

SARA & ANDRÉ
A matriz e o paradigma
The matrix and the paradigm
11.03.16 – 07.05.16

THEIR WORK (...) (...) IN INNOVATIVE WAYS

The only indications I got to write this text were, the number of words – 600 to 1200 –, a date for delivery and an email contacting the artists Sara&André.

The main idea for the show was clear from the start: to present works made according to instructions by other artists. How to articulate then, a text that would not describe but would answer in itself to the project? To understand this operation I would have to find my own instructions.

There is an unavoidable reference: the *Manual de estilo del arte contemporáneo* de Pablo Helguera¹. In the book, the author refers to the writing of texts, whether they are press releases, essays or commissions. As this is the text that will be in the exhibition, it is important to think in its informative side, beyond its reflexive function. For that, I will follow freely some of the advice given in all categories.

To determine a title, I synthesized the template of the definition of artist and work. Helguera proposes a chart, in which the first and last columns are not variable: his/her work – in innovative ways. The verb, column 2, and the indirect object, column 3, would be a combination of: comprised of the exploration of / explores / critiques / reflects on – modernism / its own genre / society / personal experiences / conceptualism. Any composition, in this case, would be plausible as an epigraph.

Second instruction: use Google results as bibliography². The search for “instructions for curatorial texts”, returned about 263.000 entries. I find <http://mon.ellieirons.com>³, a communication blog of the students of Syllabus Fall. In 24/11/12, they published advice for a valid curatorial proposal with just 500 words, according to the structure given by Elisabeth Sussman in the catalogue *Invented Worlds*⁴:

▪ **Introduction** — artist names, title, how the artists work, the main theme (kind of like the “thesis statement” or “elevator pitch” for the exhibition).

Sara (1980) and André (1979), were born in Lisbon, where they live and work. As David Santos describes: “*For more than a decade, Sara & André have been stretching the limits of their artistry, reinventing in each of their projects the recognition of, or by contrast, the opposition to their condition. What drives them is ultimately a systematic questioning of that which — despite the game of borders and negotiations marking our contemporary age — persists in distinguishing and classifying an object as a work of art and an artist as someone with supposedly specific attributes.*”⁵ Of their copy, appropriation and commission strategies during this time period, we can highlight the series “Fundação”, since 2007 - works about them made by other artists -, and since 2012, the production of works plagiarizing the style of Julião Sarmento, Batarada, Lourdes Castro or Nikias Skapinakis. In the same line of work, they gather artist instructions since 2009, the year in which they saw the works of Yoko Ono at the Venice Biennale. They now have 13 books of rules, thousands of potential works, this exhibition being a selection of those and the beginning of the series “Instruções”.

▪ **Context** — these works were not made in a vacuum, what else was going on? historical context, both within the art world and outside of it.

This way, they go back to discussing about what and who is validated as a work and as an artist, through the repetition of the thought of artists already renowned, which means, in their words, “to avoid to the maximum the responsibilities of the creative act” (the use of interviews with artists, another of Helguera’s guidelines, exempts the writer from responsibilities).

Since the 70s that conceptual artists emphasize thought and its freedom of movement as a work, in detriment of the authorial production of objects: amongst others Baldessari, Yoko Ono or Sol LeWitt, that are now instructors of some of Sara&André’s works. Besides that, they add other referrals that go beyond the rationalization of the selection and / or repetition of daily actions as works of art. *To make a Dadaist Poem* de Tzara, 1920, initiates the practice of the make-absurd as repeatable and exportable, that we will find in the followed instructions by Fluxus, Rob Pruitt or Jimmy Durham.

▪ **Expanding the thesis** — talk specifics about the works and how they relate- this is a good place to compare and contrast specific works. Use the works as evidence to support you curatorial mission! Talk about why the works you’ve included are so great and why viewers should appreciate them.

Let’s think of instructions as meta-languages: musical scores, theatre plays, movie scripts, food recipes or self-help books. Samuel Smiles⁶ wrote in 1859, the first *Self-Help*, “bible of Victorian liberalism”, where he highlights irresponsibility as the cause of poverty and as counter progress. Adapting his thought to Sara&André, we would reach the amazing paradox of looking for recognition by adopting the most irresponsible of positions: to follow the instructions of others. This way, the validation of the work is offered by names already legitimized in the world of art. A kind of recuperation of the artwork’s aura through a trite act, imitating the ones that defended according to Benjamin⁷, its loss. This relation of the reproduction of the other is fundamental in the interpretation of their general proposal: the continuous experimentation of human relationships. As Adorno defends: “The human supports himself on imitation: a human being is only truly human, when he imitates other human beings”.⁸ (These two references correspond to the helguerian term “adornamentation”⁹).

¹ Pablo Helguera, *Manual de Estilo del Arte Contemporáneo*, Tumbona Ediciones, México, 2005

² El propio libro de Helguera está disponible on-line en su versión española http://vereda.ula.ve/curador/assets/docs/PH_MANUALDEESTILODELARTECONTEMPORANEO_PabloHelguera,SF.pdf

³ <http://mon.ellieirons.com/blog/2012/11/26/writing-a-curatorial-statement/>

⁴ Elisabeth Sussman, Caroline A. Jones, Katy Siegel, *Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2005.

⁵ <http://www.museuartecontemporanea.pt/pt/programacao/Exercicio-de-estilo>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-help_book

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Obras. Libro I / vol. 2*, Abada Editores, Madrid, 2008.

⁸ Adorno, T. W., *Notas sobre Literatura. Obra completa, 11*. Akal, Madrid, 2004

Three examples in this room reinforce the idea of construction of the artist through the paradox of the negation of geniality, and of the integration in the art system. The first work, *My first great artwork*, according to Dana Hoey, painting of the work *Claim to Fame #1* where they defend appropriation as work of art; *Rules Assignment (1)*, proposed by Jackie Brookner, in the shape of an infinite relation of quotations and *Signatures*, according to Annette Messenger, a compilation of possible Sara&André signatures.

▪ **Aesthetic & Conceptual** — Be sure to touch on both of these areas! What is the artistic intent or concept behind the works? How do the works actually look to the audience- what is the aesthetic experience of the viewer?

The artists underline the lack of formal or stylistic unity, reinforcing this way the concept that is common to them as a group. The experience of how we relate to a series of works that aim to study recognition relationships themselves, self-affirming and power in a certain system, becomes the repetition of these same conditions. An ironic exacerbation of a system in which the presence of the artist exists in its own dissolution, as Boris Groys¹⁰ could say.

To finalize this game of copies and (ir)responsibilities, I resort to one last Helguera quote: "As the reader will not have, general rule, time to decode each sentence of the press release, its reading will convert itself in an act of faith".

Marta Ramos-Yzquierdo, February 2016

⁹ Adornamento: "Prática de certos curadores e críticos de citar compulsivamente nos seus textos várias frases desconectadas dos filósofos Theodor W. Adorno (que dá origem ao termo), Baudrillard, Derrida, Deleuze, Nietzsche y Benjamín. A técnica do adorno, tal como a do barroquismo, não tratar de não dizer nada, mas antes em dizer algo que no fundo não tem nenhuma relação". En Op. Cit.

¹⁰ Boris Groys, *Volverse público: las transformaciones del arte en el ágora contemporánea*. Caja Negra editora, Buenos Aires, 2014.

LIST OF WORKS

1. From the word "Art" #02, 2015

Coloured pencil on printed page (Hugh Adams, *Art of the Sixties*, Phaidon Press, Oxford, 1978), 27.9 x 20.6 cm

From the word "art": blue lines to four corners, green lines to four sides, red lines between the words "Art" on the printed page. Sol LeWitt, 1972

2. Not to be looked at, 2016

Graphite on paper and arrow, (approx.) 42 x 29,7 x 60 cm

Rooms contain objects that are visible yet not intended to be looked at. These include steam radiators, electric heat radiators, electric light switches, electric outlets, electric wires, water pipes, gas pipes, drain pipes, lighting fixtures, wooden trim, paint, surveillance cameras, burglar alarms, etcetera.

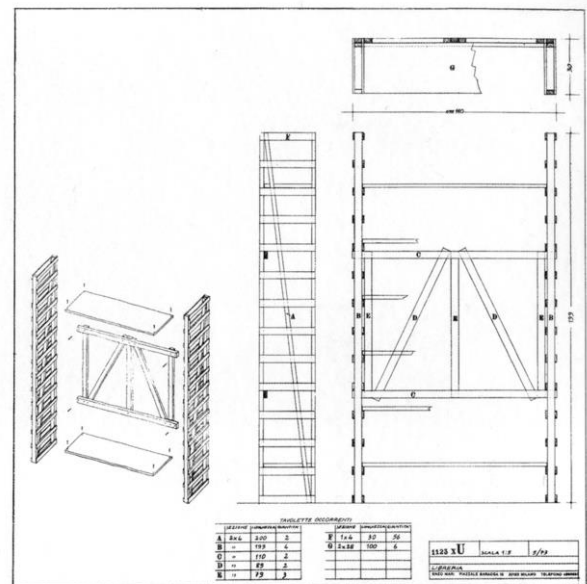
Using a graphite pencil or a ballpoint pen, make a list on paper or wood of all the not-to-be-looked-at objects in the room. Jimmie Durham, 1996

3. A collection and a means for its display, 2016

Wood, nails, screws, books, prints, plastic covers and pushpins, (approx.) 199 x 110 x 30 cm

Create a Collection and a Means for Its Display. This can be a collection of absolutely anything (made, found, or otherwise) of absolutely any quantity, and any vehicle for the collection's display (however simple or complex), or any and all interpretations of the very nature of a "C" and its "D"—two variables with the perfect structural integrity and innate fragility to yield astounding results from blossoming artists from any place and at any age.

Rachel Foullon, undated



Display: *Libreria*
Enzo Mari, 1974

4. A plus B painting, 2015

Acrylic on canvas and nails, 32.9 x 27.7 cm

Cut out a circle on canvas A. Place a numeral figure, a roman letter, or a katakana on canvas B on an arbitrary point. Place canvas A on canvas B and hang them together. The figure on canvas B may show, may show partially or may not show.

You may use old paintings, photographs, etc. instead of blank canvases.

Yoko Ono, 1961

5. *Untitled*, 2015

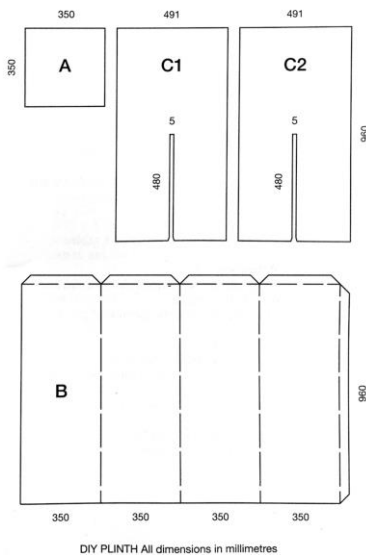
Shoe, soil and plant, Variable dimensions

Use an old shoe as a planter.
Rob Pruitt, 1999

6. *Do it yourself Plinth*, 2016

Cardboard and glue, (approx.) 90 x 35 x 35 cm

From large sheets of cardboard, cut out the parts as shown in the diagram. Score the card and fold back at 90 degrees where indicated by broken lines. Apply a suitable adhesive to the construction flaps and join the top (A) to the side panels (B). Slot together the two cross brace sections (C) to form a X and place into the enclosure. Stand the plinth upright and place an item of your choice on the top (A).



Peter Saville, 2005-07

7. *Empaquetage pour Christo*, 2015

Oil tube, tissue and thread, (approx.) 4 x 17 x 7 cm

A modest object is wrapped.
Ken Friedman, 1967

8. *Yes No (Stratum 1.1)*, 2016

Tempera and graphite on paper, 138 x 100.4 cm

Draw a uniform grid of 200 x 200 squares within 1 square meter. Open a telephone directory and read the numbers in order. For each square, starting in the upper-left corner, fill with blue paint if the number is even, fill with red paint if the number is odd.
Casey E. B. Reas, 2012

9. *Signatures*, 2016

Archival pen on paper, (7x) 29.7 x 21 cm

When we are born, we receive a last name and a first name that will characterize us from the beginning to the end of our life. Our signature is thus important. It is a sign, it can show a strong-willed personality (be strong or illegible)... Moreover, in the history of art, the artist's signature always represented a completion of his work. Try to write all of your possible signatures on several sheets of paper. Frame them. You will be surprised by the results and by the comments of your friends!
Annette Messager, 1996

10. *Painting to hammer a nail*, 2016

Acrylic, nails and hairs on MDF, 35 x 25 cm

Hammer a nail into a mirror, a piece of glass, a canvas, wood or metal every morning. Also, pick up a hair that came off when you combed in the morning and tie it around the hammered nail.
Yoko Ono, 1961

11. *Nothing but your car*, 2015

Car on paper, 45.8 x 61 cm

Take an 18 x 24 inch piece of paper and make a drawing using nothing but your car.
Heather Heart, undated

12. *George Herriman's Krazy Kat*, 2015

Sumi ink on archival paper, 29.7 x 20.5 cm

Take George Herriman's Krazy Kat and do a Sumi ink drawing on archival paper 4 x 7 cm.
Sturtevant, 2012

13. *Painting with make-up*, 2016

Eye contouring pencil, eye liner, liquid eye liner, color stick for eyes, moisture whip, lipstick, nail shine miracle, creamy blush, cream rouge, rimmel and lash curl on canvas, 40 x 50 cm

Make a painting with make up.
Rob Pruitt, 1999

14. *Secret zen garden*, 2016

Sand, rake and stones, (approx.) 15.5 x 35.8 x 44 cm

Fill a desk with gravel and make a secret zen garden.
Rob Pruitt, 1999

15. *Business cards, por Júlia Garcia*, 2016

Offset and perforation on paperboard, 8,3 x 11,4 cm

Design and have printed your calling card.
John Baldessari, undated

16. *A portrait of my friend's desires (boesner)*, 2015

Collage on paperboard, 77 x 65 cm e 50,3 x 65 cm

Ask a friend or relative if there is a catalogue that they want things from. Maybe it is J. Crew or Facets Multimedia or Toys R US. Get a copy of this catalogue if your friend doesn't have one. Then ask your friend to look through the catalogue and point to everything they really, really want. Not just want, but really, really want. Put a mark next to each of these things. Maybe there will only be two or three. Maybe there will be many. When they are done, carefully cut out each of these things, cut out the objects only, do not include anything surrounding them. Glue them on to a piece of colored paper. Do not write anything on this paper.
Harrel Fletcher and Miranda July, undated

17. *Rules Assignment (1)*, 2016

Typewritten paper, glue, wood and screws, (approx.) 31.5 x 50 x 11 cm

Of course we know artists have a kind of congenital allergy to rules, especially to somebody else's rules. We like to make our own rules. Very freeing, right? Well, that's not the whole story. Let's take a look at the rules you are following, especially ones living below the threshold of consciousness. Make a list of these rules, right now. Which of them that you think that are your rules, are really rules you've inherited, been taught, learned are the cool rules? Are they serving you, or trapping you?

As you work try to hear the rules whispering to you. Keep a running list, and add to it every time you hear another one.

Now what kind of rules did you come up with? Are they the easy formal ones about choices of materials, how long or short the piece should be, or what to wear? Try again, and listen for the harder ones: the conceptual limits you put on your work, the kind of work you let yourself do, or not do. Are there whole parts of your being you put in a separate compartment and don't even consider bringing into your work? Whole enthusiasms you haven't let yourself imagine as part of your work? Embarrassments, naiveties, intelligences you leave out?
Jackie Brookner, undated

18. *My first great artwork #01*, 2016
Oil on canvas, 54 x 70 cm

Re-create your first artwork (not baby scribble—the first one where you conceived the idea of being an artist).
Dana Hoey, undated

19. *A nice piece from home #01*, 2015
Paint on plaster mounted on wood, 21 x 14 cm

Find one thing from your home and bring it to the gallery—sell it at your own price. If selling succeeds, find other thing for the next day and do it again.
Surasi Kusolwong, 2000

20. *Instant artist*, 2015
Pastel and graphite on paper, 100 x 100 cm

You can become an (almost) instant artist if you follow these instructions.

Wash your hands—it creates expectation. Take a white piece of paper, 1 by 1 meter. Find a good, sharp pencil—sharpen it if its point is dull. It's always best to use good materials. With your pencil draw a grid—let's say 9 little squares by 9 little squares, 81 squares in all, of equal size.

Take 10 crayons (oil pastels) that you have chosen out of a box. Think of the rainbow, its colors, its freshness. Let's have 10 colors, for example red, purple, orange, yellow, dark blue, light blue, brown, ochre, dark green, light green. Keep them in this order (or any order you wish). Fill the first upper-left side little square with red, evenly painted red, carefully painted. Then purple for the next square, then orange, then yellow, then dark blue, then light blue, then brown, then ochre, then dark green, then light green. You will be at the end of your top row. Go back and start on the next line at the left side with light green, which will fall under the red square. Then continue: red, purple, orange, yellow, and so on until you fill in the last little square on the right of your bottom line, which will be red. You will obtain thus regular patterns, rhythm, brilliance, a nice painting. You won't need special skills for such a beautiful result. Try it.
Etel Adnan, 2012

21. *Paper folding piece*, 2016
Folding on printed page (Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000), (approx.) 13 x 6.2 x 2.5 cm

Fold certain parts of a paper.
Yoko Ono, 1963

22. *Francisco*, 2015
Mixed media, Variable dimensions (present at the opening and/or by appointment)

Make a baby.
Rob Pruitt, 1999

23. *Untitled*, 2016
Googly eyes, fire extinguisher, (approx.) 50 x 34 x 15 cm

Put googly eyes on things.
Rob Pruitt, 1999

A. (exhibition title:) *The matrix and the paradigm* (A matriz e o paradigma)

MATRIZ PARA CONSTRUIR TÍTULOS MODERNOS

SUBSTANTIVOS (MÓDULO 1):

Mito, Desejo, *Elipse*, Evidência, Poder, Silêncio, Nome, Lugar, Texto, Corpo, Ritual, Universo, Ordem, Percurso, Linguagem, Interior, Matriz, Fruição, Liturgia, Vertigem, Domínio, Ausência, Eixo, Fruição, Sinal, Acto, Labirinto, Olhar, Crepúsculo, Sedução, Paixão, Leitura, Esplendor, Prazer, 'O Real', Paradigma, Fantasma, Dialéctica, 'O Eu', 'O Outro', 'O Mesmo', Obsessão, Fala, Espaço, Estrutura, Objecto, Sujeito, Cenário, Exercício, Consumo, Tabu, Discurso, Jogo, Imaginário, Sentido, Modo, Fascínio, Transgressão, Cumplicidade, Registo, Efabulação, Referência.

VERBOS (MÓDULO 2):

Dizer, Intuir, Jogar, Comunicar, Fruir, Sentir, Perseguir, Representar, Encenar, Afirmar, Libertar, Devir, Problematicar, Olhar, Pressentir, Codet, Celebrar, Desmistificar, Desmontar, Interrogar, Nomear, Assumir, Ocultar, Revelar, Habitar, Inscrever, Decompor.

ADJECTIVOS (MÓDULO 3):

Espíndido, Cíclico, Precário, Invisível, Indisfarçável, Sublime, Obscuro, Obnóscio, Notável, Incontornável, Funesto, Proibido, Espantoso, Impossível, Execrável, Urgente, Indispensável, Feminino, Extremo, Plural, Inenarrável, Oculto, Frágil, Curioso, Misterioso, Último, Latente, Manifesto, Quotidiano, Relevante, Intimista.

ADVÉRBIOS (MÓDULO 4):

Extremamente, Singulamente, Efectivamente, Verticalmente, Completamente, Insuportavelmente, Divinamente, Excessivamente, Eroticadamente, Absolutamente, Distintamente, Ininterruptamente, Explícitamente, Poderosamente, Ludicamente.

ESTRUTURAS

1. ENTRE O/A (...1,2 OU 3...) E O/A (...1,2 ou 3...)
2. PARA UM/UMA NOVO/NOVA (...1 ou 2...) DO/DA (...1 ou 2...)
3. O LUGAR DO/DA (...1,2 ou 3) Pode continuar com: NO/NA (...1 ou 2...) (...3...) DO/DA (...1 ou 2...)
4. O/A (...1,2 ou 3...) E O/A (...1,2 ou 3...)
5. DO/DA (...1,2 ou 3...) AO/A (...1,2 ou 3...)
6. (...2...) O/A (...1 ou 3...)
7. PARA ALEM DO/DA (...1,2 ou 3...)
8. O/A (...3...) (...1 ou 2...) Pode continuar com: DO/DA (...1,2 ou 3...)
9. O/A (...1,2 ou 3...) ENQUANTO (...1...) DO/DA (...1,2 ou 3...)
10. O/A (...1,2 ou 3...) (...4...) (...3...) DO/DA (...1,2 ou 3...)
11. DEPOIS DO/DA (...1,2 ou 3...) O/A (...1,2 ou 3...)
12. PARA (...2...) O/A (...1 ou 3...) (...4...)

Para construir os seus títulos, basta colocar as palavras escolhidas nas estruturas indicadas.

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Miguel Esteves Cardoso, 1986

