who produces the work or that of the spectator who is summoned and affected by it; "affective", because this action does not take place in a neutral manner, but is driven by forces, memories, intensities and sensory dispositions that engage both those who create the work and those who experience it; "material", because the work requires some form of physical support or inscription (such as fabric, photographic images and embroidery) that enables it to exist in the world.

intersect and sustain one another. Thus, rather than a sum of distinct parts, an expanded corporeality takes shape, characterised by the horizontality of relations and the inseparability of its dimensions.

Through this gesture, the work extends these stories beyond mere visual representation. The photographs, inherited and reinscribed by the artist, reverberate through new relations in a poetic territory shared by the living and the dead. The ancestors present there emerge as existences that continue to produce effects, affects and demands. Thus, the "reliquary" (Rendeiro, 2010) Paulino constructs becomes a collective of faces, gestures, and stories that once acted on the artist and now act on us.

If reactivating the dead means opening new territories for forms of presence and continuity, we must ask what limits our understanding of these "other ways" the dead exist. Looking at the installation *Parede da Memória*, we ask: how do the dead teach us to engage with the living?

It is widely recognised that hegemonic Western thought tends to approach death through forgetting, as Despret (2019) points out: the dead "have no other role to play than to make themselves forgotten" (p. 16). Forgetting the dead is a fundamental premise of what we call "the work of mourning" (p. 16)[13].

By contrast, *Parede da Memória* powerfully exemplifies what Despret (2015/2023) calls an "ecological niche", insofar as it establishes a relational field in which certain existences can continue to act. To speak of a "niche" is not to limit ourselves to a bounded territory, but rather to consider an ecology of connections that sustains presences, activates memories and reconfigures modes of coexistence. The ecological niche the work establishes can therefore be understood as a dispositif of continuity: it does not guarantee substantial permanence, but creates the conditions for traces, signs, and ancestries to remain active, spreading through new relations.

This is a form of coexistence in which the dead continue to teach us and demand new ways of being in the world. Their presence thus depends on the relations they establish with the living: in a sense, the dead are what they bring about in the lives of those who remember them. Despret (2019) therefore warns that, if we do not care for the dead, they may die again — this time, irrevocably.

This dependence, however, should not be confused with the complete subordination of the dead's existence to our practices. To think about the relationship between the living and the dead therefore requires us to consider a specific territory. In Western culture, the customary environment of the dead is often associated with cemeteries, gravestones and albums forgotten at the back of drawers. In *Parede da Memória*, however, the dead inhabit another place: art, circulation, and experience.

Perhaps it is precisely for this reason — for this heterogeneous network of things and existences — that Deleuze and Guattari (1991/2010) understand art as a privileged

[13] The concept of "the work of mourning" was formulated by Sigmund Freud (1917/2010) in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia", in which mourning is described as a psychic process through which, in response to the loss of a loved object, the subject gradually withdraws the libido previously invested in that object, eventually making it possible to reinvest it in new attachments. The term "work" indicates that mourning is not a passive state, but an active process of working through loss within the psychic apparatus.

operator of assemblages. Exploring this perspective, we see that, in *Parede da Memória*, materials are both "agency" and "contagion", since they produce a plane-territory with its own consistency, in which images, fabrics, stitches, archives, and ancestries cease to exist in isolation and instead function in co-relation.

As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) remind us, every territorialisation is traversed by lines of deterritorialisation that cause forms and their relations to vary. The installation's very structure makes this movement visible. The repeated family photographs, rendered in watercolour, temporarily stabilise faces, stories and presences. However, the variable arrangement and installation of the *patuás* prevent the work from becoming fixed in a single configuration.

The work's exhibition history also makes this process visible. Since its earliest presentations, when Paulino was still an undergraduate at the School of Communications and Arts of the University of São Paulo, *Parede da Memória* has moved through different institutions, exhibitions and exhibition designs. In 2015, the work became part of the exhibition *Territórios: Artistas Afrodescendentes no Acervo da Pinacoteca* (Territories: Afro-Descendant Artists in the Pinacoteca Collection), curated by Tadeu Chiarelli, and was acquired for the Pinacoteca de São Paulo collection. It subsequently featured in exhibitions such as *Rosana Paulino: A Costura da Memória* (Rosana Paulino: The Sewing of Memory; 2018–2019), presented at the Pinacoteca and the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, and in the "35th São Paulo Biennial" (see the second image at https://35.bienal.org.br/participante/rosana-paulino/) e da mostra *Chão da Praça* (2023; disponível em https://pinacoteca.org.br/programacao/exposicoes/chao-da-praca-obras-do-acervo-da-pinacoteca/).

Each exhibition produced new spatial configurations (at first glance) and relational configurations (on closer inspection) of the installation. According to documentation from the Pinacoteca de São Paulo, the artist works with the idea of a "minimal footprint", allowing the work to be rearranged according to each exhibition space's dimensions and conditions and, in a sense, assembled by the space-territory itself. Therefore, *Parede da Memória* has no definitive visual form. For example, each element is not numbered to indicate an ideal or fixed position when the work is installed on a gallery or museum wall.

Each installation redistributes images, distances, rhythms and relations, keeping the work open to variation, as in a "memory game" (Graichen et al., 2021). In this way, different architectures, different forms of sharing between artists, dispositifs, circulation flows and modes of approach become part of the assemblages through which the work comes into existence.

As noted above, *Parede da Memória* reached us primarily through luminous surfaces, compressed into pixels and translated through framing and resolutions determined by others (our agents). Accessing it in this way also entails another kind of relation: a distant touch, without thickness or temperature, yet still capable of producing affects. The work remains (almost) the same, but the territory of encounter changes.

Perhaps it is precisely in this interval — between presence and circulation, between materiality and image, between body and screen — that the work's power continues to operate. *Parede da Memória* is not confined to its status as an art object — it persists as a

field of relations, capable of circulating memories, affects and presences across different media and territories.

The dead present in the work thus continue to call for relation, listening and continuity. Perhaps this is one of the work's central forces: allowing past existences to continue traversing the present. As Vinciane Despret (2015/2023) suggests, only the forgotten dead disappear completely. As long as people allow these photographs to affect them, as long as they sustain a relationship with them, something of these lives will continue to exist.

Conclusion

Throughout this journey, *Parede da Memória* (1994–2015) has taught us how to sustain an encounter with that which persists. In Rosana Paulino's work, something always escapes: a remainder that stays in circulation, a force that operates by tearing through its materiality and challenging what can be said about it.

By reorganising photographs, stitching them together and reinscribing them within a different plane of relations, Paulino retrieves memories while transforming their modes of existence. Those faces cease to belong exclusively to the past and begin to inhabit a territory (in constant motion) between times, where they can still affect and be affected.

Perhaps this is where the work displaces us most radically. For, in the presence of these images, what matters is who these image-persons-protectors-*patuás* might still become and what they might still bring into existence. As Vinciane Despret (2015/2023) suggests, the dead continue to exist insofar as they remain capable of "making us do" something. Thus, *Parede da Memória* wanders into an open field: a place where memory, relation and continuity continue to insist on taking place within the poetic weaves of the visual arts.

Machine Translation Post-Editing: Anabela Delgado

Acknowledgements

We want to thank the Fundação Araucária for the funding that made this research possible.

References

Amaral, D. G. do. (2021). Costurar o tempo: Tessituras para um arquivo nagô. *Galáxia*, (46), Article e50763. https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-2553202150763

Antonacci, C. M. (2017). Rosana Paulino: Enunciações poéticas de arte africana contemporânea. *Rebento*, (6), 272–291.

Aquino, P. (2014). Corpo fechado: Frontières des corps afro-brésiliens (capoeira et Candomblé). *Sigila*, *34*(2), 61–70. https://doi.org/10.3917/sigila.034.0061

Archer, M. (2012). *Arte contemporânea: Uma história concisa* (A. Krug & V. L. Siqueira, Trans.). WMF Martins Fontes. (Original work published 1997)

Barthes, R. (1984). *A câmara clara: Nota sobre a fotografia* (J. C. Guimarães, Trans.). Nova Fronteira. (Original work published 1980)

Bottene, S. (2014). Arte contemporânea: Três perspectivas atravessadas pelo prefixo (des). *Revista Ciclos*, *2*(3), 117–125.

Cattani, I. B. (2002). Arte contemporânea: O lugar da pesquisa. In B. Brites & E. Tessler (Eds.), *O meio como ponto zero: Metodologia da pesquisa em artes plásticas* (pp. 35–50). Editora da UFRGS.

Deleuze, G. (2006). *Diferença e repetição* (L. Orlandi & R. Machado, Trans.). Graal. (Original work published 1968)

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2010). *O que é a filosofia?* (B. Prado Jr. & A. A. Muñoz, Trans.). Editora 34. (Original work published 1991)

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2011). *Mil platôs: Capitalismo e esquizofrenia* (Vol. 2 ; A. L. de Oliveira & L. C. Leão, Trans.). Editora 34. (Original work published 1980)

Derrida, J. (2001). *Mal de arquivo: Uma impressão freudiana* (C. de M. Rego, Trans.). Relume Dumará. (Original work published 1995)

Despret, V. (2019). Les morts sont des gens comme les autres. *Multitudes*, (77), 178–183. https://doi.org/10.3917/mult.077.0178

Despret, V. (2023). *Um brinde aos mortos: Histórias daqueles que ficam* (H. Lencastre, Trans.). n-1 edições. (Original work published 2015)

Freud, S. (2010). *Obras completas* (Vol. 12). Companhia das Letras. (Original work published 1917)

Graichen, G., Desconci, L. K., & Barbosa, R. A. (2021). Da caixa ao cubo: Análise da obra "Parede da Memória" de Rosana Paulino. *RELACult – Revista Latino-Americana de Estudos em Cultura e Sociedade*, *7*, Article 1997. https://doi.org/10.23899/relacult.v7i4.1997

La Biennale di Venezia. (2026). *Biennale Arte 2026*. https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2026

Lago, P. X. do, Eugenio, N. P., & Ramos, P. H. van V. (2022). Movimento, representação e funcionalidade: Africanidades estéticas visuais presentes em obras da artista Rosana Paulino. *Problemata: Revista Internacional de Filosofia*, *13*(1), 353–364. https://doi.org/10.7443/problemata.v13i1.63075

Léxico. (n.d.). *Patuá*. Retrieved May 12, 2026, from https://www.lexico.pt/patua/

Martins, A. S. (2014). O diário secreto. In *Anais do XVIII Congresso Nacional de Linguística e Filologia: Semântica e terminologia* (pp. 163–175). CIFEFIL.

Martins, L. M. (2021). *Performances do tempo espiralar: Poéticas do corpo-tela*. Mazza Edições.

Mbembe, A. (2002). The power of the archive and its limits. In C. Hamilton, V. Harris, J. Taylor, M. Pickover, G. Reid, & R. Saleh (Eds.), *Refiguring the archive* (pp. 19–27). Springer.

Oliveira, A. M. de. (2025, February 28). *Rosana Paulino: Conexões arte e ciência*. Jornal da USP. https://jornal.usp.br/articulistas/alecsandra-matias-de-oliveira/rosana-paulino-conexoes-arte-e-ciencia/

Paulino, R. (n.d.). *Sobre Rosana Paulino*. Retrieved March 10, 2026, from https://www.rosanapaulino.com.br/blank-1

Paulino, R. (2018). Você não passa por um objeto, por dez anos, sem ser tocada por ele. *Arte & Ensaios*, (37), 8–41. https://doi.org/10.37235/ae.n37.24597

Rajchman, J. (2011). O pensamento na arte contemporânea. *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, (91), 97–106. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-33002011000300005

Rendeiro, M. E. L. S. (2010). Álbuns de família: Fotografia e memória; identidade e representação. In A. Barreto, A. M. Mauad, A. Porto, A. E. M. Rodrigues, M. G. Sanches, & R. Salles (Eds.), *Anais do XIV Encontro Regional de História da ANPUH-Rio: Memória e patrimônio* (pp. 1–10). ANPUH.

Rolnik, S. (2002). Subjetividade antropofágica. In L. D. Machado, M. C. C. Lavrador, & M. E. B. Barros (Eds.), *Texturas da psicologia: Subjetividade e política no contemporâneo* (pp. 11–28). Casa do Psicólogo.

Simões, E. (2022, October 17). Ancestralidade, território e ciência. *ARTE!Brasileiros*. https://artebrasileiros.com.br/arte/artista/rosana-paulino/

TV Brasil. (2019, January 4). *Rosana Paulino: A costura da memória encerra ano na Pinacoteca* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27EOpiAWy10

Biographical Notes

Vinicius dos Santos Moreira is an undergraduate Psychology student at the State University of Maringá. His research interests include existence, the relationship between the dead and the living, art and the philosophy of difference. He is conducting an undergraduate research project entitled "A Existência (In)visível do Concepto Morto Continuada Pela Pessoa que Gesta" (The (In)visible Existence of the Dead Conceptus Continued by the Gestating Person; 2024–2025) and holds a scholarship from the Fundação Araucária for the ongoing research project "Para que os Mortos Não Morram: Rastros e Retornos em 'Parede da Memória' de Rosana Paulino" (So That the Dead May Not Die: Traces and Returns in Rosana Paulino's "Parede da Memória"). Since 2024, he has been a participating member of the research project *As Narrativas que Cultivam a Relação Entre os Vivos e Mortos: Implicações Para a Terapêutica em Psicologia* (Narratives That Cultivate the Relationship Between the Living and the Dead: Implications for Therapeutics in Psychology) and the teaching project *O Cultivo dos Afetos Entre os Vivos e os Mortos: Contribuições de Benedictus de Espinosa e Vinciane Despret* (Cultivating Affections Between the Living and the Dead: Contributions From Benedictus de Spinoza and Vinciane Despret).

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1599-0881

Email: viniciusmoreira.psi@gmail.com

Address: Universidade Estadual de Maringá (UEM), Av. Colombo, 5790, Jardim Universitário, CEP 87020-900, Maringá, Paraná, Brasil

Vanessa Séves Deister de Sousa holds a master's degree and a PhD in Visual Arts from the State University of Campinas and a bachelor's degree in Art Education, specialising in Visual Arts, from the State University of Londrina. Her research interests include academic and artistic/poetic explorations of trends in the expanded field of contemporary Brazilian art, with particular emphasis on possible encounters between the body, death, politics and poetry. She is an assistant professor in the Visual Arts programme at the State University of Maringá and coordinates the Memento Mori: Grupo de Pesquisa em História da Arte.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2131-8961
Email: vsdsousa@uem.br
Address: Universidade Estadual de Maringá (UEM), Av. Colombo, 5790, Jardim Universitário, CEP 87020-900, Maringá, Paraná, Brasil

Adriana Barin de Azevedo graduated in Psychology from the Federal University of Santa Maria in 2005. She holds a master's degree and a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, and she completed part of her doctoral studies at the University Paris Nanterre. She is an associate professor in the Department of Psychology and the graduate programme in Psychology at the State University of Maringá. She is a researcher with the Deleuze and Guattari Working Group and is affiliated with the National Association of Philosophy. Her research focuses on subjectivity, clinical practice, ethics, and the relationship between the living and the dead.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8975-9421
Email: abazevedo@uem.br
Address: Universidade Estadual de Maringá (UEM), Av. Colombo, 5790, Jardim Universitário, CEP 87020-900, Maringá, Paraná, Brasil

Submitted: 23/05/2026 | Reviewed: 09/09/2026 | Accepted: 12/09/2026

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.