

## Actions Eleonora Fabião

It is forbidden to sell this book. *Actions* was made to be given, received, traded, lost, found, purposely lost, donated, lent, passed on. Neither bought nor sold. Even if you find it in a bookstore, you can acquire it at zero cost; just ask the bookseller. I will leave some copies on bus', subways', and ferryboats' seats; on town squares and churches' benches; on tables at coffee shops, bars, and nightclubs; on the ground at universities, museums, galleries. I will also leave copies in government offices, banks, supermarkets, gyms, and on car hoods in parking lots and garages. And, on pieces of colored cloth, they will be left at beaches, waterfalls, and riverbanks. Several copies will be sent to Brazilian and international libraries or handed out in specific events. I can affirm that this book enjoys movement immensely. The proposal is to continue the performative movement launched on the streets. What matters is the art of initiative.



## Photos

Adrian Heathfield [p. 245, 246 (above)]  
André Lepecki [p. 10, 22-25, 26 (below), 28,  
113-115, 148-149, 158-191, 243, 344]  
Anne Wenniger [p. 109 (below)]  
Barbara Browning [p. 280-291]  
David Bergé [p. 46-51]  
Eleonora Fabião [p. 100, 109 (above), 112, 123-131]  
Felipe Ribeiro [p. 12-20, 26 (above), 27, 30-41,  
134-147, 150-156, 192-219, 236-241, 246 (below),  
248-251, 317]  
Flávia de Souza [p. 110]  
Jaime Acioli [p. 252-256]  
Laura Muñoz Sánchez [p. 52-57, 60, 62-65]  
Liz Heard [p. 107]  
Luis Sotelo [p. 66-67]  
María Alejandra Muñoz Pinilla [p. 58-59, 61]  
Sky Oestreicher [p. 220-233]  
Tourist on the Staten Island Ferry [p. 111]  
Victor Furtado [p. 70-97, inside front and back cover]

### DADOS INTERNACIONAIS PARA CATALOGAÇÃO NA PUBLICAÇÃO (CIP)

---

F118a

Fabião, Eleonora

Actions : Eleonora Fabião / Eleonora Fabião ; essays Adrian  
Heathfield ... [et al.] ; editors Eleonora Fabião, André Lepecki ;  
[translator Christopher Peterson]. – Rio de Janeiro : Tamandú Arte,  
2015.

352 p. : il. color. ; 24 cm.

Translation of: Ações : Eleonora Fabião.

ISBN 978-85-69099-02-4

1. Performance art. 2. Street art. 3. Art and society. I. Heathfield,  
Adrian II. Lepecki, André III. Title.

CDD- 700

---

Roberta Maria de O. V. da Costa – Bibliotecária CRB7 5587

Font: Aktiv Grotesk  
Papers: Eurobulk 135 g/m<sup>2</sup>  
and Lux Cream 80 g/m<sup>2</sup>  
Printing plant: Ipsis  
Print run: 1000 copies



Support

Este projeto é selecionado  
**RUMOS**  
Itaú Cultural

Funding

Ministério da  
Cultura

GOVERNO FEDERAL  
**BRASIL**  
PÁTRIA EDUCADORA

## For an ethics of the strange

Tania Rivera

I imagine Eleonora Fabião silent, standing in the middle of the world. At a slight movement of her hands, the invisible strings connecting us to each other would suddenly start vibrating. The artist's small gesture would ripple, undulating, until it spreads along the streets, through the houses and buildings, in the cars and in the passersby, touching each and every one of us, unpredictably and almost imperceptibly. Then, unlike the maestro that remains firm, master of his orchestra, Eleonora would immediately begin to dissolve, blending with the people, the ground and the buildings, the honking horns and the voices, the babbles and sighs of the big city.

To make vibrate the strings that resound among us is a grand feat, but there is nothing spectacular about it. It can only be done in small, punctual, discreet, and scarcely visible actions, thanks to almost gratuitous acts inscribed between dream, word, and body. Such subtle interventions emerge on the world scene and destabilize it in order to redraw the lines, the ties, the web we call life.

•

Eleonora Fabião's most emblematic work is perhaps the one called precisely *Line*, ongoing since 2010. The artist asked an acquaintance to arrange a meeting with somebody she didn't know, and to provide her with just the date, time, and place. Without even knowing the name of the person that would welcome her at home, Fabião would bring Brazilian coffee, tea, and sugar (she was living in New York at the time). During the encounter the artist and this person were supposed to discover/ create an action they both wanted to do together. Then they would schedule the second encounter, before which the necessary measures would be taken for the planned work. Have executed the action, the collaborator would be asked to choose



an acquaintance and arrange a new meeting between him or her and the artist—so that the line is drawn from one person to another, from one point to another in space and time, in a virtually infinite zigzag.

The artist's motivation is not to make friends with each collaborator in *Line*, but to form a pact that allows two persons to achieve such actions as to hold hands and dive into the ice-cold waters of the Hudson River, or to "plant" a fig tree in one of their bellies, on the deck of the Staten Island Ferry. However, I suspect that the action in itself is not the most important thing for Fabião. The strange invitation to conceive a joint action is the password to a universe habitually kept secret and rarely shared: each one's daydreams and crazy fantasies. The action's project is thus a kind of decoy to arrive at something else even more important: what Fabião calls "affective circulations." Among words and bodies, gestures and dreams, such circulations lead to a passage, to a transformation: to a "pass,"<sup>1</sup> as the artist says. Something passes and is transmitted between the persons involved, and that is precisely what should materialize in a joint action, lived like a kind of celebration of such event. For Fabião, the performance thus redefines itself as a "performative pass."

The idea of performative pass thus reclaims something vast and ancient, which I will call here—somewhat prosaically—*poetic encounter*: that to which art invites us and which always involves *others*, even when it does not corporeally present a specific other. What *happens* in art (when it happens, since there are no guarantees, only invitations, wagers, and addressings), always implies some degree of sharing: it's about something that takes place *between us*, and which may occasionally happen outside of art, when life itself is art. Throughout the encounters in *Line*, the artist perceives that this work "spawns peculiar modes of contact, unexpected affective circulations, highly agile personal disconfigurations and reconfigurations" and—doubtless most importantly—it generates "a unique form of pleasure—something I had never experienced before."<sup>2</sup> The action consists of a complex and ritualized montage—a score—that attempts to trigger something unique: an affective and bodily experience, a desiring and strangely pleasurable encounter.

It may sound surprising that such a poetic encounter happens during such short contact as proposed in *Line*, with no prior situation of familiarity. But it may be that the encounter's sharpness and force depend precisely on a certain anonymity and a *heterotopia*—perhaps I can only truly encounter somebody outside of my habitual

1 Editors' Note: In Brazilian Portuguese, "passe" means both "pass," as in going through, but also a spell to open someone's paths and ways. Rivera explicitly plays with both senses of the word regarding Fabião's work.

2 As Eleonora Fabião says in a talk entitled "a performance called *Line*: encounters with the encounter."



circles, apart from the place in which I and my others already have defined positions. Art thus delineates and reconfigures singular space-times, opening windows in the everyday scene—and flipping my place in it.

*Line* thus demonstrates a fundamental but habitually denied fact: we need strangers. The stranger is not the one that comes to disturb the idyll of the similar, but rather the one that is both valued and feared, having the power to break the bonds of my own identity and open me up to something else—which for lack of a fixed name we vaguely call *poetry*.

•

Modern Western thought is hostage to the notion of identity, which allows autonomously designing a single *I* to which the *other* is opposed. The latter can be the similar—the one whose identity is different from but analogous to mine—or the stranger, whose identity is dissimilar to mine and who can be either feared and distrusted or idealized and envied in his exoticism. Discourses in favor of approaching and valuing the stranger frequently tend to construct a well-designed figure of the other with a proper identity, and thus reinforce the stranger's difference in relation to the *I*. Although well-intentioned and so important today, praise for alterity can thus reinforce my identity and my belonging to my peer group, with the paradoxical consequence that the stranger is kept at a distance. Only the encounter in which my own identity is cracked and thrown into a crisis, as is the stranger's, is capable of providing a real experience of the other (that in which "I am another," as Rimbaud wrote, highlighting the experience of uncanniness at the core of his poetic work).

The uncanny is sometimes another name for poetry, and its greatest theoretician is Sigmund Freud in his famous work *Das Unheimliche* (*The Uncanny*) from 1919. The strange and unsettling is at the same time familiar, as shown by this curious German term, the meaning of which oscillates between two extremes: the most uncanny is what turns around and suddenly reveals itself very close and intimate. The estrangement of the world, which literature and art can operate masterfully, but which may also be experienced in specific situations in daily life, is for the psychoanalyst linked to the experience of the double, in which the *I* itself becomes stranger. This event's minimalist model is the situation in which, for a split second, one does not recognize one's own image in the mirror. I am, in part, stranger to myself—and this is one possible way of defining what psychoanalysis calls the *unconscious*.

Avoiding the identity trap contained in the term *other* in its opposition to *I*, the strange, the stranger, can name that which cannot be clearly demarcated in relation to me, since although different, the strange/stranger proves to be fundamentally



familiar to me. While the other is the one that traditionally plays the role of alterity as an identitary complement (the *alter ego*), the strange/stranger's position is that of *otredad* (otherness), to use a term from Octavio Paz. "Poetry is the search for others, the discovery of otherness,"<sup>3</sup> posits the Mexican poet and critic. Art seeks others—since it is always addressed to somebody—but what is encountered in it is something else: the dimension of difference as inherent to the very *I*. Eleonora Fabião follows this same path when she recognizes and valorizes the "strange and strangeness as modes of knowledge and relationship,"<sup>4</sup> attributing to the performative act nothing less than the power to "reveal the strangeness-of-all-things."<sup>5</sup> For the artist, performance is, therefore, about assuming the strange as *method*.

Thus, the action *Converso sobre qualquer assunto* [*I will have a conversation about any subject*], performed in various cities around the world beginning in 2008, consists of a mundane situation, that of talking with people on the street, activated by a setting that consists of two kitchen chairs and a large sheet of paper announcing the title. Its performance as *Ação Carioca #1* [*Carioca Action #1*], on the square called Largo da Carioca in downtown Rio de Janeiro, explored a practice which is not uncommon on Rio's streets, namely striking up a conversation with a stranger in situations of physical proximity, like standing on a queue, etc. However, by providing a chair for the stranger and making herself available for any subject—and not only quick comments on a shared situation, as usually happens—the artist expands the limits of this practice, erasing the borders between public and intimate, friend and stranger, place of passage and place of conviviality. In a subtle poetic shift, she questions what is really traded—what is at stake—in each conversation, no matter how banal and everyday.

Something is traded: mine becomes yours, and yours mine. Or could it be that "mine" already belonged to the other? The most intimate can prove to be *extimate*, to employ Lacan's beautiful neologism. The world is something that is shared in fluid demarcations, in transitions—and transactions—between us. In *Série Precários: troco tudo* [*Precarious Series: to trade everything*, 2013], Fabião makes this negotiation the core of her practice. In a busy and popular place like Feira de São Cristóvão, a market and meeting place in Rio de Janeiro, she approaches strangers, successively, asking whether they want to trade something with her, until she has replaced all the pieces of clothing, footwear, and accessories she started with.

3 PAZ, Octavio. *O arco e a lira*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1982, p. 319.

4 In the talk "a performance called *Line*: encounters with the encounter," as mentioned in note 2.

5 Idem.



It's about exploring a zone of exchange between me and the other, so as to put into practice a *strange* way of being, and thus renounce the unification and fixation of identities. This proposal, which is simultaneously aesthetic, subjective, and political in a broad sense, echoes a fundamental question for Brazilian modernism. The Manifesto Antropófago [Anthropophagic Manifesto] by writer Oswald de Andrade, customarily considered a milestone for Brazilian modernism, already proclaimed in 1928: "I am only interested in what is not mine." The Anthropophagic Movement was thus inaugurated, in which Brazil's colonial position was culturally assumed (and subverted) in an anarchic swallowing of the European artistic movements. If Anthropophagy brought out a certain Brazilianness, in which tropical colors and themes abound, its basis did not consist of the affirmation of national identity. Quite to the contrary; central to Anthropophagy was a critical treatment of the very notion of identity—"I am only interested in what is not mine," precisely, because what is my own is problematic and complex, derived from miscellaneous appropriations, as demonstrated so well by Brazil's history.

(Identity is a line that departs in many directions.)

In the Anthropophagic Manifesto, Andrade's point of departure is a noteworthy reading of Freud's famous *Totem and Taboo*, from 1913. The book reconstructs the origin of civilization through the myth of the primitive horde, dominated by a perverse father until the brothers joined together and killed him. In a totemic banquet, each brother swallowed part of the dead father's body, and through this incorporation identified with him, thenceforth sharing their belonging to that group, the social "identity" that the taboos and other totemic practices would maintain and reinforce, in contrast with other groups. Thus did society emerge with its laws and prescriptions.

Oswald de Andrade proposes a subversion of this narrative, based on the substitution of the totemic banquet by a 16th century anthropophagic ritual of the Tupi Indians on the Brazilian coast. The cannibalism of this indigenous people consisted of eating the brave enemy, the valiant prisoner of war, after a long period of contact in which he was familiarized, receiving a name and wife and enjoying freedom, but curiously not taking advantage of such freedom to flee his captivity. The anthropophagic feast in which this familiar-stranger was incorporated at the end of this process was by no means the mere elimination of an undesirable foreigner or a punishment for war crimes, but rather a curious, long, and ritualized experience of alterity. As indicated by anthropologist Renato Sztutman, cannibalism should thus be seen as "an ethics,"<sup>6</sup> to



the extent that it consists of putting oneself in the other's place (as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has been highlighting in his anthropological writings).

(Still, this experience of the other has an extremely violent facet: that of the rawness of cannibalism, which the allegorical use of the practice by Andrade is unable to totally silence. Perhaps the encounter with the other is not only pleasurable, since the presence of the body implies a "friction of presences," to quote a formula by Fabião,<sup>7</sup> even before any transaction takes place between the different I's. Intertwined with pleasure is perhaps, latent, some dose of anguish.)

Far from claiming a given indigenous identity, anthropophagy is about a model of incorporating the other that doubts identity and plays with the borders between the I and the other, in a constant and constitutive exchange, in a game in which the body and subject stand out and couple with each other in a certain mobility. It's about a mode of identifying with the other that presupposes and assumes a de-centering in the conception of "oneself." "Tupi or not tupi," proclaims the Anthropophagic Manifesto—and by parodying Shakespeare, the main Brazilian indigenous group (the Tupi people) is thus ironically affirmed in English. In Brazilian art and literature, this marks a critical conceptualization of the position of the colonized, translated as playful and allegorical appropriations of European modernist canons, as seen especially in the twists performed by Oswald de Andrade's writing upon the surrealist model—and later in the reinvention of Joyce by Guimarães Rosa in *Grande sertão: veredas* [*The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*]. More or less latent over the course of the subsequent decades, the anthropophagic élan is explicitly resumed in the music and in the arts by the Tropicalist Movement in 1967.

Throughout the 1960s, artists like Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica make art's core a certain identity shift, assuming the work of art as a proposition, an invitation to the other. This proposal goes far beyond the notion of "audience interaction," to the extent that it radically questions the autonomous position of both the artist and the work itself. Only the other can complete the work of art, which does not exist otherwise: such is the fundamental proposal, which echoes the core of the anthropophagic proposal and unfolds in numerous and varied works, with nuances that of course I will

6 SZTUTMAN, Renato. "O retorno dos antropófagos." In: *XXIV Bienal de São Paulo. Antropofagia e histórias de canibalismos*. Available at <http://www.escolasapaulo.org/ESCOLA%20SP%20PDF%202013%20.pdf>, p. 12.

7 FABIÃO, Eleonora. "Corpo cênico, estado cênico." *Revista Contrapontos-Eletrônica*, 10(3):323, Sept-Dec. 2010. Available at <http://www6.univali.br/seer/index.php/rc/article/view/2256/1721>.



not have time to analyze in this short essay. I only wish to highlight that the body has central importance in these proposals, but in general it is not about the artist's own body, but that of others. The body appears in a fundamentally critical way and is never considered as evidence in itself. To the extent that unitary identity is questioned, the body can no longer be a guarantee of its delimitation. It thus becomes a kind of critical instrument, and may be taken as the seat of perceptions that allow one to extend beyond perception (towards the *Suprassensorial* [Suprasensory], of Oiticica), as the crossroads of aesthetic, cultural, and political questions (in the *Parangolés*, also by Oiticica), as the place of fantasies to be lived and put into words collectively (in *Fantasmática do corpo* [Phantasmatic of the Body], by Lygia Clark), as the terrain for a transformation of the subject (in *Estruturação do self* [Structuring of the Self], that Clark presents as psychotherapy), etc. Whatever the case, in the final analysis, the body as such is irremediably lost (I think of *Nostalgia do corpo* [Longing for the Body]—Clark, still and always).

Eleonora Fabião's work reverberates this critical and propositional tradition, making the interrelationship with the other her central thrust, in a questioning and transforming way. In a *strange* way. Her position is fundamentally ethical—we can call it the "ethics of the strange" (but perhaps this is superfluous; to the extent that the ethics should always be that of the stranger, it is the ethics that should lead us to experience the other's place).

Lygia Clark's presence is especially striking in Fabião's trajectory, which sometimes resumes collective propositions like *Baba antropofágica* [Anthropophagic Slobber, 1973]—precisely Clark's proposition that explicitly reveals the importance of the anthropophagic legacy in her work. "We seek the other to encounter him and ourselves," writes Fabião. And she proceeds, "The search is narcissistic in its resemblances. The search is overwhelming in its fear of perdition."<sup>8</sup> (As I copied this quote, I typed: "in the *midst* of perdition"—perhaps because I believe that such perdition is the object not only of fear, but also of a certain attraction). At any rate, as the artist proclaims in concluding, "The search is transformative in difference." The other's difference is pursued as a possibility of uncanniness and transformation of oneself—and of the other. And of the world.

As *Line* makes explicit, it's about isolating and highlighting—as in a laboratory experiment—the very fabric of our daily life: the web between me and the others, the interweaving in which familiarity and difference alternate and sometimes mix, so as

8 FABIÃO, Eleonora. *9 dias, 89 instantâneos*. Insert in *Encontro: Rumos Itaú Cultural Teatro 2010-2012*. São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2013.



to indicate to us—and make us explore and enjoy—our own hidden uncanniness. From this fabric, Fabião removes some threads to make us feel, nakedly and truly, what happens between me and the other, but which is usually found buried in the conventional spheres of friendship, of amorous relations, of work contacts, etc. The word “transactions” is dear to the artist. In *Line*, the encounter is intimate, even though delimited by the rules of the work of art (or perhaps *thanks to them*), since a singular invitation is formulated: to share desires and daydreams. For Fabião, it’s about “generating performative programs that generate stories”<sup>9</sup>—the performance aims to incite phantasmatic narratives, it wants words-subject to emerge (which are not exclusively of one or the other, but are immediately *between* them). The invitation to joint action is thus as crazy as the proposal to dream together (“I dream of a long dream where everyone would dream [...] / I dream on the shore of the world and of the night,” as Louis Aragon writes<sup>10</sup>).

(And the line walks from person to person, unpredictable like life, infinite like the dream.)

Such intimate contact with the other inevitably involves the body. Its presence, its friction with the world and with other bodies. But the body is not everything. Its presence in itself does not guarantee the encounter capable of unraveling threads. Perhaps the body is not a piece of evidence, but a trigger: something that incites a reconfiguration of the elements in a given system. The body serves to cross doors and spaces, to touch objects and other bodies, it is the territory of transaction with the world, of passage, of *pass*. The body crosses borders, it is between one and the other, the body itself is “something intermediate” as the Portuguese poet Mário de Sá-Carneiro wrote of himself. “Your body, this stage”—this “fluid” stage, says Eleonora<sup>11</sup>—in it we crisscross the world and others. And in order to be between one and another subject, the body cannot be whole, it has to be the contrary of the image in which identity finds its imagetic anchor. The body thus shows itself the way—I believe—it really is: *in parts*.

I’m moved by the photographs of feet, hands, and navels that Fabião takes of each participant in *Line*. Rather than affirming and showing the body of the other in its entirety—and thus reaffirm its monadic alterity—the artist poetically tweezes out parts

9 In the talk “a performance called *Line*: encounters with the encounter,” as mentioned in note 2.

10 ARAGON, Louis. *Une vague de rêves*. Paris: Seghers, 1990, p. 28.

11 FABIÃO, Eleonora. “Corpo cênico, estado cênico.” Op. cit., 322.



of the body, in an intimate and even amorous act. In fact, the body is always in pieces. This is an important lesson from psychoanalysis: the bodily unit is a construction that coincides with the formation of the fiction we call *I*. The infant sees its image in the mirror, and recognizes itself for the first time. Its body, previously unperceived as unified and not clearly demarcated from the exterior, suddenly shapes itself to the identification with this image, in which it finds its limits and its surface for sharing with the other. Only at this moment, inside and outside are clearly highlighted, and an "internal" *I* takes shape and opposition to the other and to the world's other elements. Unified thanks to an identification with a mirror image that leaves out part of its bodily experience, the *I* thus crystalizes itself in a fundamental alienation, as stated by Jacques Lacan.

But another fundamental point needs to be stated. In front of the mirror, it is another's gaze that confirms to the infant: that is its body, and thus that image is what it *must be*. Here, it is not merely any other, but somebody that loves it and on which it depends to survive—mother, father, or some other figure invested with this role. The body only becomes proper if the other recognizes and confirms it, if the other looks at it, and upon looking at it, loves it in some way. The body makes itself in the amorous crisscrossing of gazes. It is only "proper" when it is taken by the other as "alien." That is why "the performative body," as Fabião says, can only be "a field of relations," an "interplace."<sup>12</sup>

(Body does not exist without the other's gaze. One is never alone on the world's stage.)

By inscribing itself between me and the other, the bodily image that sustains the illusory unit of the *I* takes and transforms the place (the *interplace*) which was occupied before it by a certain fundamental object: the mother's breast. In the Freudian narrative construction that attempts to explain the origin of desire, it is the object that allows the passage from necessity (the food which is breast milk) to desire (of the body, of the mother's presence). At first, it is not perceived as "outside," as part of another body, but occupies a zone of indiscernibility between the infant and the nursing mother. To experience the lack of the mother's breast at the moment in which one yearns for it thus corresponds to an experience of bodily loss that founds the desiring movement as search of the lost object. The object of desire, which we always attempt to reencounter, is that which was once part of me (and of the other).

Thus, the body does not clearly demarcate an *I* in presence, but always carries with it, uncannily, the other and the object. The body is dubious: on the one hand, my

12 FABIÃO, Eleonora. "Corpo cênico, estado cênico." Op. cit., 323.



body coincides with my I which relates to objects, and on the other hand, my body itself is an object—not only for the other that relates to me, but also for myself, that I *have* a body more than I *am*, as our everyday speech reveals. That is why the body is an intertwining, a chiasm in the flesh of the world (as Maurice Merleau-Ponty says)—it is a zone of intersection in which some objects of the world can take place, those that mark an intersection between me and the other. Such interplace of the object is the same one that, beginning in 1976, Lygia Clark aimed to activate in her “therapeutic” proposal *Structuring of the Self*, using beautiful and precarious objects made of plastic bags, air, stone, net, fabric, sand, water, etc., that she calls *relational objects*, borrowing Donald Winnicott’s psychoanalytical concept.

(Body is what is split between me and the other, making us lose a certain object between us.)

Any object of the world, whether preexistent or created by me, can thus be sown with body, or rather, with presence, with *inter-presence*, so long as I inject a little of me into it, in a poetic operation that I like to call *dissemination*. In this operation, one puts into practice and actualizes the fact that the subject does not properly inhabit its interior, clearly demarcated from the objects—on the contrary, the subject only becomes itself *outside of itself*, in the objects. Such a strange condition appears to me to furnish the implicit basis of art’s adventure. Any object, anything of the world can become art, so long as a presence of the subject germinates in it (with surprise and uncanniness, I find in one of Fabião’s writings precisely the beautiful expression “seed object”). In addition, the same gesture of dissemination implies that such presence be promptly addressed to others, making the object a kind of *object-pass*. The small but powerful gesture that I spoke of at the beginning of this essay is perhaps that of sowing—oneself, becoming an-other—in the scattered elements of the world. (In some we germinate. In others we die).

In several, we reencounter the form pregnant of life of things. Thus it was on Praça Tiradentes, in 2012, in the action *Quase nada, sempre tudo #1: 25 tijolos* [*Almost nothing, always everything #1: 25 bricks*]. For hours, Eleonora Fabião made and unmade, with her body, compositions with these elements. A photograph showing an arm and part of the side of the body aligned with a line of bricks shows in an unequivocal way such dissemination of the body—or rather, of something more than the body, but which the body indicates: of a certain presence in the world’s objects. The body is outside of itself: in the objects, rather, between itself and the objects. Or rather: the presence



is not in the body itself, but in what it sows *outside*: in the world, in the object, in the other. "The inter-place of presence is in our body what is not in us," in Fabião's words.<sup>13</sup> (With bricks, as with the body, a fragile architecture of the subject is constructed).

In *Quase nada, sempre tudo #3: 9 lençóis* [*Almost nothing, always everything #3: 9 bed sheets*], performed on the same city square in 2013, with a score analogous to the first work in the series, a kind of dance is done between the performer's body and the bed sheets, in which both body and fabric become *bodies* (that disseminate in the air each gesture performed there, for the gaze of others). Fabric or bricks thus subtract themselves from the logic of merchandise, of consumption, to become pieces of subject that offer themselves to the gaze and body of the other. They are things that are traded, as we saw in the action *Troco tudo*, which the artist only concludes when she has replaced (passed on) everything that originally covered her body. The banknotes themselves are nothing more than that, in the end: an appendix of my body, addressed to the other, to trade (in *Série Precários: dinheiro* [*Precarious Series: money*, 2012], Fabião attaches to her forehead a wire longer than her arm can reach, on the end of which she hangs a banknote).

In the object-pass or object-seed, even before Lygia Clark's *relational object*, we hear the echoes of the theory of the *non object* formulated by poet and critic Ferreira Gullar in 1960. Before a work by Clark composed of moveable wooden parts, Gullar believed that he had found neither an object in the usual sense of the term, with its use and meaning, nor the object which philosophically would be the complement of the subject, but a *non object*: something that refuses itself as object, but meanwhile is capable of inviting the other to experience it as subject. As refusal and resistance to the objectification of the world, Eleonora Fabião can explore this negative power of the object so as to nearly make it disappear—like the water that she repeatedly pours from a silver pitcher to a pottery jug and back, on the street and occasionally with help from passersby, until nothing is left (*Ação Carioca #7: jarros* [*Carioca Action #7: pitchers*, 2008]; *Ação Bogotana #2: jarros* [*Bogotana Action #7: pitchers*, 2009]; *Ação Fortalezense #5: jarros* [*Fortalezense Action #7: pitchers*, 2010]; *Ação Rio-Pretense #5: jarros* [*Rio-Pretense Action #7: pitchers*, 2012]). Any and whatever object can thus dematerialize, perhaps to become the seed of a gesture to share.

Art thus appears to be about bringing some body to make present the absent object, or to highlight some object to make present the body that is not there. Or even to assemble a complex interaction between body and object so as to make them alternate and exchange with each other in favor of a strange presence. At any rate, we

13 FABIÃO, Eleonora. "Corpo cênico, estado cênico." Op. cit., 322.



can say that art is always *a bit of body*, even though what is really at stake, the poetic encounter, is immaterial (the parts and images of the body, like those of the object, can only give news of it).

In fact, we can only keep remains or vestiges of this. Photographs, words. More than recording a passing action, which indeed would have the statute of art, the function of reports and images is to retransmit the encounter and disseminate it in us, in the world. In this dissemination, the act of writing plays a key role in Eleonora Fabião's work. Her actions involve continuous work with words, both in prior notes and in formulations stemming from bodily practices. The artist "sweats" ideas and gives body to words. She claims she needs to "sculpt verbal mass"<sup>14</sup> in order to move on, and her verbal sculptures should in fact be read as poetry, in a literary practice that may occasionally be presented independently, although organically interwoven with her actions. Taking a closer look, the artist's propositions reveal themselves as complex montages of gestures and words, bodies and places, spaces and objects. The texts and public talks by Fabião (who is also a university professor) are part of these montages, in essayistic writing that also invites the listener or reader to a *pass*, to the performative pass. It's about launching, at each moment, a circuit open to life, an affective circulation, a spark cast into the world like a shipwreck's message-in-the-bottle in the vast sea.

In *Line*, in addition to the pictures of navels, feet, and hands, Eleonora Fabião photographs windows and front doors on people's homes. From the body to the dwelling place she thus draws a line. From each to their cave, an inscription is engraved like that of the prehistoric men that produced negative images of their hands placed on the rock wall by blowing saliva with pigment on them. Vestige of presence—past. Our relationship with space is that of marking the place of someone that was there. In *Ação Carioca #3: linha* [Carioca Action #3: line], from 2008, Fabião used scouring paste and a scrub brush to polish a long straight line on the cobblestone paving on Largo da Carioca, a dense region of passage in downtown Rio de Janeiro. It's about "opening zones of indiscernibility in the city's body," as the artist says. Zones between city and people, between me and the other, between me and myself thus emerge in the urban landscape, thanks to a bodily gesture that inscribes the subject on the living fabric of the world. Because "if the performer evidences the body, it is to make the body-world evident."<sup>15</sup> And to make

<sup>14</sup> FABIÃO, Eleonora. "Corpo cênico, estado cênico." Op. cit., 321.

<sup>15</sup> FABIÃO, Eleonora. "Performance e teatro: poéticas e políticas da cena contemporânea." In: *Próximo ato: teatro de grupo*. São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2011, p. 240



the body-world evident is to transform and recreate the city (which acts build the city in which we wish to live?—asks Fabião).

But the inscription of the subject on the body-world is, as seen in this *Ação Carioca #3*, subtle and transitory—urban grime will soon reoccupy the paving homogeneously, through the action of pedestrians' shoes, dust from the cars, and perhaps some rain. It's about a mobile and infinite writing of the body on the city's text, and it can even consist of nothing more than the artist's moving around the streets (with eyes closed as if to make the presence of the body more concrete, in *Série Precários: toco tudo* [*Precarious Series: to touch everything*], Rio de Janeiro 2012 and Montreal 2014, touching things and persons and being touched by them—and, of course, accepting help from strangers). The world is made from the inscriptions—not always imagetic, sometimes nearly invisible, and always remaking themselves—of the subject in the surrounding elements. Amorous dissemination of what is most intimate to me in space, on the street, in the enormous world that I will never succeed in encompassing.

The images by Eleonora that I like most are the ones in which her body follows the score of the Nambikwara Indians lying on the ground, that Lévi-Strauss portrays in his *Saudades do Brasil* (*Série Precários: Saudades do Brasil* [*Precarious Series: Saudades do Brasil*, 2013]). The artist's body delivers itself to the thin grass with the Sugarloaf Mountain as the picture-postcard background—the ground I frequently tread during my walks in search of air and immenseness, I now realize. The body's abandonment to the earth brings to my mind an intimate, beautiful, and painful episode—my seven-year-old daughter who, for the first time in front of the tombstone of her recently deceased father, embraces the earth with all her body, face-down, corporeally materializing the transcendental in the word *saudade*.

*Saudade* for the other is *saudade* for myself, in the world.