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Monster aesthetics as an expression of decolonizing the design body

ABSTRACT

Institutionalized design education aims at training the human body to become a design body, a subject capable of designing according to aesthetic canons. In colonized territories, the modern canon predominates over indigenous, vernacular and other forms of expression. Manichaeism, utilitarianism, universalism, methodologism and various modern values are inculcated in the design body as if it did not have any. The colonization of design bodies makes young designers believe that once they learn what good design is, they need to save others from bad design. This research reports on a series of democratic design experiments held in a Brazilian university that questioned these values while decolonizing the design body. Comparing the works of design produced in the experiment with some works of art from the Neoconcrete movement, we recognize a characteristic form of expression we call monster aesthetics:positive affirmation of otherness and collectivity that challenges colonialists' standards of beauty and goodness.

INTRODUCTION

Education in colonized territories such as Brazil has its roots in the European and Christian concept of salvation, for which the natives are savages in need of purging their sins. The savage body is considered a monster: the other that is different from the self, the weird or the outsider (Souza 2016). Monsters have been part of human cultures since the Paleolithic; however, in the modern age, Europeans have tried to domesticate some monsters by including them in the expanding reason of enlightenment (Szaniecki 2010). Domesticated monsters were useful as examples that celestial aims prevail over terrestrial origins and that identification norms can reason out any contradiction in humanity (Kearney 2002). Thus colonization relied on the belief that it was possible to tame, convert or instrumentalize indigenous monsters to expand the European civilization and bring modern values to the entire world.

Modernity classified strange bodies as monsters, formed by an unsettling mix of known and unknown concepts and body parts. They are considered wonders and absurdities, beauties and ugliness, natural and historical beings simultaneously (Rojo 2019). The Greek Chimera is the archetypal monster, made out of a strange combination of a lion head, a goat body and a snake tail. This mythological animal is often referred to when humans make or build something out of a heterogeneous or incongruous combination of diverse elements, resulting in an object that resists classification under the existing ontologies, taxonomies and cosmologies in operation (Vassão 2017). Due to their partially unknown nature, monsters are represented ambiguously in art and religious images – like demons and angels. In biology, monsters are clearly defined as non-natural creations, while in psychology they are beings attracted to cruelty (Szaniecki 2008). Monsters are typically reduced to their partially known appearance across these fields, excluding any learning and understanding of the unknown parts (Szaniecki 2008).

This reduction is not a superstition. Keeping monsters unknown helps blocking any claim of humanity and cultural development from them (Rojo 2019). Even if colonization has officially ended, in the territory where we write from, it remains a steady force affecting bodies at the unconscious level and popular imaginaries (Merlin 2019). Colonization in African and Caribbean territories persuaded the colonized bodies to believe in their consecrated inferiority in relation to the colonizer bodies (Fanon 1963, 1967). As a result, the colonized feel ugly, dumb or imperfect. This body hierarchy is reinforced by bank education, oppression that ignores or denies any knowledge from life experience, the oppressors' knowledge being the only valid and valuable (Freire 1970). In colonized education, the savage must conform to the colonial culture as a means of humanizing their souls, even if their bodies cannot be completely humanized.

Despite being privileged in access to education, design students are also treated as savages by colonized design education. Instead of letting students understand and express the culture of their origins, they are from day one educated to consider everything around them as badly designed and in desperate need of canonic design treatments. Modern values such as Manichaeism, utilitarianism, universalism and methodologism are projected to student minds, with no regard for previous values. Similarly, their bodies are accustomed to a specific discipline of seeing and drawing, which is required to master the aesthetic canons from Europe. If they do, they are finally considered authors of recognizable design works – a designer – or, as we prefer to call them, a design body. The aesthetic canon unfolds into an ethical stance that pushes educated design bodies to save uneducated non-design bodies from the so-called 'bad design'.

This research reports on a series of democratic design experiments held in a Brazilian university aimed at decolonizing the design body. Following a transgressive critical pedagogy (hooks 1996; Freire 1970), these experiments harnessed the vivid experience of diverse bodies, particularly those who are identified as part of minority groups, 'taking to the classroom pedagogical strategies that affirm their presence, their right to speak in multiple ways on various topics' (1996: 114). These minorities, eventually judged as monsters, are not included in the Eurocentric, male, white, patriarchal, heterocisnor mative matrix that constitutes the colonized design body. These experiments raised the ontological question of who designs and who gets to be designed in a colonized territory. Instead of replacing a colonizer for a colonized in the role of those who design (for) other bodies, the experiment explored collective authorship as a means to design (for) the self.

A feeling for otherness emerged in these experiments. It manifested in what we call monster aesthetics, a joint effort of coalescing different political bodies into a diverse, beautiful and, at the same time, monstrous collective body. The experiments harnessed the political aspect of the design body (Angelon and van Amstel 2020) to find concrete paths for decolonizing design (Schultz et al. 2018). The next two sections describe the impact of colonization in the design body, followed by the democratic design experiments that tried to decolonize it in design education.

THE POLITICAL ALIENATION OF THE BODY IN COLONIZED TERRITORIES

Colonization is not merely an economic and political regime; it is also a subjective regime that includes ontological, psychological and aesthetic prescriptions (Quijano 2000). Beyond the physical violence of invasion wars and in public punishments, colonization exerts symbolic violence that nurtures a voluntary servitude (La Boétie

[1563] 2017). Media images are instrumental in the psychopolitical manipulation of popular imaginaries to normalize models of
the self (Merlin 2019). The self is educated to reject its collective existence, to accept the cult of hatred, and eschew any critical thinking, ultimately restrict ing its development potential to the colonial development path (Merlin 2019). This path is built on a distinction between superior and inferior races and cultures (Morrison 2017), which naturalizes and legitimates the need for the inferior groups to abide by the superior, who is capable of guiding development. Thus, oppression affects the way people experience the world through their allegedly inferior or superior bodies (Boal 2006; Fanon 1963, 1967).

This relation can also be framed as an aesthetic injustice (Dalaqua 2020), a systematic denial of the inferior groups' everyday sensibilities. Popular forms of art are devalued while colonial forms of art are exalted. The colonization of imaginaries establishes the privilege of producing and consuming art to those who have the free time and resources to study and understand European aesthetic canons. Instead of representing a community, colonized art represents the modern individual, as if art was only about self-expression. In this way, aesthetic injustice prevents the individual body to see itself as part of a collective body.

This alienation is useful to convert the body into a modular piece of a system. As a cog in the machine, the individual body loses its potential to produce differences and relations in the collective body, stuck to a predefined and pre-empted political position (Vassão 2007). The body is considered either as an instrument for work or as a medium for information. In either case, the body is conceptually torn apart and sewed together, to the point of becoming a domesticated monster. This outward process narrows down the creative possibilities of the monstrosity (Hardt and Negri 1994). However, anti-modern art and postmodern design react to this domination, embracing the sublime disproportions and the terrible excesses of monstrosity to produce alternative worlds. Szaniecki (2010) refers to this process as monstruation, an emergent insurrection that emanates from social life to express popular values against the established control society (Deleuze 1992).

Not surprisingly, control society has even more cruel consequences in colonized territories than in metropolitan nations. The colonial legacy includes several uncontested power structures that can conceal control, such as the regular city grid, the right for integral property inheritance, centralized govern ment and extreme inequalities. Control can take many forms. In education, a contemporary form of control appears in the law project Escola Sem Partido ('schools without political parties') that prepares public schools in Brazil for the impending privatization and market logic. With the prerogative of offering neutral teaching, the students are alienated from their political bodies (Nani da Fonseca and Barbosa 2020). The fallacy of a supposed 'gender ideology' is used by the project supporters to keep control and maintenance over the

binary gender in schools (Reis and Eggert 2017). The next section examines .
how this alienation manifests in formal design education.

THE COLONIZATION OF THE DESIGN BODY IN BRAZILIAN DESIGN EDUCATION

Formal design education in Brazil started around the 1950s in different places
(Couto 2008). The military government prescribed the first minimum curriculum for
industrial design education in 1968, based on the experience of ESDI,
an Ulm-inspired design school located in Rio de Janeiro (Ferreira 2018). This
version provided enough freedom to accommodate the art programmes
recently converted into design programmes to escape the budgetary cut in the
arts and humanities areas ordered by the military dictatorship (Couto 2008).
This adaptation did not appease the government, and a new commission was
formed to develop a more restricted curriculum, which was attained much,
later than expected, in 1987. At that time, the dictatorship was over; however,
its legislative legacy remained for a while. The Ministry of Education abolished
the minimum curriculum in the 1990s, but the design schools did not revise
their old curriculums right away.

In parallel to design education regulation, art education returned to high
schools in 1996, almost 30 years after its military dictatorship exclusion. At
that moment, undergraduate and graduate art schools were thriving (Nani da
Fonseca and Barbosa 2020). This resurgence of art education stimulated the
creation of interdisciplinary art and design bachelor programmes, which were.
not well evaluated by the government assessment, hence being soon closed.
Analysts claim that design education's rational and functional orientation did
not afford such interdisciplinarity (Nani da Fonseca and Barbosa 2020). Design
carried over the tradition of knowledge transmission to the job market, which
considered artistic expression superfluous unless commercialized (Cardoso
2008). The resistance of specific design educators that welcomed popular art
and local cultures in their studios is an exception to this rule.

Unfortunately, even if the design educator is aware of these abstract policies
and regulations' limitations, colonization can still reach students by teaching
supposedly neutral skills such as technical drawing. Instead of being a univer
sal, correct or beautiful way of representing the world, Euclidean geometry
reflects a colonial world-view. The world is flattened and homogenized under
a single perspective, just like colonization's broader cultural phenomenon.
Geometric design becomes then a mechanism of power in design schools
through the discipline of rigid body movements (Machado and Flores 2018).
Mastering technical drawing requires turning the body into an activity object
instead of an activity subject, raising a contradiction within the design body.
This contradiction is heightened when design students learn to direct non
design bodies through cognitive heuristics and ergonomic rules of thumb.

Instrumentalized bodies learn to instrumentalize other bodies, passing over the colonial metadesign knowledge (Vassão 2008).

This transmission of design knowledge can be considered an example of banking education, an oppression that deals with knowledge as if it was some kind of money that could be deposited in student accounts, just in case they need it in the future (Freire 1970). 'Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates (although it cannot completely destroy) the intentionality of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human' (1970: 83–84). Van Amstel and Gonzatto (2020) have found traces of banking education in new design disciplines such as interaction design. The consequence of a non-liberating education is the will of the oppressed to become the oppressor and, thus, to contribute to the perpetuation of colonized actions (Freire 1970). In the case of design education, this means design students learning to extend colonization to other (user) bodies through attention herding, behavior prescription, power aestheticization, ideological communication and different colonialist strategies.

The colonization of the design body is never complete or absolute, foi it is produced at the expense of distrust, dissent and anger. This research has tried to harness anti-colonial feelings among design students through a series of democratic design experiments, described in the next section. The subsequent section theorizes the results.

EXPERIMENT DESCRIPTION

The experiments included here stems from a programmatic design research (Redström 2006) that aims at exploring designing for liberation. So far, most of the experiments in this programme were conducted in design education, generating new pedagogical approaches such as a hybrid between the European design studio and the Brazilian cultural practice of metaphorically cannibalizing foreign ideas. The experiments reported by this paper advances further the effort on decolonizing design education, now based on a political notion of the (design) body. These experiments were conducted as part of the Designing for People: Laboratory for Design and Social Innovation, an elective course offered by the Design bachelor program of UTFPR, Curitiba, Brazil.

The course began with problematizing design theories and practices based on collective and personal histories. Students embarked on a journey of critically reading everything they took for granted in their professional knowledge and experiences. At some point, students realized they wanted to bring this discussion further than the classroom. They decided, then, to write together a political manifesto about social design to be published somewhere. In response to this decision, the authors (the first author was a student of this

course while the second author was a teacher) proposed a series of democratic design experiments (Binder et al. 2015) to support this writing. The experiments tried to raise consciousness about the student body's concrete ness, potentializing the ethical and political reflection about the design profession, similar to the Precarity Pilot workshops organized by Elzenbaumer and Franz (2017). The experiments took the extradisciplinary risk of questioning the foundations of the design discipline (Vodeb 2019; Grocott and McEntee 2019) and the docility of the design body (Devas 2005).

The first experiment consisted of a public reading of existing political manifestos, followed by a discussion and analysis of arguments, language, tone and historical context. The reading followed the hybridization cycle of the anthropophagic studio (van Amstel and Gonzatto 2020). Each student chose a manifesto that they admired and shared it with the others to collectively devour the text. Some of them adopted a theatrical declamation style to read the texts, taking advantage of bodily expressions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A student reads out loud the famous 'Tupi or not tupi, that's the question' line from
Manifesto Antropófago (Andrade 1928) with cannibalized costumes and props.

Most of them just read them out loud. The manifestos advocated for education, sustainability, art movements, music movements and LGBTQIA+ issues. The students digested the manifesto proposals through more or less acid counterarguments. The arguments that affected them most were quickly annotated in a whiteboard by the teacher. Those who were particularly touched by the reading could share. related personal stories – a typical practice in feminist critical pedagogy (hooks 1996), revealing signs of absorption. For example, female students shared

many personal experiences of harassment and abuse. At the end of the experiment, the students celebrated the collected affects from the various readings.

The second experiment consisted of conceptual preparation for writing the manifesto. The goal was to work upon the vision of the students towards their expectations. Students received colourful modelling clay to model their expectations and motives (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Metaphorical models of the political wishes for a manifesto on social design.

With generic moulds or simply bare hands, they expressed political wishes through symbols and physical metaphors later explained to the class. Most of the students represented their complex feelings through abstract shapes, whereas three of them made small creatures: a medusa, a dinosaur, a boy without arms and a snail with fins. The third experiment consisted of weaving a wearable manifesto out of inscribed cloth. The experiment had three phases: inscribing, connecting and performing. Students cut rough pieces of fabric in the first phase and wrote

on them the most vigorous sentences they could imagine being part of the manifesto. The pieces were laid down on a table and sorted based on their perceived affinity. Sorting helped to deal with differences in political stand points. In the second phase, safety pins tied together the cloth pieces, following the found affinity patterns. Significant differences in political stances made some connections challenging to make, even if necessary. Despite the tensions created between students, the discussions that ran parallel to making the wearable manifesto helped articulate possible bridges between the standpoints without forcing an artificial consensus. This stage ended with an euphoric celebration of the resulting patchwork that everybody could agree (and disagree) upon.

In the last phase, the students dressed the manifesto, getting help from others to customize the manifesto to fit their bodies (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The wearable manifesto is adjusted to the wearer.

Some connections had to be reworked, eventually breaking the carefully crafted affinity patterns. While recrafting, the manifesto acquired a similar appearance and structure to the Parangolés of Hélio Oiticica (2003), introduced as an inspiration at the beginning of the experiment. The first student to wear it – a male who was always eager to discuss any topic in the class – tried to mimic the performance of Nildo da Mangueira, a master samba dancer often invited by Oiticica to perform the Parangolés in public exhibitions. The student performed with steps and turns, taking advantage of his entire body to move the parts of the manifesto along with his arms, incarnating a patriarchal monster (Figure 4).

Figure 4: The patriarchal incarnation of the monster.

The subsequent students dressed the manifesto differently, as there were no fixed sleeves or collars to fit in. The smartphone used by the second author to document the design experiment soon became part of it as students began posing for the camera (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The individual monsters pose to the camera.

The manifesto was even worn by more than one body simultaneously, generating the first collective body (Figure 6).

Figure 6: The Siamese sisters monster, the first collective body that emerged in the design experiment.

In response to a comment made by an individual poser, a student took the initiative of hugging the little monster, a movement followed by all other remaining students. When they formed this collective hugging body (Figure 7), they realized that only women were present in the class – except the second author. According to them, this was the first time they saw women outnum bering men in the bachelor courses.

Figure 7: The female incarnation of the monster celebrates the collective resistance to patriarchy.

Several subsequent experiments supported writing the next version of the manifesto – the digital version, but these will not be described here since they did not explore monstrosity any further. Monster aesthetics returned in the final experiment when an online collaborative writing application was used. The manifesto was written, discussed and laid out using this same application, which had limited graphic design features. The students decided to attend to this tool since everybody could participate in real-time, something impossible to do using sophisticated design tools. The design gradually emerged from the interactions between the students.

The final written manifesto breaks with most of the rules prescribed by the European aesthetic canons. It has some resemblance to postmodern design, dadaist art and digital vernacular, tinged by striking colours that defy standard contrast rules. Similar visual features could be found in both the wearable and digital manifesto: a variety of types that represents multiple voices, a variety of colours that represents various emotions, plenty of loosely connected ideas that open up for possible readings and performances, and the absence of a consistent visual grid (Figure 8).

Figure 8: The early version of the analogue manifesto and the later version of the digital manifesto.

   The textual-graphic anatomy is similar to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (Beccari 2018), with the main difference that the monster does not die by the end of the story. The end of Manifesto Design Dissenso is clear about its expectations on decolonizing design: 'We are against the design used only as synonymous with modern colonial aesthetics. We are in favor of design not only as a synonym of functionality and accessibility' (van Amstel et al. 2019: 3). The criticism devel oped through the previous experiments has grown into an articulate discourse that strengthened student self-determination in looking for design choices. Students recognized that the design body must be reclaimed, even if through an aggressive tone: 'STOP DIMINISHING THE BRAZILIAN DESIGNERS AND STOP GIVING VALUE TO EUROPEANS, THE COLONIZERS WHO STOLE ALL OUR GOLD, DESIGN' (van Amstel et al. 2019: 7, original uppercases).

The manifesto seems to address academic and professional peers in the design field. Beyond catchphrases, the manifesto includes statements of positionality and contextualization:

"The problem is that historically, colonizers have tried to shape people, but it didn't work out completely, otherwise, there would be no such manifesto. Must we unite and become colonizers of those who govern us? Simply revolting is not enough, but it is the beginning. We are still peasants in modernized feudalism: we wake up in huge invisible walls, run by families of imperialists who hold all possible forms of power in our country and the world."
(2019: 6)

The criticism went beyond the aesthetic canon and the design body, including colonization's social and historical conditions. The manifesto asks many questions and provides few answers, generating a confusing and outrageous feeling in the reader.

THEORIZING MONSTER AESTHETICS

Writing the manifesto led students to transform their perception of design work; however, we cannot say that they came out of the experiments as fully decolonized design bodies. Decolonization is not bound to a specific situation and to a particular moment in history (Fanon 1963). The conflicts that brought political independence to colonized territories did not lead to cultural and economic independence automatically. Colonialist relations are still in place (Quijano 2000), even if less visible than before, as denounced here in design education. Thus, decolonization is a long, historical process that requires more than democratic design experiments (Binder et al. 2015). In the case of design education, decolonization requires a series of concerted actions that build upon previous actions, guided by theories that challenge the epistemic injustice between metropolitan and colonial centres of knowledge (Santos 2018).

Positioning monster aesthetics within the historical tradition of decolonial art in Brazil enables theorizing the phenomenon beyond a specific instance. Monster aesthetics can be traced back to the Neoconcrete movement that rose in Brazil between the 1950s and the 1960s. This movement explored the body experience to generate an authentic Brazilian modern style (Sperling 2015). Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica are often referred as the Neoconcrete pioneers who explored participatory art to include the body, even if they did so in very different ways.

Hélio Oiticica created the Parangolé in the late 1960s to shift the attention from the author to the performer. The wearable piece comprises multiple layers of fabric that do not realize their existence unless worn by a moving body in front of other bodies

(Birringer 2007; Souza 2006). Ferreira Gullar called it a non-object (Birringer 2007) because it displaces conventional divisions of art and the relations between art and the spectator, abolishing the need for pedestals and frames while seeking new forms of interaction beyond vision.

Hélio Oiticica justified the experience as a form of 'renewed subjectivism' (cited in Souza 2006: 89), an inquiry on the roots of collective and individual behavior. In the Parangolés, Oiticica fused all of his ideas of colour, structures, poetic sense, dance, word and photography, therefore calling it an example of a totality-work (Souza 2006). Similarly, we could say that the Manifesto Design Dissenso seeks the totality of future designs in it's territory, an anti-colonial metadesign project.

Lygia Clark did not seek such totality in her work, as she was more interested in relational ontologies. She advanced much further participatory art by adding articulations between plans and actions. In Animals, presented in 1960, the human body can interact with a reconfigurable animal body, constructed with metal plates and hinges. This destruction du mur breaks with the art support tradition, opening up the work for multiple framings. By opening cracks on the surface, Lygia Clark embodied her work in the space of real life, a poetic shelter where living is the equivalent of communicating. The body is home to a community experience (Sperling 2015), epitomized in the work Collective Body, first presented in 1970, which consisted of multiple full-body apparels worn by various participants, so they had to negotiate their moves in order to move and experience the work.

Oiticica, Clark, and other artists who eventually explored anthropophagy (Andrade 1928) to decolonize Brazilian art were later explained by the theory of incarnate design: the convergence of subaltern individuals towards making something subversive. Szaniecki (2008) provides the example of the incarnate design of street salespeople (camelôs), who wrapped in paper the walkways above Avenida Brasil in Rio de Janeiro in 2008, drawing public attention to their precarious work conditions and at the same time generating new business opportunities. She characterized this type of action as a multiformance, a collective body expression that does not fall under the traditional art and design languages, such as architecture, dance, theatre or performance. Thinking about the democratic design experiments as an example of a multiformance, we could say that the students created a new form of incarnate design, an experience lived by the participants as a whole, from the reading and the performing of the manifesto, till the final writing. By adding the aesthetic injustice lens to incarnate design (Dalaqua 2020; Boal 2006; Freire 1970), we can see the incarnation of two types of monsters: the oppressor and the oppressed.

The oppressor monster was incarnated by the male student through the

exhibition of his privileged position in the patriarchy, by being the first and only individual who danced expansively, with no concerns for what others would think of his performance (Figure 4). The performance was an incarnation of the expansive masculinity, almost like a haunting movement that reminded everybody of the male leadership's historical role in creating collective bodies like the Leviathan (Hobbes 1668) and famous studios and firms, which embody and market the values of good design.

The oppressed monster incarnated in the Siamese sisters (Figure 6) and later in the collective hugging (Figure 7). Through collectively hugging their bodies, students realized to what extent mutual care matters in designing feminist coalitions (Eleutério and van Amstel 2020). Like Tunstall (2020), they found in compassion a viable path to circumvent patriarchy, neo-colonization and imperialism. Instead of becoming an abstraction like Hobbes' Leviathan or a totality like Oiticica's Parangolés, the female monster became a multiformance (Szaniecki 2008), similar to Clark's Collective Body.

Students learned to deal with oppression by liberating the political poten tial of turning individual bodies into collective bodies to fight oppressor monsters. The shared subjectivities were essential to encourage self-reflection (Devas 2005) and self-actualization (hooks 1996). The stories students told to each other approached cultural issues in a personal way, as if understand ing ourselves better could help us better understand others (Grocott and McEntee 2019). This decolonizing experiment was also a personal experience for the students, preparing them to play a role in future design bodies that can fight Eurocentric, male, white, patriarchal, heterocisnormative and sexist dominations.

Reflecting on the power and the strength of the collective movement towards political purposes, the first author pursued a final solo design experiment in Confrontalab, a temporary laboratory created at DADIN-UTFPR that aimed at artistically reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic experience. The experiment results synthesize the collective body as a movement: an image of diverse hands weaving together their coexistence (Figure 9).
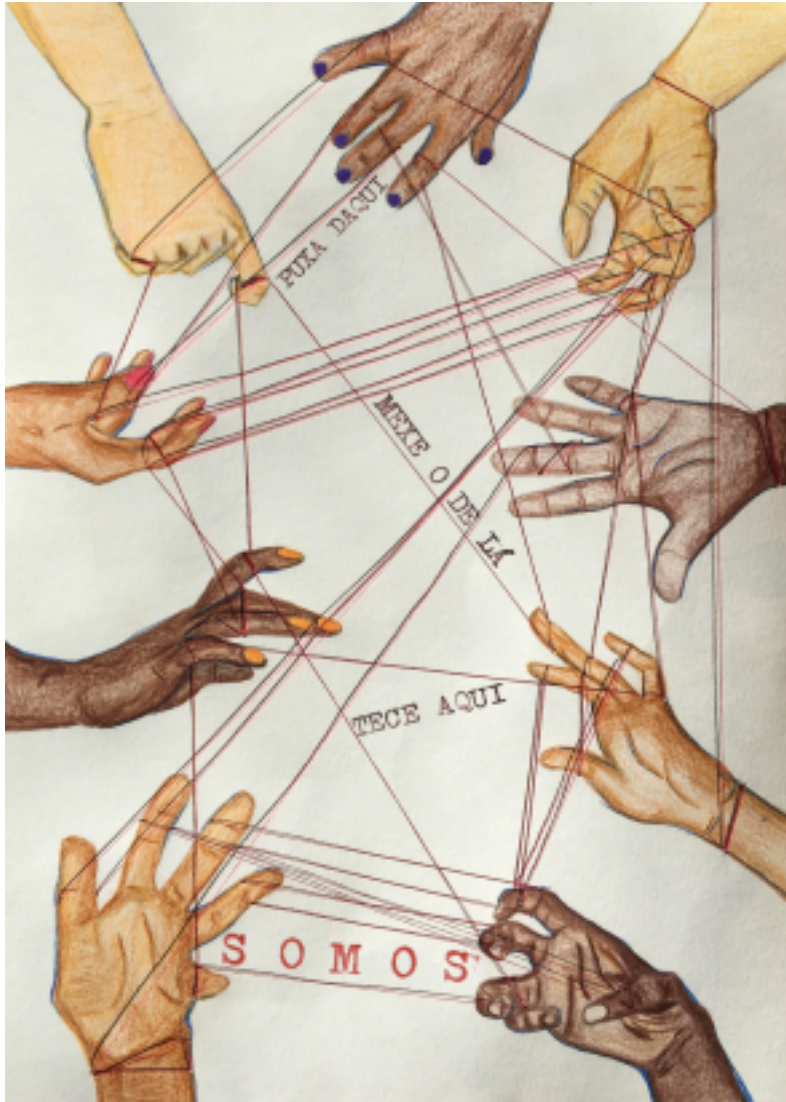
Figure 9: The final experiment: Collective Body (Angelon 2020). The inscriptions say 'pull from here, move the one from there, weave here, WE ARE'.

This image expresses the impact of each gesture on others' hands. Movement generates tension and looseness, shaping the collective body's circumstances and consolidating social change.

The image is inspired by akai ito, an invisible thread tied to the little finger that has a connection with the heart and thus becomes entangled, stretched, curled, but never broken. The Japanese legend says that the wire connects people who are predestined to meet. The hand interaction resembles the cat's cradle, an ancient game that appears in various cultures, also known as ayatori (Japan), cama de gato (Brazil) and other names. Like in the game, a composition of connection between bodies in specific hands was conceived to contemplate the collective movement and the tensions involved in bodily political negotiation. This experiment's monstrosity is expressed through an unusual mixture of materials and the representation of various hands as if

they were part of the same body.

   The image was also inspired by Donna Haraway's words on the need for abdicating consensus when negotiating collective matters:

"Articulation must remain open, its densities accessible to action and intervention. When the system of connections closes in on itself, when symbolic action becomes perfect, the world is frozen in a dance of death. The cosmos is finished, and it is One. Paranoia is the only possible posture; generous suspicion is foreclosed."
(1992: 327)

CONCLUSION

   As recognized in a series of democratic design experiments, monster aesthetics is a positive expression of otherness against the colonization of the design body. The monstrosity emerges from the hybridization of individual and collective bodies, loosely connected, refusing to erase their cultural and political differences while reproducing European aesthetic canon. Monsters aesthetics was expressed through weaving out a wearable manifesto that looks like a Neoconcrete Parangolé or Collective Body and by collaborative writing and designing a digital manifesto that looks like a postmodern-dadaist digital-vernacular brochure. Instead of advocating authorship as a viable path for the liberation from aesthetic canons – as postmodern design does, monster aesthetics emphasizes collective organizing and shared authorship. This emphasis transforms the design body into a collective subject, a menace to alienated, depoliticized, neo-liberal, fragmented and individualized design practices.

   Different monsters incarnated the collective body, who displayed a multiformance of personal stories, movements, adjustments, dances and articulations. The multiformances centred around the tension generated by the movements from the 'me' to the 'you' while reaching the 'we' (Szaniecki 2008). By incorporating the other into the self instead of purging otherness to become a pure (European) designer, the tension encouraged the participants to remain savages, yet sophisticated, like the technified barbarians described by Oswald de Andrade (1972). This achievement results from an open space created for a non-ending story, an unexpected realization of an unlikely hope: liberation from oppression (Haraway 1992).

   Therefore, students experienced the possibility of bringing in their spontaneous and popular forms of expression, learning to break with the unconscious obedience (Merlin 2019) prescribed by the European aesthetic canons. They learned to fight aesthetic injustice (Dalaqua 2020) through pedagogy democratization, dialogues on personal motivations and the development of collective organizing skills needed for continuous social action. In this sense, monster aesthetics can be considered aesthetics of the oppressed in design (Boal 2006). Despite its appeal, monster

aesthetics is just one possible aesthetics of the oppressed. It stands as another example that design education can empower future designers to transformatively engage with their profession's work politics (Elzenbaumer and Franz 2017). This research found that the human body's political and collective dimensions are essential for decolonizing the design body.

Reflecting on the salvation myth often found in the justifications for colonized design education, we conclude that design students do not need to be saved from design ignorance. It is quite the contrary: they need a design education that recognizes the value of the design knowledge they already have from their local culture, an education that respects the value system of communities (Tunstall 2020). In this way, design students may recognize popular forms of expression and alternative methodologies to become conscious of the (eventually monstrous) design body.

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