

Performative Care: An Articulation Between Art and Mental Health in the Care of People Who Use Drugs

Cuidado Performativo: Uma Articulação Entre a Arte e Saúde Mental no Cuidado de Pessoas que Usam Drogas

Cuidado Performático: Una Articulación Entre el Arte y la Salud Mental en el Cuidado de Personas que Consumen Drogas

RESUMO

Na relação entre arte e Redução de Danos, as discussões sobre o cuidado geralmente abordam práticas que integram arteterapia, arte-educação e a experiência estética da arte como estratégias de Redução de Danos. Este estudo investigou os objetos artísticos criados pelo Coletivo Arte e RD de Belo Horizonte, analisando suas contribuições para atos performativos que potencializam o cuidado de pessoas que usam drogas. Foi realizada uma análise de conteúdo das obras do coletivo, acompanhada de uma revisão narrativa da literatura existente. Conclui-se que o cuidado performativo, enquanto percepção-imagem de atos performativos, oferece à Saúde Coletiva uma nova perspectiva, centrada na reconstrução de corpos fragmentados e seus desejos de reinvenção.

DESCRIPTORES: Saúde Mental; Redução de Danos, Arte; Performatividade

ABSTRACT

In the relationship between art and Harm Reduction, discussions about care generally address practices that integrate art therapy, art education, and the aesthetic experience of art as strategies for Harm Reduction. This study investigated the artistic objects created by the Coletivo Arte e RD from Belo Horizonte, analyzing their contributions to performative acts that enhance the care of people who use drugs. A content analysis of the collective's works was conducted, accompanied by a narrative review of the existing literature. It concludes that performative care, as the perception-image of performative acts, offers a new perspective to Public Health, centered on the reconstruction of fragmented bodies and their desires for reinvention.

DESCRIPTORS: Mental Health; Harm Reduction; Art; Performativity

RESUMEN

En la relación entre arte y Reducción de Daños, las discusiones sobre el cuidado generalmente abordan prácticas que integran arteterapia, arte-educación y la experiencia estética del arte como estrategias de Reducción de Daños. Este estudio investigó los objetos artísticos creados por el Colectivo Arte y RD de Belo Horizonte, analizando sus contribuciones a actos performativos que potencian el cuidado de personas que consumen drogas. Se realizó un análisis de contenido de las obras del colectivo, acompañado de una revisión narrativa de la literatura existente. Se concluye que el cuidado performativo, como percepción-imagen de actos performativos, ofrece a la Salud Colectiva una nueva perspectiva, centrada en la reconstrucción de cuerpos fragmentados y sus deseos de reinvencción.

DESCRIPTORES: Salud Mental; Reducción de Daños; Arte; Performatividad

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INTRODUCTION

Art, as a field of sensitive practices anchored in the body and inventiveness, can offer Harm Reduction (HR) and Public Health (CH) a kaleidoscope of new insights focused on the care of people who use drugs. After an initial search for texts that addressed the relationship between art therapy and harm reduction or/and art and harm reduction, the presence of several themes was observed that bring together aesthetic experiences in art in the promotion of care technologies, with an emphasis on subjectivity, bonding and affections, the following stands out: art as a strategy for creating care practices¹; art as an “input” used as a care device in line with Harm Reduction²; art workshops as a method of intervention in Harm Reduction³ and the use of clowning as a harm reduction strategy⁴. The work of the following collectives also stands out: *É de Lei*, *Biricada*, *Pagode na Lata*, *Teatro de Contêiner* and *Coletivo Arte e RD*.

After the initial analysis, the challenges arising from the moralistic view of substance use are emphasized, as well as the impact of art and aesthetic processes in reducing drug consumption and promoting a sense of belonging. Creative processes were identified as alternatives in health care, highlighting the connection between art and harm reduction, especially in terms of territorial and community ties. The scarcity of artistic productions was also observed and, consequently, the limited integration of bodily practices in this context, with a focus on the performativity of bodies and harm reduction.

Based on the premise that eradicating

drug use is impossible, Harm Reduction (HR) proposes care based on “empathetic pragmatism” through a horizontal approach against the moral/criminal model.⁵ Therefore, the problematization of the political-social processes that involve drug use, as well as the use of art as a harm reduction strategy in the conception of new perceptions-images, leads us to the following problem: Do artistic practices, as propitiators of contradictions and the creation of new perceptions-images, conceive performative acts that enhance the care of people who use drugs?

The objective of the study was to analyze the artistic objects created by Coletivo Arte e RD (CARD) from Belo Horizonte, identifying their contributions to the creation of performative acts that enhance the care of people who make harmful use of alcohol and other drugs, as well as a narrative review in an attempt to elucidate and interconnect the concepts of performativity, art and Harm Reduction (HR).

METHOD

This research is a qualitative study that explores the intersection between Art and Mental Health. The first phase of the study focused on the performative analysis of the works created by Coletivo Arte e RD, with the aim of investigating the aesthetic experience and the communication of care. To this end, content analysis was used, complemented by a narrative review of the literature, aiming to construct the concept of Performative Care. The following works were analyzed: *Cersamos Magazine* (1st, 2nd and 3rd edition)^{2B}, *One of the Places from Where Immanence Flows*^{3C}

(mini doc) and *Based on Racial Scenes*^{4D} (mini doc).

The artistic objects were numbered according to their production dates and follow the following nomenclature throughout the text: *One of the Places from Where Immanence Flows*, 2019 (Object A); *Cersamos Magazine*, 2019, 2020 and 2023 (Object B); *Based on Racial Scenes*, 2023 (Object C). To analyze the works, we used the following markers: Aesthetic experience and communication of care. Both are divided into three elements: Corporeality (Body/image); performativity (body/language) and Word (language/image).

RESULTS

When invited to lead the creation of artistic works, users reconfigure their perceptive mechanisms through words (language/image) and corporeality (body/image), adopting upon themselves the corporeality/word of a creative subject. After analyzing the artistic objects of CARD, it was realized that performative care is directly permeated by the body, language and ethics. In objects A, B and C, guilt and addiction cease to permeate the performativity of the caregiver and, consequently, of

^{1A} Sobre o Coletivo Arte e RD informações disponíveis em: <https://www.instagram.com/coletivoarterd?igsh=NzN1NmhrN2c2c2V2>

^{2B} Objetos artísticos disponível em: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bFfPqY-9vOF9NWKb29M-nsz06vh9MWVe3>

^{3C} Vídeo disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vo57p6NoNZk&t=26s>

^{4D} Vídeo disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrWQ59Tzcc4&t=214s>

Qualitative Article

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the person being cared for. In this way, a communicative horizontality is established, opening space for a creative process that (re)invents the problems that circumscribe drug use. Therefore,

performative care begins to operate through the construction of image techniques, experience techniques and practical techniques that articulate body, ethics and language in the production

of actions that enhance care. These actions are capable of redistributing violence directed at these bodies, that is, in the (re)invention of oneself and one's emancipatory processes.

PERFORMATIVE CARE	IMAGE TECHNIQUES	EXPERIENCE TECHNIQUES	PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES
BODY: (understands the body and its intrinsic interaction with language)	Theater, dance, music, literature, visual arts, performance, audiovisual (etc.).	Change of routine, space and contact between people. Change of territory (affective, geographic, spontaneous).	Intersection of image techniques and experience techniques
LANGUAGE: (language and its intrinsic interaction with the body are understood)	Memes, films, debates, discussion groups (etc.)	Thematic discussions (draw, selection) previously selected or not.	Overlaying life stories using any image and experience techniques
ETHICS: (criticism of the knowledge-power that conceives experiences, practices and morals)	Current themes (neoliberalism, racism, misogyny, etc.), chosen by users and/or artists.	Ethical-political stance towards singularities, diversities and prepositions	Interaction between ethics, body and language

Lives shattered by political systems that produce violence structure vulnerable bodies, which conceive of the only experience of freedom as the exercise of survival. It is important to reconsider the epistemological contributions to the emancipatory construction of care, as well as to the Eurocentric conception of social well-being. Therefore, investigating performative acts in the practice and perception of care enables the construction of new epistemological apparatuses in the conception of post-abysal, post-capitalist and post-colonial actions.⁷

DISCUSSION

Performativity is a concept first used by the philosopher John Austin (1911–1960) when referring to speech acts. Austin proposes that the effectiveness of statements is due to their performative nature, that is, the body performs the act itself in the practice of language, therefore, a duplicated act: the word itself and the statement that the body performs. The discourse that recognizes us as social subjects aims to “designate and establish a subject in subjection, to produce its social contours in time and space”.⁸ Powers therefore operate in the performativity of the act and in the

production of discursive influences prior to the subjects and, consequently, in their constitutions.

The subject who uses drugs is addressed by language through at least two statements: guilt and addiction. The entire institutional system that surrounds him is organized, predominantly, around his act, the use of substances. Therefore, the care provided to these subjects is constructed historically and socially through a performativity that reproduces discursive power relations and control mechanisms⁹ both about the interactions between individuals and about the perceptions they build about their actions.

Analyzing the body as a bio-political reality¹⁰, it is considered that corporeality¹¹ begins through perceptions moderated by biopower.¹⁰ After analyzing the artistic objects, it was possible to perceive that the (re)invention of care, promoted by the field of art, is articulated with the (re)invention of the aesthetic experience and the communication of care in the field of Public Health. The corporeality (body/image) present in objects A, B and C constructs a perception-image that humanizes the user subject, addressing themes from an ethical perspective that does not fall on the blame, control or universalization of the users' ac-

tions.

The artistic objects analyzed offer individuals singularized experiences, through an ethical counter-performative approach, that is, non-universal actions. It is possible to observe this perspective in the narratives used in Object C, as well as in the aesthetics experienced, which does not distinguish ethical values from aesthetic values.¹² The objects analyzed have the capacity to generate temporary and provisional presences, which can influence the dynamics of the health-disease-care object¹³, thus affecting the way in which care processes are experienced and carried out at the intersection between art and mental health.

The performativity used by CARD creates an aesthetic perception and a communication of care that produces counter-performative actions¹³, since they transcend the hegemonic constructions that circumscribe madness, “It only manifests what madness is in its essence: a revelation of non-being”.¹⁴ Non-being is transformed by the perception-image of being, since it is named and incorporated into experiences in which care is carried out by the subject of the action itself. In other words, a biopower that is challenged by non-knowledge, which acts in the process of creation, directly affecting the perception of those

who produced it.

Universality produces in itself a performative contradiction; the “unrealized” by the universal formulates the challenges “of those who are not included in it.”¹³ In other words, the social structure and its consequent practical apprehension conditions our performativity, directly influencing our imagination¹⁵, the production of wishes¹⁶ and the construction of the self. Therefore, colonizing processes of the corporealities present in the health-disease-care object give rise to the restructuring of

epistemologies¹⁷ used as a field of knowledge in approaches that interconnect art and Mental Health.

CONCLUSION

Care is proposed, aligned with biopolitical processes, qualified to perceive and imagine new performative acts capable of contradicting the universality imposed by practices that colonize bodies. Redistributing violence means enabling perception with the imagination of new percep-

tions-images, which consider non-hegemonic humanization processes in the framework of the health-disease-care object.

Therefore, after conducting this research, the need for a crossover between artists and health professionals stands out, as well as the inclusion of art in the study and development of the concept of performative care, so that it is possible to (re) align, through a decolonial and emancipatory perspective, the care of people who use drugs.

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