

Art of Resistance

The Impossible Artist

Ana Amorim

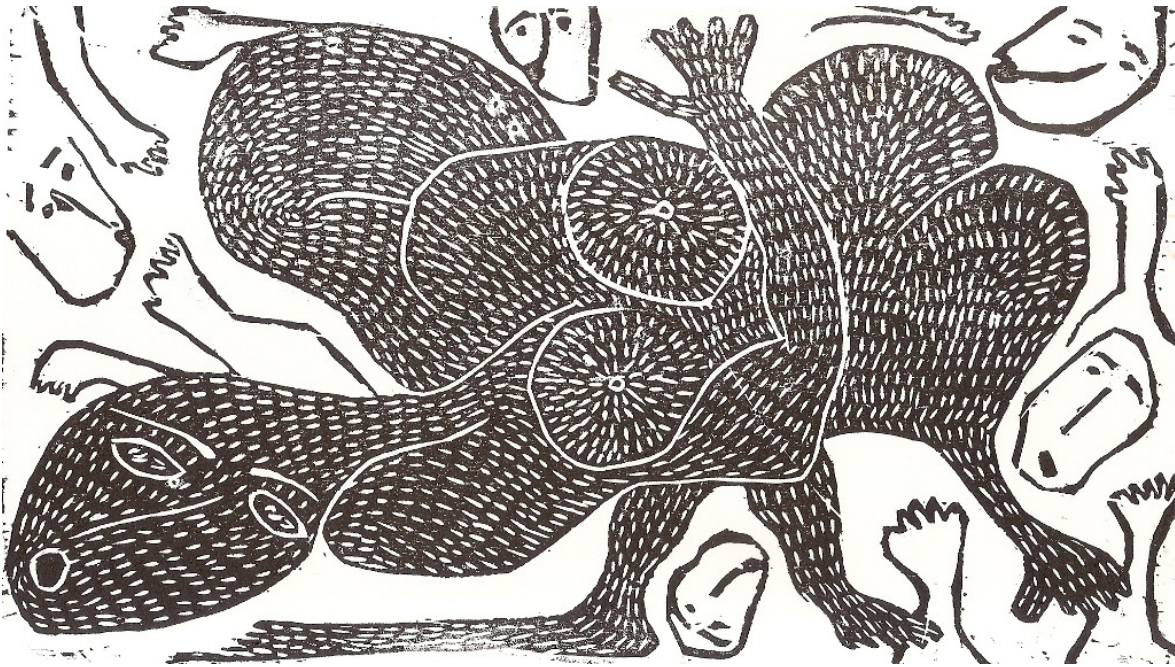


Figure 1 - untitled Wood cut (1986) – early work

Early Decisions

In 1988 I made a radical decision to start a 10 year Performance Project. The main premise for this project was that **my life was art** and I was going to collect one evidence of my living, at the end of the day for 10 years. I decided that this evidence was going to be a mental map (Figure 2) of my walks during the day. I also decided that I would never exhibit in commercial galleries, or in spaces where fees were charged. This project has been extended since the year 2000 and it will only stop at the end of my life.

I understand art as a sequence of meaningful mental and emotional experiences deeply rooted in my surroundings and in the significant relations I establish in my everyday life. Everything that constitutes my existence is my art material and the world is my art space. Therefore, the city space, the work space, all spaces are my natural art spaces.

Consequently, life is art and everyone is an artist and the most creative act is the individual and collective life project.

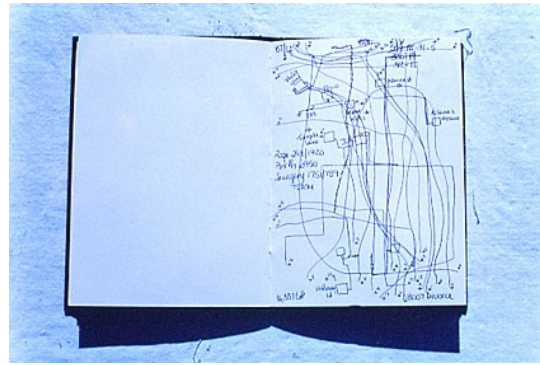


Figure 2 – Mental Map (1988)

After the 10 year Performance Project ended (1997) I slowly switched my focus from the icons around me to a much broader view involving the lives of millions of other people, and particularly the obstacles that millions of people around the world face to live their lives. However, the work has evolved and now I look at the agents involved in the distribution, presentation, promotion of art works and analyze the interests that lie behind these processes. My work questions the role that art, artists and culture play in what I call “Artwash” for large financial groups, transnational corporations, oil companies, mining companies, pharmaceutical companies, and many others, by scrutinizing exhibition sponsors. (Figure 3)



Figure 3 – Sponsors - 29th São Paulo Biennial - Brazil – September 25th – 12th December, 2010 –

Source: <http://www.comunicacao.cesjf.br/node/15450>

Resisting the Corporate Appropriation of Art

In 2001 I wrote an **Art Contract** which decreed that my maps cannot be used by any corporate or capitalist economic interest, or carry any corporate logo, due to the implications in the

collective imaginary¹, when art becomes a marketing and PR vehicle for transnational capital. The Art Contract excludes all those involved in the process of commoditisation of life. In a few years I realized that I had created a very powerful character through my practice - ***The Impossible Artist***.

I began looking for the rightful place for art. I also decided to be more incisive in demonstrating to the various agents involved in the art system, the reasons why I believe a work of art can not incorporate identities of transnational corporations. I instigated the blog *Letters to the Art System* and *Cartas ao Sistema de Arte* (Figure 4) (English and Portuguese versions, each with slight variations in focus) where I have been publishing and sending letters containing non-commercial messages to various art system environments, in order to raise awareness and to materialize my critique. The letters have been largely ignored by the various agents involved, which might be an indicator of the relevance of the theme, but they have generated counter discourse among art students, professors, activists and artists.

Cartas ao Sistema de Arte

Projeto Performance onde a Artista Impossível escreve ou subscreeve a declarações, textos, vídeos ou cartas endereçados aos vários agentes envolvidos no sistema de arte ou a fatos e situações que tenham implicações práticas ou conceituais na maneira como entendemos e aceitamos o sistema de arte hoje. As cartas em sua maioria, são enviadas por email a pessoas no Brasil e no mundo e publicadas nesse blog como registro da performance.

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					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

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dezembro 2009
novembro 2009
outubro 2009
setembro 2009
agosto 2009
julho 2009
abril 2009
março 2009
fevereiro 2009

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Figure 4 – Blog - Cartas ao Sistema de Arte

I no longer write letters to the art system, instead I use the blog as a platform for posting relevant issues to art and artists.

¹ Collective imaginary is a set of symbols, concepts, memory and imagination of a group of individuals belonging to a specific community

Another Way of Doing Art

In 2003 I also started a new performance which I felt would illustrate my views on the role of art and artists today. I started doing performances as the **Transcommunicator** - an interpreter for the Landless Rural Workers Movement - MST and Via Campesina International. In this performance the **Impossible Artist** becomes a conduit for the other to communicate. I am only a mouth and an ear for those who have had their voice silenced by power.



Figure 5 – Transcommunicator – Latin American Festival of Peasant Music –
MST – Landless Rural Workers Movement - Curitiba - Brazil - 2004

I have done countless trips with this performance. I never document them, but I do collate residual evidence, when available (Figures 5,6,8). I never inform the audience and as I became familiar with the MST and Via Campesina International I told them that this is art (which was met with disbelief).

I only have the people involved in the various events in which I have participated as my witness. I have interpreted hundreds of testimonies from peasants and indigenous communities who have been evicted from their lands, have lost their forests and waterways. Including indigenous and diasporic communities, forced from their land into cities to live in slums and shantytowns. I have interpreted countless meetings of people discussing their difficulties to live, to have access to land, water and trying to find ways to end their suffering and oppression.



Figure 6 – Transcommunicator - National March for Agrarian Reform - 2005
Landless Rural Workers Movement – May 2005 – Goiania to Brasilia – Brazil
13,000 militants – 230 Km

Figure 6 was taken from the National March for Agrarian Reform, during 17 days, 13,000 militants walked 230 km to demand the implementation of the Agrarian Reform from the Federal Government. Everyday I drew the map (figure 7) of the day. During those 17 days my maps were the maps of the collective.

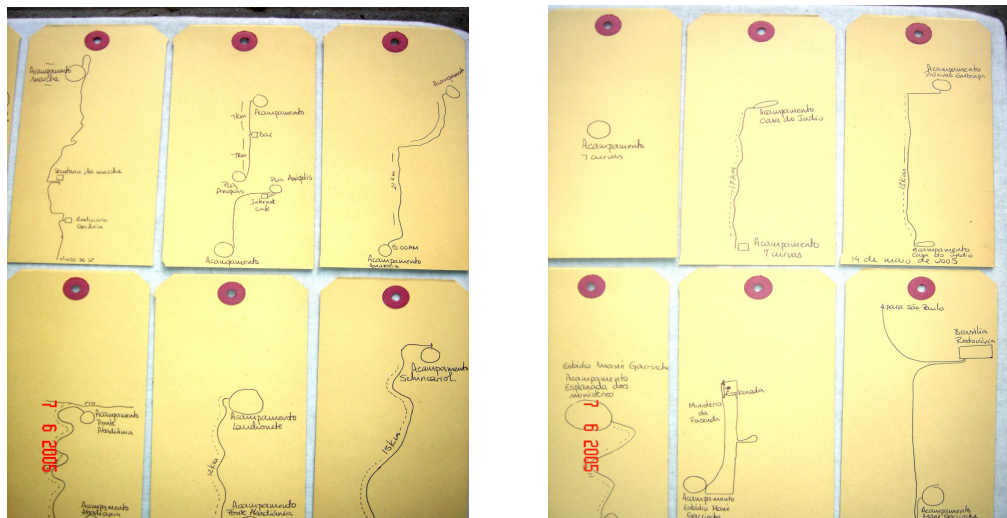


Figure 7 - A few Mental Maps of the National March for Agrarian Reform – 2005

Figure 8 shows me working as a Transcommunicator for the social movements parallel – parallel FAO International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. FAO trying to control social movements organized an “official” parallel conference for movements do discuss their demands. Via Campesina International and social movements decided to organize an independent parallel conference, where they would have total control of the panels and the agenda.



Figure 7 – Transcommunicator - FAO International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
Porto Alegre – Brazil – 2006

The image in Figure 8 is a newspaper photograph taken while I was acting as *Transcommunicator* at the moment when a member of Via Campesina International was served a police summons to go to the Police Station for questioning. This moment was the climax of a three-day media battle after more than a thousand peasant women from Via Campesina International destroyed thousands of GE tree seedlings at a Monsanto Genetic Engineered Tree laboratory.



Figure 8 Transcommunicator

The actions of The Impossible Artist suggest “mental landscapes” that are not frequently explored by individuals because it is not practical to do so. I hope with this work to demonstrate that another way of doing art is possible, from people, for people, by people without any mediation of power. Perhaps that might also inspire others to turn their back to the powerful interests that have hijacked art and culture.

1st South South Forum on Sustainability
Hong Kong
December 12-14, 2011