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Worlding Rio de Janeiro's favelas

Relations and representations of socio-spatial inequality in visual art

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Introduction

This thesis studies works of visual art in and about Rio de Janeiro's favelas, which are often aimed at creating opportunities for residents and fighting territorial stigma. In recent years, artistic favela representations have received considerable media attention in Brazil as well as internationally, which is related to the worldwide fame favelas have attracted in fields such as tourism, cinema, television, design, architecture, and academic research by Brazilian and foreign scholars. Recent mega-events in Brazil, most notably the 2014 Fifa World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games, only heightened this global popularity through extensive global press coverage. During the World Cup, for example, players of the English and Dutch national teams visited the favelas of Rocinha and Santa Marta respectively, which received considerable media attention in their home countries. However, while it has certainly increased in scale, this globally-oriented showcasing of favelas is a recurring phenomenon rather than a new one. In 1961, for example, various Dutch newspapers wrote about the dire living conditions in Brazilian favelas, brought under international attention by the publication of Carolina Maria de Jesus' diary *Quarto do Despejo*. In one of the articles, the author closes with a striking statement: "A start has been made, because no one will be able to say that they did not know [about favelas]. Carolina Maria de Jesus has pointed us to our responsibility" (Boltendal, 1961, my translation).

The success of de Jesus' book is a good example of how artistic representations can raise international awareness about issues such as poverty and inequality, but the Dutch article poignantly asks about the responsibilities of de Jesus' Dutch readers. Research into representations of poverty has shown that a raised awareness of poverty and hardship is not a guarantee for social action or societal change (Boltanski, 1999; Sontag, 2003; Chouliaraki, 2006; 2010; 2011; Seu, 2010; Hutchison, 2014; Corpus Ong, 2014). As Lilie Chouliaraki (2006, p. 18, emphasis in original) describes in her well-known account on the distant spectatorship of suffering: "No, we cannot say we didn't know, but can we *act* on what we now know? What are we supposed to do with our knowledge of suffering?" Over the course of my PhD-research, this question became increasingly important to my approach. Through conversations with artists from Rio's favelas, I became aware of the problematic nature of many of the projects I studied *and* how I myself – speaking and writing from a privileged position – often reproduced rather than challenged global inequalities. Several

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authors have pointed to the similarities between commercial depictions of favelas and the work of artists and academics in these neighborhoods (Valladares, 2005; Freire-Medeiros, 2009, p. 587; Robb Larkins, 2015, pp. 161-164; Frenzel, 2016, pp. 9-10; Custódio, 2017, pp. 17-). Building on and extending this important body of work, this thesis explores the relations between the academic, artistic and commercial interests in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. It asks not only what visual artworks can do in/for favela spaces, but also what we – the international art audience – do with the knowledge we acquire through artistic representations of favelas.

To address the latter question, I will focus on how artistic favela representations travel across cities, countries and continents. The title of my thesis refers to this process of 'worlding'; depicting and/or describing favelas to 'the world.' For Ananya Roy (2011a, p. 312), worlding is "a practice of centering, of generating and harnessing global regimes of value." Abdoumalig Simone (2001, p. 17) rather speaks of "a state of being 'cast out' into the world," in which "the capacity to maintain recognizable and usable forms of collective solidarity and collaboration becomes difficult." For art projects in Rio's favelas, reaching a 'global' audience necessarily implies a physical and symbolic detachment from the peripheral neighbourhoods from which they started. My goal in this study is to examine how this happens exactly, as well as what the consequences of this detachment are for different people involved in the production, dissemination and consumption of the artworks under study. As such, the thesis is not so much about favelas as physical territories, although lived realities will be frequently referred to, building on my ethnographic fieldwork, conversations with favela residents, and on academic or local journalistic accounts. Instead, I discuss how actors from different backgrounds have transformed favelas into artistic objects to be looked at and thought about in a globalized context, and how this affects the different people involved in this process.

Throughout the chapters, two characteristics of this worlding process will repeatedly return. The first concerns a set of interrelated dichotomies, such as global North vs. global South, Brazil vs. Europe, favela vs. *asfalto* (asphalt, the formal city), rich vs. poor, and center vs. periphery. Crucially, art practices often aim – with various degrees of success – to invert or redefine the value judgments attached to these dichotomies, with the goal of challenging dominant power relations. While sympathetic to these attempts and mindful of the very real practices of exclusion that lie at the basis of these oppositions, my analysis tries to call this dichotomous framework into question because it ultimately maintains the idea of favelas as

territories of ‘Otherness,’ which are “forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 31). Secondly, the thesis will show that, despite good intentions and progressive discourses, the sociopolitical contexts in which favela representations are displayed and received tend to reproduce a number of local and global forms of inequality. With this in mind, the chapters will disentangle how artistic practices – embedded as they are in their social, political and economic contexts – can both reinforce and challenge existing inequalities, highlighting the dilemmas and difficulties this raises for actors within this field.

Without a doubt, each artist or art project examined in this thesis employs different strategies and receives different opportunities to fight the inequality faced by Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, and it is important to be attentive to these particularities. At the same time, the artistic and symbolic meanings attached to favelas by artists and audiences do not occur in a vacuum: they are negotiated through collective discourses and frameworks in diverse spatial and temporal contexts. This thesis studies the broader discursive patterns and socio-cultural relations that determine the production, dissemination and reception of varied artists and artworks. Various authors have described how artistic favela representations can reproduce stereotypes and socio-economic inequalities (e.g. Bentes, 2002; Peixoto, 2007; Williams, 2008; Kertzer, 2014; Robb Larkins, 2015), and/or how representational practices can work towards a more nuanced and inclusive imagery and practice (e.g. Bentes, 2011; da Costa Bezerra, 2017; Custódio, 2017). These accounts are incredibly valuable to challenge prejudice, inequality and discrimination as well as to formulate new imaginaries of difference, and I build on these important studies throughout the thesis. At the same time, I argue that these two key aspects of artistic production in favelas (and other peripheral contexts), which are frequently linked to the national, economic and racial backgrounds of cultural producers, are more entangled than most academic and popular accounts make them out to be. In my view, the discursive and practical forms of exchange between representations by local, favela-based actors and ‘outsiders,’ whether Brazilian or foreign, deserve more attention in academic work on favela representations. For this reason, I deliberately selected case studies by artists who come from different backgrounds, to concretely show how this entanglement of relations and representations of inequality functions across the field of artistic favela representations.

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Each chapter describes a different component of the worlding process in which the selected case studies are embedded. After providing a more elaborate theoretical and contextual framework in chapter one, chapter two studies the art historical background of artistic favela representations. Chapter three focuses on favelas in urban imaginaries of Rio de Janeiro, whereas chapter four considers the display of artistic favela representations in Europe. The final chapter looks at how artists born and/or raised in Rio de Janeiro's favelas conceptualize change and transformation through the medium of visual art. In this introduction, I will elaborate on the main arguments presented above by discussing, in turn, two central concepts of the thesis' approach: worlding and complicity.¹ After this conceptual framing, the final section outlines the methodology and provides a more extensive chapter outline.

Worlding

The worlding of favelas can be defined as the process of (re)presenting favelas to the world, by which I refer to a ostensibly global, cosmopolitan (art) audience. Considering that favelas are part of the local and the global periphery, this worlding necessarily implies the transportation of images, ideas, and narratives to audiences that are physically and culturally removed from those represented. Of course, as Spivak (1985, p. 247) and other post-colonial theorists have influentially argued, “the ‘worlding’ of what is today called ‘the Third World’” has a long and highly problematic history. The ways in which the West has depicted, narrated and interpreted images of various ‘Others’ has long been aimed at establishing its own supposed superiority. As Edward Said (2003, p. 5) influentially writes in his study of literary accounts of the Orient: “[A]s much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West.” In my view, similar discursive mechanisms have produced a particular idea of ‘the Favela’ for international (art) audiences, and several key points from Said’s seminal texts resonate strongly with the topic at hand.

First of all, the relation between ‘the Favela’ as idea and object of representation, and the real spaces called favelas deserves scrutiny. Writing about the Orient, Said (2003, p. 5) notes: “There were – and are – cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their

¹ Parts of the section on ‘worlding’ have previously been published in the article “Favelas at the Biennale: Exhibiting Brazilian Informality in Europe” (Kalkman, 2018b).

lives, histories and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that can be said about them in the West.” Similarly, considering artistic favela representations, we should never forget that the ideas and representations in question refer to real places and real people. Discursive practices can have a significant impact on residents’ lives, as several scholars have shown how discriminatory narratives and representational practices directly impact those living in favelas and periphery (e.g. de Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005; Perlman, 2010; Freeman, 2012; Carvalho, 2013; Reyes Novaes, 2014; Robb Larkins, 2015). Nevertheless, what is articulated about favelas does not define what favelas are or how residents experience them. While favelas and the people that inhabit them are very real, there exists no uniform and pure favela reality to be represented. Both within and between favela neighborhoods, we can find stark differences in for example levels of poverty, forms of architecture, geographic setting, access to public services, power struggles, and violence (de Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005; Perlman, 2010). In a similar vein, Said (2003, p. 22-23) argues that “[there has never] been such a thing as a pure, or unconditional, Orient.” For this reason, too much emphasis on ‘realistic’ or ‘authentic’ representations can be counter productive, because it denies the pluriformity and diversity of favela spaces and those who inhabit them.

A second important point, as I argue, is that the discourse around favelas has been produced and distributed through texts and images in a variety of contexts and media (e.g. art, journalism, tourism, policy-making, and different academic disciplines), which influence and reinforce each other. Said (2003, p. 24) describes this as a “complex collective formation” of images, narratives and imaginaries. Because of this, as he writes:

The Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity ‘the Orient’ is in question (Said, 2003, p. 3).

Similarly, representations of favelas are always already embedded in the broader frameworks of thought that have produced ‘the Favela’ as a category: they cannot be considered independently from this discourse (Valladares, 2005). Importantly, this holds not only for the production of artistic representations, but also for subsequent processes of distribution and

public display, which can fundamentally transform art's message and impact. Of course, as the case studies of this thesis will show, these inevitable links to broader discourses and frameworks do not mean that every representation is the same, or that artists have no choice but to repeat clichés (see also Said, 2003, p. 23). It can also, following Homi Bhabha (1994), open up a space of negotiation that is necessarily political, for “[e]ach objective is constructed on the trace of that perspective that it puts under erasure; each political object is determined in relation to the other, and displaced in that critical act.” Evidently, my goal in studying this process of negotiation is not only to see how dominant ideas and narratives are reproduced, but also how they can effectively be challenged. In other words, how can we – the international audience – imagine favelas in a more nuanced manner, and how can our actions support greater inclusion rather a reproduction of socio-spatial inequalities?

Third, Said famously argued that Orientalism is inherently about the positionality of the West and its so-called ‘Others.’ As the chapters of this thesis will show, the worlding of favelas is inextricably connected to broader imaginaries of Brazil and the global South, which are frequently juxtaposed to imaginaries of Europe and the United States. Like the Orient, Brazil has long been imagined as “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said, 2003, p. 1). Since their arrival in the 1500s, Europeans have described Brazil (and South America as a whole) as a wild and savage place, which sparked both fear and fascination (Morais, 2001; Bandeira and Burton, 2011; Burton and Bandeira, 2011). Moreover, as Mignolo (2005, p. xv) influentially argued, over 500 years colonial and later Creole elites formulated the “idea of Latin America.” The remnants of colonial discourses are still evident in current descriptions of the country, for example in the practice of favela tourism (Jaguaribe, 2007, p. 125-151). More generally, histories of colonialism and global inequality continue to have a large impact on Brazilian politics, economy and culture. Importantly, however, since the country's independence in 1822, Brazilian elites, who often descended directly from colonial rulers, have also participated in discrimination on the basis of race, class, region and gender – which resulted in attempts to ‘whiten’ or ‘civilize’ the country (Skidmore, 1993a; Silva Bento, 2002; Valladares, 2005; Mignolo, 2005; Holston, 2008; Olavarria Berenguer, 2015). Even now, Indigenous, Afro-Brazilian and poor populations are often approached by Brazilian media and policy makers as savage, criminal and unwanted, albeit not always explicitly (although the recent election of

Jair Bolsonaro as president certainly marks a return to more overt discrimination in public discourse).

When studying artistic favela representations and their reception, as I argue, it is key to recognize both the persistent inequalities between the global North and the global South, and the widespread inequalities within Brazil. In addition, the idea of Latin Americans as “second-class Europeans,” part of but peripheral to the West should be kept in mind (Mignolo, 2005, p. 64). As we will see, these different scales and types of inequality have a determining impact on how actors in different positions view and interact with each other – which, in turn, impacts the production of knowledge about and images of favelas in local and global contexts. Writing about this topic, several authors differentiate between Brazilian and foreign producers and consumers (e.g. Kertzer, 2014; Perlman, 2010, p. 330), and comment on the “very different social worlds” of those living in favelas and the more affluent target audiences of ‘favela chic’ (Robb Larkins, 2015, p. 84). Both concerns are valid, but I argue that they must be combined and considered in relation to one another. Accordingly, this thesis highlights a triangular relation between three groups that are significant in the process of worlding favelas: favela residents, members of Brazil’s middle- and upper-classes, and foreigners. Of course, we must be careful not to generalize these groups, as each is highly diverse in itself, but I nevertheless argue that this conceptual distinction provides insight in the mechanisms of producing and consuming artistic favela representations, not least because these groups often position themselves in relation to each other.

To elaborate on this, it is useful to return to the concept of worlding, and how it has been employed in recent debates on urban theory (e.g. Simone, 2001; Roy and Ong, 2011; Roy, 2011a; 2011b; Ong, 2011; McCann, Roy and Ward, 2013; Binnie, 2014; Ming Wai Jim, 2014; Baker and Ruming, 2015; Jones and Sanyal, 2015; Furlong and Kooy, 2017; Birdsall and Kalkman, 2018).² Broadly speaking, as Jones and Sanyal (2015, p. 533) note, the concept “has been adopted by contemporary scholars as a means to discuss the ontology of always emerging assemblages” and “as a way of doing critical comparative research whilst ‘provincializing’ urban theory.” For McCann, Roy and Ward (2013, p. 584), “worlding is

² The co-authored article by Carolyn Birdsall and myself was written for a special issue on the theme of urban world-making in the *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*. Both authors developed the idea and revised the introduction text for the special issue. My own contribution focused on the concepts of “world-making” and “worlding” (also drawing from my research for this PhD thesis) and Birdsall’s contribution focused on the summary of the overarching themes/questions and the summary of the individual contributions.

fundamentally concerned with how cities – of both the global North and global South – are represented in the canon of urban studies and its archives of knowledge.” More specifically, the authors employ the concept to foreground and critique a number of oppositions commonly found in academic knowledge production on cities. Indeed, Jennifer Robinson (2006, p. 2) has addressed the tendency to “[divide] the field of urban studies between Western and Other cities: celebrations of urban ‘modernity’ and the promotion of urban development.” Within this framework, as Ananya Roy (2015, p. 2) writes, Western cities (especially those deemed global cities) are generally thought to *produce* urban theory, whereas cities of the global South are seen as the “empirical variations” on these Euro-American models (see also Chakrabarty, 2000; McFarlane, 2008; Roy, 2009; Leitner and Sheppard, 2015). In an attempt to counter these ‘regimes of truth’ – which are inextricably related to the geographies of academic knowledge production – several authors emphasize that *all* cities function as “worlding nodes [...] that create global connections and global regimes of value” (McCann, Roy and Ward, 2013, p. 584; see also Simone, 2001). Accordingly, these authors argue for new geographies of theory, recognizing that “cities of the global South can generate productive and provocative theoretical frameworks for *all* cities” (Roy 2009, p. 820, emphasis in original).

In such attempts to ‘theorize from the South,’ informally-built neighborhoods like favelas have received widespread scholarly attention. As a different form of city building, these territories have been praised for their innovative, flexible and spontaneous architecture (e.g. Brillembourg et al., 2005; Neuwirth, 2005; Koolhaas, 2007). Roy (2011b, p. 227) calls this celebratory tendency within urban studies “subaltern urbanism,” noting how it is dominated by two themes: “economies of entrepreneurialism and political agency.” In Brazil, this tendency to positively validate informal neighborhoods is associated particularly with the hillside favelas of Rio de Janeiro’s south zone (Varley, 2013). Moreover, it intersects with the age-old celebration of cultural expressions of marginalized Brazilians (e.g. via carnival, samba, capoeira) in the country’s identity formation. Chapter four of this study will provide a more in-depth account of the phenomenon of subaltern urbanism, asking how it has impacted art and architecture exhibitions that show favelas in Europe. At this point, however, it should be noted that Roy (2011b) and others have cautioned that these worlding practices easily become paternalistic and idealizing, because they invert and/or generalize the divisions between formal and informal urban areas (e.g. Rao, 2006; Amin, 2013a; Varley, 2011; 2013;

Jones and Sanyal, 2015). In favelas especially, the curious combination of celebration (as ‘the real Brazil’) and stigma (as criminal, violent and poor) is central to the production and display of artistic representations, both at home and abroad.

To challenge these binary frameworks, I follow Roy (2015, p. 8) who argues that we must think in terms of *relationality* and *positionality* rather than oppositional divides between formal and informal urbanism, cities in the global North and the global South, and rich versus poor. Differing local realities should be read as historically-formed inequality, rather than simply empirical variation, which implies examining how and why specific places have come to be (and be known) in certain ways (Roy, 2015). The concept of worlding, as Roy and Ong (2011) employ it, aims to do just that through its focus on the processes and discourses that reproduce (sometimes unwillingly) unequal global relations.

As will be argued in this thesis, this conceptual approach provides valuable insights for the study of art and culture in contexts of inequality. For the topic at hand, two points are particularly relevant. First, the focus on worlding challenges common ideas about favela spaces by emphasizing that they are “worlding nodes [...] that create global connections and global regimes of value” (McCann, Roy and Ward, 2013, p. 584). This highlights local and regional forms of agency without losing sight of deep-seated and persistent inequalities. Accordingly, it also allows the acknowledgment of complexity and shifting positionalities. Ong (2011, p. 9) in particular argues for a “non-ideological formulation of worlding as situated everyday practices” rather than thinking “into opposite sides of class, political, or cultural divides.” Artistic favela representations usually operate across a variety of spatial and social contexts, connecting a diverse range of actors. Focusing too much on ‘dominant’ versus ‘resistant’ positions – while often highlighting very real forms of inequality – might gloss over such practices of collaboration and complicity. We can think here for example of the role of local elites in the global South, or of favela-based artists strategically using the foreign fascination with their neighbourhoods to secure funds and opportunities. To be clear, this is not to deny inequalities or power struggles – which remain the primary focus – but rather to argue that these cannot be framed in absolute positions or dichotomies, implying a more situated and relational approach of globalization and its hierarchies.

Second, the concept of worlding foregrounds the links between artistic and academic representations of favelas, both of which participate in a global circuit of knowledge production. At the outset of this introduction, I highlighted the international fame that Rio de

Janeiro's favelas have gathered. Crucially, as Kertzer (2014, pp. 15-16) notes, this popularity is related to the widespread academic attention to favelas in several scholarly disciplines. A practical example of these relations can be found in artistic favela representations adorning the covers of academic books, for example by artists such as Ração Diniz (Fischer et al., 2014), Grupo Opni (Smith, 2015), Favela Painting (Feireiss, 2011), Morrinho (da Costa Bezerra, 2017), and JR (Hutchison and Haynes, 2012; Rolnik, 2015; Alvarez et al., 2017). Much like Said's analysis of Orientalism, a focus on worlding highlights the collective and multi-disciplinary production of the idea of 'Favela,' rather than studying representations as unrelated, individual occurrences. For example, we can see similarities between scholarly accounts of subaltern urbanism, the commercial validation of favela images both within and outside of Brazil, and government policies acting in favela neighborhoods (Steinbrink, 2014). Importantly, the display and reception of artistic and academic representations takes place primarily in spatial and discursive contexts outside of favela neighbourhoods, but can nevertheless have a tangible impact on these areas. With these entanglements in mind, worlding should be seen as "both an object of analysis and a method of critical deconstruction" (Roy 2011a, p. 314). Following especially Roy's (2011a) theoretical approach, ethical and epistemological questions should be fundamentally intertwined when researching the process of worlding favelas. To elaborate on this, I will now turn to the concept of complicity.

Complicity

As Angelini (2012, p. 3) notes, "Rio favela studies is practically a discipline unto itself, with a vast literature and variety of approaches" (see also Valladares, 2005). Critique of this extensive body of scholarly work is growing among favela residents, some of whom report on feeling like "a rat in a lab" and not seeing concrete improvements as a result of these research practices (Steiker-Ginzberg, 2013; Custódio, 2017, p. 20). Important here is that most of these studies are conducted by scholars that are not from favelas themselves, albeit with some notable exceptions (e.g. de Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005; da Cruz, 2007; De Souza e Silva et al., 2012; Custódio, 2017). These critiques resonate with academic publications about over-researched sites and "research fatigue," for example in the work of Clark (2008), Sukarieh and Tannock (2012), and Neal et al. (2015). For Sukarieh and Tannock (2012, p. 507), this critique is first and foremost related to the "'extractive' models

of university-based and driven research,” in which researchers simply gather their data and leave. At the same time, so-called participatory or action-based methodologies – which are often more time-consuming for participants and not always correspond to local needs – do not necessarily solve the issues mentioned above (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2012; Neal et al., 2015). In favelas and elsewhere, over-research therefore invites reflection on fundamental ethical questions around the impact of scholarly work as well as the relations and communications between researchers and research subjects.

With this caution in mind, the current section will reflect on the question of complicity to theorize how both artists and scholars (including myself) working in favelas contribute to the very inequalities we address. To do so, I will build on literature from various scholarly fields in which the concept of complicity has been employed. The previous section has noted the problematic nature of representations across contexts of (global) inequality, depicting disadvantaged or marginalized subjects for a more privileged audience. Crucially, as Megan Boler (1997) argues about literary representations of war and suffering, the consumption of these far-away images usually remains passive. Without “self-reflective engagement,” as she writes, consumers are free to engage in “a mode of passive empathy that not only frees the reader from blame, but in this case allows the voyeuristic pleasure of listening and judging the other from a position of power/safe distance.” As noted above, while seeing or reading certain representations of suffering might lead to action, this is not necessarily the case. More often, we are “let off the hook, [...] free to move on to the next consumption” (Boler, 1997, p. 261). Accordingly, as a variety of authors have argued, we should acknowledge our complicity in the contents that we study. ‘Moving on to the next consumption’ becomes more difficult when representations include, in Susan Sontag’s (2003, p. 92) words, “a reflection on how our privileges are located on the same map as their suffering.” In the words of Keenan (2002, p. 193), who builds on Spivak (1999): “Underline and acknowledge implication, [Spivak] says, again and again, and acknowledge it again and again, because you can never do it enough.”

A focus on complicity can thus serve to examine and critique how different actors contribute, willingly or not, to various forms of inequality, for example in systems of racism/discrimination (e.g. Probyn, 2004; Ahmed, 2009; 2012; Applebaum, 2010; 2013), representations of ‘Otherness’ (e.g. Marcus, 1997; Mato, 2010), and in ‘favela studies’ specifically (e.g. Freire-Medeiros, 2009, p. 587; Kertzer, 2014, pp. 15-16; Robb Larkins,

2015, p. 161-164; Frenzel, 2016, p. 9-10; Custódio, 2017, p. 17-34). Naturally, merely acknowledging complicity is not enough: it might even be counterproductive. As Barbara Applebaum (2013, p. 24) explains, “confessions of complicity, while seemingly progressive, actually function to demonstrate one’s goodness.” Following Sara Ahmed (2009; 2012) and others, we should therefore ask what the act of acknowledging complicity *performs*. Too often, Ahmed notes in her account of racism in higher education, the acknowledgment of complicity serves to silence discussions about inequality and discrimination. Similarly, Probyn (2004) writes about white voices in debates on racism: “Revelation satiates an urgent need and makes it seem like we’ve arrived somewhere. But arrivals are always already points of departure, the revelation of whiteness must go somewhere else.” In other words, declaring commitment to equality and diversity can be erroneously used as ‘proof’ that action is no longer necessary.

Of course, it can be argued that some degree of complicity with structures of inequality is unavoidable for scholars, regardless of whether they work within and/or outside of the university system. As Özden Firat, De Mul and van Wichelen (2009, p. 10-11) write:

It seems that when we want to involve ourselves in some form of politics, advocacy or representation – albeit ‘symbolic,’ ‘discursive,’ or ‘real’ – complicity cannot be avoided. As such, politics is a site at which complicities are accumulated from a sense of commitment. This acknowledgment of one’s complicity with the structures that one inhabits can be considered the condition of intellectual commitment. Moreover, it is this acknowledgment of complicity which forms the necessary prerequisite for action and politics (Keenan 2002: 193-4). In such a way, intellectual engagement goes hand in hand with complicity and it is only by coming to terms with the latter that committed endeavours in its different manifestations can be productive.

Other authors have used the concept of complicity to describe specific forms of collaboration and compromise they see in their fields of study, for example between varied actors in the cultural field (e.g. Thal, 2008; Kester, 2011, p. 199-210; Ziemer, 2016), focused negotiations between powerful regimes and individuals or communities (e.g. Pickowitz, 2006; Steinmüller, 2013), and the relation between researchers and their interlocutors (Marcus, 1997). In many of these more pragmatic accounts, the concept of complicity thus highlights

how different (groups of) people achieve desired outcomes by consciously negotiating or collaborating with powerful actors.

In the visual arts, the complicity of artists and institutions with the unequal systems of capitalism and imperialism has also been a topic of widespread and heated debate. A number of artists have explicitly staged their complicity with systems of inequality to spark discomfort, shock and even outrage on the part of their audiences. A well-known example of this is Renzo Martens' documentary *Episode III: Enjoy Poverty* (2008), in which he performs a painful reproduction of how aid workers and consumers of images of poverty are implicated in a global system of inequality. For the topic at hand, Martens' film is particularly interesting considering its explicitly unethical statement of complicity. As the artists says: "Sure, [I have been] vain and unethical [in this work], but not more vain or unethical than we all are in the free, or quasi-free consumption of [images of poverty]" (*IDFA 2008 | Interview | Renzo Martens*, 2009, my translation). For many commentators, it is precisely this strategy of shock and unease that moves "toward a new relation to power and knowledge," which is seen here as a political and even ethical strategy (Bruce, 2016, p. 298; see also den Hartog Jager, 2014). Similarly, the work of Spanish artist Santiago Sierra has been celebrated for its "amplifications of the status quo in order to expose its [injustices]" (Bishop, 2004, p. 71). Again, the blunt acknowledgment and staging of complicity here serves to raise critical awareness about different forms of inequality. Here too, however, we might ask how these works can function as constructive "points of departure," rather than a discursive tool to move past discussions of inequality in artistic practices across the world (Probyn, 2004).

More optimistic approaches to complicity can also be found in practices of and writings on contemporary art. Art scholar Johanna Drucker (2005, p. 11), for example, critiques the hypocrisy of not acknowledging complicity:

This admission of complicity, in which self-interest plays a part, rather than a claim to "resistance," or "aloof separation," or "distance," is the starting point of critical awareness. We are all within the ideologies that artistic means bring into focus and form.

Her usage of the concept is principally concerned with criticizing the age-old ideal of artistic autonomy and the highly influential Adornian rhetoric, which she calls "negative aesthetics,"

of critique and oppositionality as art's only way towards socio-political relevance (Drucker, 2005, p. 64). Instead, she argues for embracing complicity: "If we accept the complicit condition of fine art, this may be a moment of superb reinvigoration. The realization that the ground has shifted provides new possibilities" (Drucker, 2005, p. 48). Employing a slightly different focus, art researcher Grant Kester (2004; 2011) also emphasizes pragmatism and effectiveness when studying complicity and the socio-political function of art. As summarized by Smith (2012, p. 36), Kester argues that

contemporary art projects cannot avoid complicity with hegemonic forces structuring the context in which they are created, setting up his subsequent arguments for a middle ground from which to understand the complex politics mobilized in different ways by different forms of collaborative artwork.

In other words, complicity is read here in terms of necessary collaborations, which despite ideological objections can bring about substantial societal change. In this view, some degree of implication with systems of inequality is required when trying to transform these systems from within.

In summary, we see that the concept of complicity serves both to foreground the hypocrisy inherent to many artistic and academic endeavors in contexts of inequality, and to acknowledge what is being achieved in this field despite (and sometimes because of) this problematic condition. A crucial question, then, becomes how to make distinctions between different forms of complicity, so that the concept can remain both critical and constructive. For Lepora and Goodin (2013, p. 5), the concept is too often used as a "catch-all term" used to describe highly different phenomena and situations. In response, their book outlines a philosophical model to make these distinctions, based on four principle factors: "badness of the principal wrongdoing, responsibility for contributory act, extent of contribution, extent of shared purpose with principal wrongdoer" (Lepora and Goodin, 2013, p. 103). Finally, the assessment made based on these factors should then be compared to the possible alternatives, for "[h]owever blameworthy an act might be in itself, it might nonetheless have been the right thing to do, given the alternatives" (Lepora and Goodin, 2013, p. 129). Of course, as the authors recognize, this model is not easily applicable to messy, real-world situations, in which we often deal with overlapping and entangled forms of wrongdoing and inequality. For

example, as noted above building on Ong (2011, p. 7), collaborations in the field of artistic favela representations cannot always “be neatly mapped out in advance as being on the side of power or on the side of resistance, as if positions could be so unproblematically delineated.” Precisely because of this, however, it is crucial to address the different ways in which actors in this field (e.g. foreign artists, favela-based artists, and scholars) are complicit with systems of inequality, as well as which alternatives are available to them.

Returning to how complicity figures in visual art, it is useful to consider two frequently-mentioned goals for both artists and scholars working in contexts of inequality: (1) critically *exposing* unequal systems or structures and (2) actually changing these systems through social and/or political *actions* (Kester, 2011; Bishop, 2012). The chapters of the thesis will analyze how these goals are put into practice in specific projects and artworks, but, for now, I merely wish to raise some critical questions regarding the audience groups addressed with these goals in the case of artistic favela representations. The first goal is most often interpreted as making more affluent Brazilians and/or foreigners aware of an unjust situation, which (supposedly) leads to social help or change in favelas. Put differently, this is art *about* favelas aimed at an outside audience. In contrast, the second goal usually aims at ameliorating the opportunities or living conditions of favela residents directly through the artistic project – and might therefore be described as art *for* favelas. In other words, art as *exposing* is usually directed at a privileged audience, the goal of which would be increased understanding through analytical/imaginative capacities of the audience. Art as *acting*, on the other hand, aims to ‘help’ disadvantaged people through more practical and utilitarian activities. Importantly, this resonates with how “theoretical” and “activist” forms of action tend to be linked to dominant and marginalized groups or sites respectively (Bhabha, 1994, p. 21-22). However, as this thesis will argue, such a distinction is neither self-evident nor value-free, considering how and where agency, knowledge and change are envisioned in socially-engaged art projects. More specifically, I contend that it overestimates the importance of ‘raising awareness’ and fails to critically address the actions of non-favela audiences/producers. In addition, hopes of change through artistic practice tend to gloss over the agency and critical capacities of favela residents. These issues strongly resonate with recent critical debates around socially-engaged art, which will be further introduced in chapter one (e.g. Kester, 2004; 2011; Bishop, 2004; 2006; 2012). In my view, a nuanced

conceptual reading of complicity foregrounds and critiques the tendencies mentioned, providing valuable and necessary insights into these scholarly debates.

In closing this section, I'll return to my own complicity – as a European writing about favelas – in the systems and structures I study. When I started this research project, my main question was how artworks and art projects, by both locals and foreigners, can impact favela spaces. From the outset, my project has thus concentrated on artistic talent and agency in favelas – which I still view as an important subject to be treated in the face of the predominantly negative imagery of these neighborhoods in Brazil and abroad. In addition, my work addresses the question of how metropolitan art institutions and art historical research can engage with artistic production in/from peripheral regions and contexts, since traditional forms of art display and discourse are not always well-equipped for this (Mosquera, 1992; Araeen, 2000; Zijlmans and van Damme, 2008). The contribution of the thesis to this field has been its choice for a comparative yet localized focus (i.e. Rio de Janeiro's favelas) and a strongly interdisciplinary approach, which allow for a nuanced analysis of representations of places and people, while also taking into account their connections to the so-called global art world (see chapter one).

Over time, however, my focus changed slightly, because I increasingly felt that it was not my place, as an outsider, to assess the local contributions of specific projects. Instead, I opted to study the broader national and international contexts in which artistic representations of favelas are shown and seen, in which I took part myself by writing and speaking about favelas in academic contexts. Importantly, these discursive contexts do have an impact on favela spaces, for example by stimulating tourism, influencing policy makers and attracting funds and projects to certain areas (Robb Larkins, 2017; Frenzel, 2016). In this sense, the central concern of the present thesis continues to be the impact of visual art on Rio de Janeiro's favelas, albeit in a more indirect manner. In their paper on over-research, Sukarieh and Tannock (2012, p. 500) note how their interlocutors in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon flagged the need to “[study] not Palestinian refugees themselves but the national and international institutions that control and govern refugee lives.” And while artists or art institutions certainly do not control and govern the lives of favela residents, I have tried to make a similar move in this study, not least because of the lack of impact I foresaw my research having on the lives of favela residents, and in the hope that a (self-)critique of institutional contexts might be more productive.

Methodology and Chapter Outline

This thesis builds on a research methodology developed from combining humanities-based approaches and ethnographic fieldwork, which several authors have flagged as important in the study of socially-engaged artistic practices (Kester, 2011, p. 10; Bishop, 2012, p. 7). Artworks were studied using a combination of visual analysis and a close reading of their exhibition framing (particularly exhibition texts and catalogs). In addition, the popular reception of the works was taken into account by reading numerous reviews and articles in online and print media. Chapter two primarily builds on archival research in libraries, cultural centers and museums in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and the Netherlands.³ For chapters three and five, my ethnographic fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro was of particular significance. During two three-month fieldwork periods in 2015 and 2016 and a one-month follow-up visit in 2017, I carried out in-depth interviews with ten artists/art collectives from Rio de Janeiro's favelas and/or the urban periphery, conducted recorded interviews with other artists and art professionals, held countless informal conversations, and attended a variety of art events, lectures and debates about art and/or socio-economic inequality.⁴ Another central component of the fieldwork was visiting numerous art exhibitions in venues and institutions in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Chapter four deals with artistic displays in Europe, building on research visits to Vienna (2015), Venice (2016) and several Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Amersfoort, the Hague, and Eindhoven) as well as studying the documentation of other European exhibitions.

Building on the previous section, it is important to note that my own positionality had an impact on the ways in which I could conduct this research project on a number of occasions. In Rio de Janeiro, my status as a foreign woman allowed me relatively easy access to art institutions as well as visits to favelas (usually with a local guide). While I obviously occupy a privileged position in the latter context, several interlocutors noted that my somewhat distanced position to Rio's deep-seated inequalities, perceived as non-threatening by actors in power, allowed me to move through these spaces with relative ease. As the thesis

³ In Rio de Janeiro, research was conducted in the Museu de Arte Moderna, the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói, the Biblioteca Nacional, the Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, and the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil. In São Paulo, I visited the archives of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, the Museu Lasar Segall (Biblioteca Jenny K. Segall), and the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo. In the Netherlands, I conducted research at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek and the Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis.

⁴ All personal interviews cited in this thesis were conducted in Portuguese and translated by the author.

repeatedly emphasizes, this is not to say that foreigners play no part in the marginalization of Rio's favelas or that foreign researchers are not complicit in broader inequalities, but simply to make a pragmatic point about how I could personally circulate the spaces I describe in this study. At the same time, however, the above-mentioned research fatigue in favelas caused a weariness and distrust on the part of some artists I contacted, some of whom I did not manage to meet in person. Realizing the importance and legitimacy of these concerns, I changed my research approach and focus towards practices of dissemination and reception both within and outside of Brazil. In Europe, my position as part of the target audience of the exhibitions I analyze was beneficial both in practical and interpretative terms, as seen for example in the number of Dutch reviews I cite throughout the thesis.

In chapter one, the reasoning behind the chosen combination of research methods is asserted in a more thorough contextual and theoretical framework, building on literature from the fields of urban studies, cultural studies, art history, art theory, anthropology, and geography. The chapter asks how art production in and about contexts of inequality can be best considered by scholars, arguing for a broad theoretical grounding and an interdisciplinary approach. It starts by describing the societal position and marginalization of Rio de Janeiro's favelas, with particular attention for the representation of favelas and its commercialization in recent years. After this, it looks at how scholars have theorized and approached the role of art in urban imaginaries as well as in urban development. Finally, debates around the so-called globalized art world are introduced, focusing particularly on art's socio-political role or function. Throughout the three sections, I will further introduce three groups of actors that define and negotiate the artistic worlding of Rio de Janeiro's favelas: favela residents, middle- and upper-class Brazilians, and foreigners. Rather than a dualistic distinction between favela residents and outsiders, or Brazilians and foreigners, the chapter contends that such a tripartite approach allows for a more nuanced account of how favelas are being represented in art and how these representations are displayed and received.

The second chapter establishes the historical context of artistic favela representations, which has had a fundamental impact on how twenty-first century favela representations are conceptualized, framed, and interpreted, both within and outside of Brazil. The chapter outlines how favelas, as real and symbolic territories, have long appeared in (artistic) narratives and imaginaries of Brazilian identity. To do so, I consider a number of successful Brazilian artists, namely Tarsila do Amaral, Candido Portinari, Lasar Segall and Helio

Oiticica, who've all found artistic inspiration in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Building on the ample scholarly and popular attention these artists have received both in Brazil and abroad, my goal is to draw out some of the continuities found in artistic favela representations throughout the twentieth century – which is important for two reasons. First, knowledge of this historical background contextualizes and clarifies the positive validation attached to favelas in more recent engagements. Second, it discerns and foregrounds the multiple scales of inequality at play in the worlding of Rio de Janeiro's favelas.

Chapter three revisits two seemingly contradictory narratives that have long dominated the urban imaginary of Rio de Janeiro, namely that of the 'marvelous' and the 'divided' city. Favelas play a role in both narratives, and the chapter examines how artworks can – but also often fail to – provide new perspectives on these imaginaries by focusing on representations of Rio's landscape, its public spaces and its inhabitants. In Rio de Janeiro, as I argue, 'giving visibility' to socio-economic inequality (and especially favelas) is particularly complex because the city's poor are at the same time hyper-visible and hidden, incorporated and excluded in dominant imaginaries of the city. In addition, it matters a great deal where, how and for whom artistic favela representations are shown. Many artists working in or with favelas hope to facilitate points of contact between different groups of people in the city, and I will pay particular attention to how these audiences are envisioned and the ways in which artists try to reach them. Building on my ethnographic fieldwork, I show that creating contact zones is harder than it seems because Rio de Janeiro is fundamentally divided, but not in the ways in which it is usually imagined to be by dominant narratives and media representations.

In chapter four, I look at how artistic favela representations have been exhibited in European exhibitions. My goal here is, first and foremost, to acknowledge that these practices are ethically problematic, as they build on a long history of exoticism and inequality. However, I also aim to look beyond the initial 'moral outrage' about the exoticist, exploitative and spectacular nature of artistic favela displays to critically reflect on how and why the European art world engages with these neighbourhoods. To do so, I look at the broader discourses and narratives that inform and frame these exhibitions and their media reception. My goal is to challenge some of the assumptions that frequently underlie artistic representations of favelas as so-called informal neighborhoods in the global South, most notably the idea that favelas are 'quintessentially Brazilian,' and that the global North can 'learn from favelas' when searching alternatives to the forms of city-building that typify

modernity and global capitalism. More broadly speaking, I seek to challenge the idea of ‘the Favela’ as a separate category – for this is what allows these images to be used in a symbolic and instrumental manner.

Chapter five builds on the analysis of narratives and discourses provided in the previous chapters, but draws more explicitly on my ethnographic fieldwork. The chapter starts from the premise that artistic practices both reproduce and challenge existing inequalities, and highlights how this reality takes shape in social situations and relations, as described by artists born and/or raised in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas. Throughout the chapter, two well-known components of the art world will therefore repeatedly come to the fore: its elitism, exclusion and commercialization, and its potential for resistance, counter-hegemony and alternative practices/perspectives. While these two aspects may seem contradictory, the chapter will show how artists from Rio de Janeiro’s favelas and periphery employ different strategies and tactics to move through and around these extremes, negotiating their constantly shifting position in relation to them. In doing so, the analysis not only provides a different perspective on the potentially transformative effects of artistic practice in unequal contexts, but also makes more concrete previously expressed critiques of Rio de Janeiro as a ‘divided city.’

Starting from specific artworks depicting favelas, the goal of my thesis is to describe what might be called the “extended field” of these artistic practices: the social, economic, political and cultural practices and discourses art is entangled with and acts upon (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 32). Each of the chapters considers a different aspect of this field, and can therefore be read separately. Taken together, I argue that these different perspectives provide new insights in the two goals for artistic practice discussed in this introduction: (1) critically addressing and exposing unjust and unequal realities and (2) imagining or enacting new and better ways to exist within them.