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Worlding Rio de Janeiro's favelas

Relations and representations of socio-spatial inequality in visual art

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Publication date

2019

Document Version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Kalkman, A. S. (2019). *Worlding Rio de Janeiro's favelas: Relations and representations of socio-spatial inequality in visual art*.

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1. Favela, City, Art, World: Contexts and Concepts

Assumir ambivalências não significa aceitar conformisticamente todo esse estado de coisas; ao contrário, aspira-se então a coloca-lo em questão.

Helio Oiticica (1973, qtd. in Salomão, 2015 p. 44)¹

In 2012, when I was first conducting fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro, the founder of the Morrinho project Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2012) said something that changed my thinking about favela representations:

The favela for me is a totality. [...] It is a labyrinth of secrets, full of secrets. Falling, getting up, success, poverty, misery, happiness, joy, luck. The favela has everything in positivity and negativity; it depends on how you see it.

This statement points to two important truths around which this first chapter centers. First, it highlights the variety and diversity of Rio de Janeiro's favelas, inextricably related to their scale and the number of people living in them. For this reason, an all-encompassing, 'realistic' representation of favelas is impossible – hence the elusiveness identified by Souza de Oliveira. Second, it shows the importance of perspective. In my view, the focus on 'how you see' the favela not only refers to which aspects of favela life we focus on, but also to questions such as: where is the representation shown? Which texts and explanations accompany it? Who is watching? In this chapter, my goal is to elaborate on these points by introducing the contexts and concepts on which the rest of the thesis will build in its approach to artistic favela representations.

Following geographer Harriet Hawkins (2014, p. 10, emphasis added) and others, my aim in this thesis is to study "what art can *do* (rather than what it means) and also what it can set in motion" in the specific context of Rio de Janeiro (see also Tanner and Osborne, 2007;

¹ Translation: "To assume ambivalences does not mean accepting conformistically the entire state of things; on the contrary, it hopes to call things into question."

Jones, 2011). Building on the concept of worlding as defined in the introduction, I argue that a focus on relationality is key to do so. In his Deleuzian take on contemporary art, Simon O'Sullivan (2006) focuses on art's performative qualities and the endless number of connections to ideas, practices and people outside of art proper. He calls this the "extended field" of artistic practice:

An art practice is a fluid, dynamic system always in connection with a number of different regimes and registers and always in contact with an outside however this latter is theorised. What an art practice 'is' then is defined by its outermost edge, its boundary line or simply its line of flight, understood as the furthest point from within its territory. Indeed the artist, when he or she is an artist, is this line of flight, or more accurately operates on this line and at this edge. An art practice is then a specifically open system in this sense, one that changes its nature as the number of its dimensions increase (as it crosses into other milieus) (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 32).

This quotation strongly resonates with the approach proposed in this thesis because of its focus on movement, expansion, territory, boundaries, possibilities and interconnections. In this chapter, the extended field of artistic favela representations is examined by discussing the different spatial contexts in which these representations are produced, displayed and received: favelas, the city and the art world. To do so, I build on literature from urban studies, cultural studies, art history, art theory, anthropology, and geography. This broad focus will draw out important interconnections and contradictions, emphasizing the status of these artistic representations as both aesthetic and socio-political occurrences.

Most importantly, the chapter examines the triangular relation between favela residents, middle- and upper-class Brazilians, and foreigners – which will remain central in the chapters to come. While each of these groups is highly diverse, I argue that the distinction is useful when considering the ethical and epistemological questions raised by artistic favela representations. The three groups possess distinct forms of agency in the varied socio-spatial contexts in which artistic favela representations are produced, displayed and interpreted, and often position themselves in relation to each other. Finally, as an analytical focal point, this relation highlights the mutual forms of exchange and interaction between local, regional and global processes.

I start this chapter in Rio de Janeiro, looking at how favelas have been represented over time and linking this to broader debates on urban informality. Central to this section will be the position of favelas in Rio de Janeiro and the world: I'm arguing specifically against the idea of favelas as isolated territories in a spatially 'divided' city.² The second section considers art and culture in cities in a broad sense, discussing how the economic, social and political impact of art has been theorized. While this is often framed in terms of dominating versus resistant practices, I call for a more nuanced, entangled approach of these two extreme functions that art might have in urban contexts. In the third and final section, I look at art and globalization, highlighting the various forms of exclusion that characterize art historical canons, institutions and discourses, but also the ways in which artists and scholars have contested these exclusionary realities. The conclusion will connect the arguments presented and offer methodological and interpretative guidelines for analyzing art projects in and about Rio's favelas.

Favelas/City

In 2014 the Rio de Janeiro-based NGO CatComm (2014) published an online article suggesting that the word favela can and should not be translated. Discussing the most common translations – namely slum, squatter settlement, shantytown, and ghetto – the organization argued that these terms' sole focus on negativity and deficiency (i.e. describing only what favelas lack, not what they have) gives an incomplete and simplified impression. Academics have also criticized the universal and uncritical use of words such as slum, arguing that “a generally negative universal imagery can be dangerous” (Gilbert, 2007, p. 698; see also Mayne, 2017). So what is a favela, if not a slum or a squatter settlement? Referring to the word 'slum,' Gilbert (2007) notes that we should be careful with strict, quantifiable definitions. As noted, favelas are highly heterogeneous, with different geographic settings, levels of poverty, access to public services, and levels of consolidation. The sheer numbers in Rio de Janeiro alone – with over 700 favelas, housing 1.4 million people – make this diversity abundantly clear (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2010). Nevertheless, common features can be addressed. Favelas are low-income or working-

² Small parts of this section have previously been published in the book chapters “On or Beyond the Map? Google Maps and Street View in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas” (Kalkman, 2018a) and “Exhibitions in a 'Divided' City: Socio-spatial Inequality and the Display of Contemporary Art in Rio de Janeiro” (Kalkman, 2019).

class neighborhoods in Brazilian cities that are, at least partly, built informally. Because of this, many favelas have a recognizable, self-built architecture (Berenstein Jacques, 2001; 2011; Varley, 2013, p. 8). Finally, favelas are integral and constitutive parts of Brazilian cities, despite being strongly stigmatized and discriminated against in the city at large (de Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005; Perlman, 2010; de Souza e Silva et al., 2012).

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, Rio de Janeiro's favelas have long been a topic of journalistic and scholarly fascination. As a starting point for this section, it is therefore useful to consider three 'dogmas' in academic writing about favelas, as recognized by Valladares (2005, pp. 148-152). First, favelas tend to be considered as a distinct category, as territories that are highly specific and singular, unlike anything else. Perhaps unwillingly, this creates the idea of the favela and the formal city as opposites, marked by clearly identifiable boundaries. Second, the favela is presented as the *locus* of poverty while, in the words of Janice Perlman (2010, p. 30), "not all of the people living in favelas are poor, and not all the urban poor live in favelas." Third, these heterogeneous places are discussed as "as singular," speaking of '*the Favela*' rather than of specific communities (Valladares, 2005, p. 151, my translation). To a certain extent, most studies focusing on favelas are guilty of reinforcing these dogmas. This thesis takes the favela as a location for and topic of visual art, and thereby also arguably treats the favela as a category separate from the rest of the city. Nevertheless, my central focus will be the relations between favelas and other neighborhoods, cities and countries. To do so, I build on a range of scholarly work that has argued for seeing favelas not as isolated 'problem areas,' but as a physical manifestation of the social and economic inequalities that characterize Rio de Janeiro *as a whole* and that affect the daily lives of all *Cariocas* (Rio natives), albeit in distinct ways and with different levels of intensity (e.g. Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005, p. 91; Jaguaribe and Salmon, 2012, p. 240).

The story of the 'first favela' is often repeated: in 1895, soldiers returned from the war in Canudos and, when the government failed to provide housing for them, settled on a hillside in Rio de Janeiro's port area, which they dubbed *Morro da Favella*. Only in the 1920s did the name favela become the common denominator for poor, self-built communities in Rio, which became more prevalent during this period due to the radical renovation of the city center by mayor Pereira Passos in the 1910s (Needell, 1984; Benchimol, 1992; Costa Mattos, 2009; Nunes de Azevedo, 2003; de Almeida Abreu, 2003). Importantly, however, these were

certainly not the first informal or poor settlements in the area. As Fischer (2014, p. 13-14) writes:

[W]ritings from the early twentieth century about Brazil's favelas and *mocambos* (shacks) suggest that the terms were invented not so much to describe the places where the poor lived, as to spell out the relationship between such places and their surrounding cities. While shacks and informal communities had existed for centuries, their emergence as a category of urban pathology largely depended on Brazil's integration into international debates about poverty, sanitation, racial degeneracy, and urbanism.

In other words, favelas only became known as a distinctive category when local government officials felt they had to be addressed as an urban problem.

Early public discourse and journalistic accounts described favelas as health hazards and hotbeds of criminality (Valladares, 2005; Costa Mattos, 2009). These discriminatory discourses were based on a combination of racist and classist prejudice, and continue to have a profound and violent impact on the daily life of favela inhabitants. Favela residents – especially young black men – are frequent victims of targeted police violence and *balas perdidas* (stray bullets). As several authors note, the mainstream media play a huge role in generating political and public support for such violent police operations (Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005; Amaral, 2010; Leu, 2010; McCann, 2014; Robb Larkins, 2015). Importantly, mainstream media coverage of violence in favelas is remarkably different from that of violence in the *asfalto*. In 2004, for example, widespread media attention for the death of a middle-class motorcyclist near the favela Rocinha stood in stark contrast to the general lack of coverage for victims from favelas during the same incident (de Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005, p. 59). De Souza e Silva and Barbosa (2005, p. 59, my translation) see this incident as exemplary of a broader discourse in which favelas and their inhabitants are systematically excluded from urban space and citizenship, where violence against residents of the formal city is “unacceptable,” while violence against favela residents is deemed “inevitable.” Similar discourses of differentiation can be found in government statements and policies, as noted by Lacerda (2015).

Crucially, however, favela-based journalism, activism and research have been actively fighting these stereotypical and discriminatory discourses in recent years (da Cruz, 2007; Bentes, 2011; 2013; de Souza e Silva et al., 2012; Custódio, 2014; 2017; Baroni, 2015; Cangialosi, 2015; Holmes, 2016). In a number of cases, this led to widespread protests *and* to more nuanced accounts in mainstream media outlets. In 2013, for example, the disappearance of Amarildo Dias de Souza, resident of the favela Rocinha, was widely shared on social media with the slogan *Cadê o Amarildo?* (where is Amarildo?). In a broader sense, a considerable amount of scientific, journalistic and artistic books and articles by favela residents have been published, countering both stereotypical discourses and the social reality of outsiders representing favelas (e.g. de Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005; *Imagens do Povo*, 2011a; de Souza e Silva et al., 2012; Diniz, R., 2015; Diniz and McCann, 2014; *Observatório de Favelas*, 2017). In other words, while discriminatory discourses concerning favelas continue to dominate public debates, they do not go uncontested. A variety of organizations from favelas and the periphery are finding innovative ways to be heard in public debates, examples of which are *Observatório de Favelas*, *Imagens do Povo*, *Coletivo Papo Reto*, *Voz das Comunidades*, *Afro-Reggae*, *CUFA* and *Agência de Notícias das Favelas*. Many of the artistic practices studied in this thesis can be considered part of this field of production, either through direct collaborations with the organizations mentioned or by sharing the common goal of countering favela stereotypes and transforming unequal social relations in the city.

Importantly for the topic at hand, both dominant and counter discourses surrounding favelas often contain a strong aesthetic focus. As recognized by several authors, favelas have long been considered aesthetic stains on the *cidade maravilhosa* (marvelous city) that Rio de Janeiro aspires to be (Valladares, 2005; Berenstein Jacques, 2005; Lopes de Souza, 2012; Fisher, 2014; see also chapter three). In 1926, physician Mattos Pimenta described favelas as “a ruthless crime against aesthetics” (Queiroz Ribeiro and Corrêa do Lago, 2001, p. 39). In this narrative, favelas needed to be ‘dealt with’ not because of the difficult living circumstances of their inhabitants, but because they threatened rich inhabitants, spoiled their views and blemished the city’s reputation. Even today, the focus on ‘prettifying’ the city at the expense of favela residents is an often-heard critique of public policies in favelas, ranging from home evictions and so-called neighborhood upgrading (e.g. for cable cars, sound walls) to the *Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora* (Pacification Police Units, or UPPs) (Freeman, 2012; Oosterbaan and van Wijk, 2014; Valle Menezes, 2014; Faulhaber and Azevedo, 2015).

It also explains why most of these policies, especially those directly related to the mega-events organized in Rio in recent years, are mainly focused on favelas located in close proximity to affluent areas (Magalhães, 2013; Steinbrink, 2014; Richmond and Garmany, 2016; Freeman and Burgos, 2017).

However, the aesthetic denunciation of Rio's favelas has long existed in parallel to an aesthetic and cultural validation of these territories. Celebrations of marginalized cultural expressions have a long history in Brazil, in which a key moment is Oswald de Andrade's (2017) *Manifesto Antropófago*, first published in 1928. This manifesto, which will be further explored in the third section of this chapter, pleads for 'devouring' different cultural influences to create an authentically Brazilian style (de Andrade, 2017; Nunes, 2004). Building and expanding on this idea, a variety of intellectuals, journalists and artists have explored the relations between popular and elite culture in Brazil, notable examples of which are Gilberto Freyre (1969), Paulo Freire (2009), Augusto Boal (2000), Glauber Rocha (1965), Ferreira Gullar (1978; 2002), Hélio Oiticica (2004), and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (2006). Simone Osthoff (2015, p. 252) summarizes this vast body of literature as follows: "More than a few Brazilian artists enlisted popular culture as a revolutionary resource and employed the body-centered metaphors of cannibalism, carnival, and hunger in order to simultaneously incorporate the foreign into the familiar and subvert traditional cultural hierarchies." Combined with the explicit political strategy under Getúlio Vargas to achieve this in the 1930s and 1940s, these writings turned popular cultural expressions such as samba and carnival into globally appreciated symbols of *Brasilidade* (Brazilianness) (Jackson, 1994; Williams, 2001).

This particular combination of stigmatization and fascination can be considered unique to the Brazilian context, connected to the country's national identity as well as its cultural and political history. Chapter two will highlight that representations of favelas have long been produced and interpreted within this "complex state of affairs, where exclusion and inclusion go hand in hand" (Meira Monteiro, 2015, p. xv). At the same time, the local and global interest in favelas resonates with other forms of middle and upper-class fascination with poor neighborhoods, as seen for example in Victorian 'slumming,' nineteenth century (photo)journalism and literature, and European primitivism (Bettez Halnon, 2002; Freire-Medeiros, 2013; Nochlin, 2018). We can also link this practices to images of 'suffering' in a more general sense, a topic that has raised extensive scholarly debate. As Sontag (2003, p.

67) notes, for example, the idea “[t]hat a gory battlescape could be beautiful – in the sublime or awesome or tragic register of the beautiful – is a commonplace about images of war made by artists.” Romanticized, sensationalist and/or aesthetic depictions of poverty, violence and hardship have long made artistic careers. In addition, these images have long performed societal functions, ranging from religious conversion to political propaganda, charity and progressive reform (Sontag, 2003; Nochlin, 2018).

For Luc Boltanski (1999, p. 3), who builds on the work of philosopher Hannah Arendt, a fundamental characteristic of modern images of suffering is “a distinction between those who suffer and those who do not,” which leads to a situation in which suffering becomes an object of spectacle. This conceptual distinction *and* physical distance between observer and sufferer has become ever more prominent, embodied by privileged, first-world spectators passively watching far-away ‘Others’ suffer from the comfort of their living rooms (Chouliaraki, 2006). Globally disseminated favela images might be considered in similar terms, although they do not necessarily only depict hardship and poverty. Here too, however, distanced audiences might feel the “bliss to realize one’s identity” (Boltanski, 1999, p. 103). For this reason, as argued in the introduction, it is crucial to not only ‘zoom in’ on the reality of favela spaces, but to also show that while the observed and the spectator are not in the same position, they are connected through individual acts and collective systems of complicity (Boltanski, 1999, p. 67; Sontag, 2003, p. 92).

Such observations are especially poignant considering the increasing commercialization of images of marginalized urban areas. Several authors acknowledge the “potential for marginalization to be subsumed in consumption” in for example global hip hop (Miles, 2005, p. 892; see also Zukin, 1995; 2010; Jaffe, 2012). Similarly, representations of favelas are now reaching ever-larger audiences in for example tourism and cinema, and the term favela is now employed in a variety of contexts that have little or nothing to do with actual favela neighborhoods, such as European nightclubs and restaurants (Freire-Medeiros, 2007a; 2009; 2011; 2013; Jaguaribe, 2004; 2014; Jaguaribe and Hetherington, 2004; Jaguaribe and Salmon, 2012; Frisch, 2012; Kertzer, 2014; Pueo Wood, 2014; Robb Larkins, 2015; Freire-Medeiros and Valle Menezes, 2016; Frenzel, 2016). This unprecedented level of international visibility, often described under the term ‘favela chic,’ has transformed ‘the favela’ into a globally recognized sign (Steinbrink, 2014; Kertzer, 2014; Robb Larkins, 2015; Kalkman, 2018a). As anthropologist Bianca Freire-Medeiros argues (2009, pp. 581-583) the

favela has been established as a Brazilian “trademark” or “brand,” which is “capable of transcending geographical and territorial referentials, promoting Brazil as well as anything wishing to present itself as ‘alternative,’ ‘hip,’ ‘recycled.’” Again, what we see here is a contradictory combination of imaginaries, emphasizing on the one hand community spirit and popular culture, and, on the other, danger, lawlessness and violence (Jaguaribe, 2004; Peixoto, 2007; Freire-Medeiros, 2007a; Williams, 2008; Freire-Medeiros, 2009). As summarized by media scholar Beatriz Jaguaribe (2004, p. 327): “Celebratory versions of the favela as a samba community composing carnival lyrics coexist with images of armed adolescents shooting police forces during drug raids.”

In some scholarly writing, we can see a similar distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ descriptions of informally-built, marginalized urban areas worldwide. Mike Davis’ (2006, p. 47; p. 138) book *Planet of Slums* is a well-known example of the ‘negative view,’ discussing ‘slums’ in rather sensationalist terms such as “human dump[s]” or “stinking mountains of shit.” In the words of Teresa Caldeira (2008, p. 3), Davis here “[reduces] the most diverse urban housing conditions of the poor worldwide to a single symbol of the worst: the slum.” Moreover, Davis (2006, p. 98; p. 206) claims that the consequence of the continuous growth of informal neighborhoods throughout the global South is that rich and poor will enter “a ceaseless social war” in which the only future possible is one of “Orwellian” private security in rich areas and absolute chaos in the slums. Here too, the idea of cities ‘divided’ between slums and formally-built neighborhoods is strongly present. Turning to the ‘positive’ images, the introduction to this thesis already addressed what Ananya Roy (2011b) calls “subaltern urbanism”: the academic tendency to celebrate informal neighborhoods for their spontaneity, creativity, possibility and dynamics (e.g. Turner, 1976; de Soto, 2000; Brillembourg et al., 2005; Neuwirth, 2006; Koolhaas, 2007). No longer a problem to urbanism, informality is here seen as a solution. As the above-mentioned quotation by Freire-Medeiros indicates, these arguments are now also commonplace in the context of favelas.

While such positive accounts undoubtedly are an improvement compared to overtly negative images and simplistic idealizations, they should also be addressed critically. Overemphasizing creativity, possibility and political agency risks new forms of idealization, forgetting that most of these creative solutions are born out of sheer necessity (Rao, 2006; Roy, 2011b; Varley, 2013). Also, by speaking in terms of “kinetic” versus “static” cities to

denote informally and formally-built areas respectively, the absolute distinction between the formal and the informal city is maintained (Mehrotra, 2010, p. xii; see for critiques of this tendency: Roy, 2011b; Amin, 2013a; Varley, 2013). A similar point can be made regarding the negative stereotypes surrounding favelas. Many favelas do struggle with violence, have precarious housing conditions and/or lack basic services. In addition, a relation between poverty, marginality and violence certainly exists, albeit not in a straightforward, causal manner (Koonings, 1999; Koonings and Kruijt, 2007; 2015). However, these conditions are not all-encompassing *and* they are the direct result of political, economic and social decisions that affect the city as a whole, not just favelas.

Fortunately, scholars from various disciplines have argued for a more nuanced approach to the Rio context from the 1970s onwards, recognizing favelas as integral and constitutive parts of the city (e.g. Machado da Silva, 1971; Leeds and Leeds, 1978; Perlman, 1979; Pino, 1996; 1997; de Souza e Silva, 2005).³ More recently, academics across the world have taken up the task to rethink divisions between formal and informal spaces, often as part of the larger project of ‘provincializing’ urban theory described in the introduction (e.g. Roy and Alsayyad, 2004; Roy, 2005; Yiftachel, 2009; Roy, 2011b; MacFarlane and Waibel, 2012; Vasudevan, 2014). Building on this diverse body of literature, this thesis challenges the oppositional view of favelas vs. *asfalto*, because it perpetuates imaginaries of divisions and difference. As geographers Jailson de Souza e Silva and Jorge Luiz Barbosa (2005, p. 90, emphasis in original, my translation) argue:

To talk about the future of the favelas is a task that requires, first and foremost, not dissociating their development with that of the city as a whole. The first step is to finish with the relation *favela* [versus] *asfalto*. A truly democratic recognition of the right to the city is brought about by a new appropriation of urban space. The city, before anything else, is *only one*.

In other words, favelas are “neither a problem, nor a solution”; they are “one of the bluntest expressions of the inequalities that mark [Brazilian society]” (de Souza e Silva and Barbosa, 2005, p. 91, my translation).

³ A more extensive overview of this body of literature is provided by Valladares (2005, p. 129-130).

As we will see, artistic favela representations often strive to provide an alternative to the simplified and discriminatory imagery of favelas, but also reproduce the stereotypical imaginaries outlined in this section. In my view, two factors are particularly important to avoid common pitfalls. First, the diversity between and within specific neighborhoods in Rio should be acknowledged, ranging from gated communities for the super-rich to modest working class areas and highly precarious settlements. Crucially, this diversity characterizes both the formal and the informal city. Second, the paradoxical combination of widespread stigma and validation should be kept in mind, as it significantly complicates challenging discriminatory discourses. Conflicting yet entangled narratives profoundly impact the favela imaginaries of middle- and upper-class Brazilians and foreigners, although the visual and discursive registers on which these groups rely are not always the same. Accordingly, we need to take into account that the city is unequal yet interconnected, and that imaginaries and realities of urban divisions are varied, closely intertwined and mutually influential.

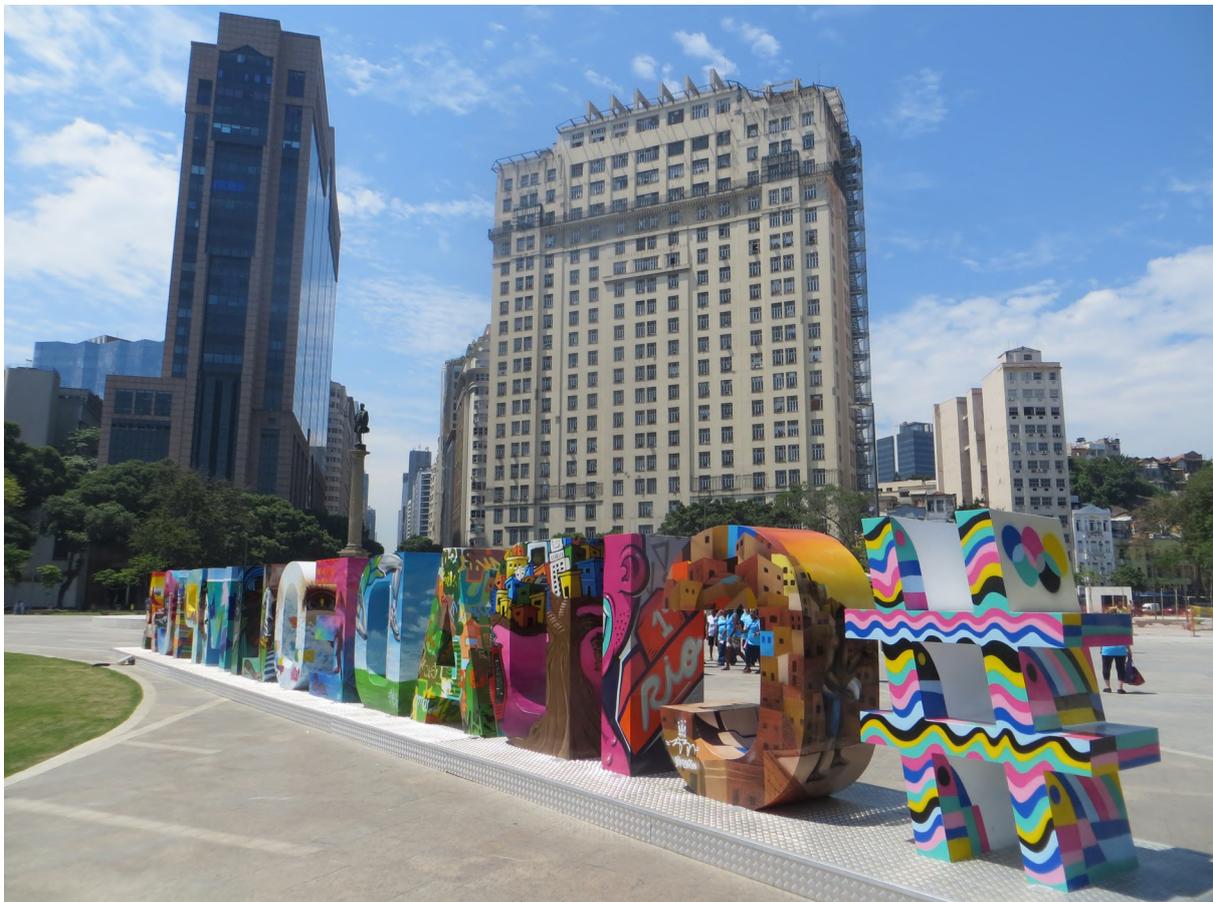


Fig. 1.1. Letters spelling #Cidade Olimpica (Olympic City), Praca Mauá, Rio de Janeiro (photo: Simone Kalkman, 2016).

City/Art

The idea that art and culture can actively impact the physical form as well as the imaginary of cities is widely discussed in academic debates (e.g. Zukin, 1995; 2010; Deutsche, 1996; Miles, 1997; Yúdice, 2003; Sharp et al., 2005; Pinder, 2005; 2008; Mouffe, 2007; Biron, 2009; Young and Holmes, 2010; Jones, 2011; Hawkins, 2013; 2014; Iveson, 2013). Urban sociologist Sharon Zukin, for example, discusses how cultures in cities, broadly defined as encompassing cultural products in urban space as well as the aesthetic ‘look and feel’ of the city, do not only reflect political and economic power relations, but also actively contribute to them (Zukin, 1995). As she writes, “culture is [...] a powerful means of controlling cities. As a source of images and memories, it symbolizes ‘who belongs’ in specific places” (Zukin, 1995, p. 1). In this section, I will consider the economic, social and political role of art in cities, focusing on relations and representations of inequality. Central to this discussion will be a distinction that frequently surfaces in these debates, namely art’s capacity to either legitimize and reinforce dominant power relations or to challenge them. While the section recognizes both of these functions for art in cities, it argues that too strong a juxtaposition between ‘compliance’ and ‘resistance’ obscures the messy realities and strategic necessities of artistic practice.

On the one hand, art is seen as capable of reproducing, legitimizing and aestheticizing existing power relations and inequalities (e.g. Zukin, 1995; Deutsche, 1996; Miles, 1997; Mathews, 2010, p. 672). Following the so-called creative cities-paradigm of Richard Florida (2002) and others, it is widely recognized in urban policy-making that art, culture and creativity have an active role in urban (re)development. At the same time, these theories have been heavily criticized, based on their instrumentalization of culture, the growing focus on (economic) competitiveness, and the fact that they tend to increase socio-economic inequalities, for example through gentrification (e.g. Gibson and Klocker, 2005; Miles and Paddison, 2005; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008; Krätke, 2010; Booyens, 2012; Borén and Young, 2013; Sacco et al., 2014). Art and culture can actively contribute to neoliberal city planning and corporate interests, even while being marketed as promoting social inclusion. As summarized by Jamie Peck (2011, p. 63), creative city policies “‘accessorize’ neoliberal urbanism in a manner befitting prevailing cultural tropes of competitive cosmopolitanism.” In Rio, we for example see that policies aimed at art and culture, tourism and public security have worked towards incorporating favelas into neoliberal forms of city-branding, serving to

legitimize state and police violence in favelas and other working class neighborhoods (Freeman, 2012; Steinbrink, 2014; Pereira Ribeiro and Santos da Silva, 2014) (fig. 1.1).

On the other hand, many authors defend the capacity of art to transform or redefine power relations in urban space through the production of alternative images and symbols (e.g. Zukin, 1995; Pinder 2005, 2008; Jones, 2011; Iveson, 2013; da Costa Bezerra, 2017). This function of resistance is often ascribed to smaller-scale artworks and practices. As Miles (2005, p. 905) writes, art might “[imagine] futures other than those prescribed by capital or its out-sourced providers of governmental services in a globalised economy.” For Chantal Mouffe (2007, p. 5), “we need to see [artistic activism] as counter-hegemonic interventions whose objective is to occupy the public space in order to disrupt the smooth image that corporate capitalism is trying to spread, bringing to the fore its repressive character.” Crucially, as Mouffe (2007, p. 5) and others assert, this understanding does not require “a total break with the existing state of affairs,” which is impossible within current societies. Nevertheless, art practices are frequently ascribed the capacity of “subverting” dominant structures and imaginaries (Mouffe, 2007, p. 5). For example, in Rio de Janeiro a number of authors have defended the idea that artistic practices can challenge dominant, discriminatory narratives surrounding favelas, by foregrounding different stories, playing with commonly-held beliefs and questioning unjust representations (e.g. Bentes, 2011; da Costa Bezerra, 2017; Angelini, 2015).

While these represent two rather different takes on the role of art in cities, I will argue that they often overlap in practice. In Rio de Janeiro, we can think for example of the installation that the Morrinho Project, a grassroots cultural project from the favela Pereira da Silva, made for the Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) in 2013. This museum was built as part of the large-scale urban redevelopment program Porto Maravilha, and is often criticized as being a ‘white elephant.’ While this installation was thus made by and directly benefited a grassroots, favela-based artist collective, it also arguably supports both an institution with some problematic characteristics and the superficial celebration of favela architecture (da Costa Bezerra, 2017, p. 125-131). Another example can be found in the project *Favela Painting*, which uses participatory methods to aestheticize public spaces in favelas with the broader aim of challenging their stigmatized reputation in the city at large. As stated in their Kickstarter-campaign:

Visual beautification, job creation and positive attention help boost pride and self-esteem and help bridge social gaps [...] The projects create a voice for the inhabitants, influence public opinion and media, and can help to change perceptions and remove stigma (Favela Painting, 2014).

The project did much to bring international attention to Rio's favelas and employed local people – some of whom traveled internationally with the project. However, it also aestheticizes favela spaces through an intervention that remains mainly cosmetic. Building on and expanding Aihwa Ong's (2011, p. 9) account of worlding, I therefore argue that practices like these “cannot be neatly mapped out in advance as being on the side of power or on the side of resistance.”

To elaborate on this point, it is useful to consider recent scholarly debates on the socio-political relevance of art and the relation art has to marginalized communities. Since the 1990s, projects with a bottom-up approach, in which “creative resources [are employed] to deal with exclusion, marginalization, and lack of opportunities,” have received widespread attention in art history and art theory (Yúdice, 2009, p. 211). In 1995, Suzanne Lacy (1995) coined the term “New Genre Public Art” to describe such projects, while others have preferred terms such as participatory art, socially-engaged art, community or community-based art, and/or relational aesthetics. Rather than a material object with aesthetic qualities, these art practices are often defined as ‘projects,’ hoping to exert a more direct, tangible influence on the contexts in which they operate. Since the early 2000s, art scholars Claire Bishop and Grant Kester have emerged as the dominant voices in scholarly debates on this topic, with divergent views on the phenomenon. Bishop (2004; 2006; 2012) argues for the importance of maintaining avant-garde tactics of shock and disruption, in order to lay bare contradictions and inequalities in art and broader society. In contrast, Kester (1995; 2004; 2011) asserts that art does not have to be artistically autonomous, but might, for example, develop in close relation to social work or activism. He argues for replacing the “antagonistic relationship to the viewer” to a relationship of dialogue, aimed at reaching a mutual understanding (Kester, 2011, p. 38). In response to these seemingly opposite viewpoints, a number of authors have argued for an approach that finds a middle ground between the two, which the remainder of this section will support (e.g. Charnley, 2011; Bell, 2015).

It is useful in this respect to consider some of the key terms and goals employed in debates on participatory art. Geographers Tim Hall and Iain Robertson (2001, p. 10-18) identify seven frequently articulated goals for such art practices: (1) developing a sense of community, (2) developing a sense of place, (3) developing civic identity, (4) addressing community needs, (5) tackling social exclusion, (6) educational value, and (7) promoting social change. Artists in Rio de Janeiro's favelas often employ similar objectives, as for example in the above statement of the Favela Painting project. Importantly, however, how this is put into practice largely depends on how concepts such as identity, place and community needs are defined. Several authors have argued that artists and policy makers often rely on simplified and even essentialist interpretations of these concepts (Hall and Robertson, 2001; Pinder, 2008; Hawkins, 2013; Massey and Rose, 2003; Kwon, 2004). As Massey and Rose write (2003, p. 3), there often exists a strong focus on "boundedness; an essential (and in extreme cases unchangeable) character; a coherent community; a common understanding; [and] inherited traditions." Several authors have used academic critiques of such essentialist notions to question theories and practices of socially-engaged art (e.g. Deutsche, 1996; Miles, 1997; Massey and Rose, 2003). Particularly important here is the sharp distinction between 'community members,' as the "victimized yet resilient other," and the artists, who form part of a globally-oriented art world circuit (Kwon, 2004, p. 147; see also Bishop, 2012).

Rosalyn Deutsche (1996), for example, argues that the idea of a neutral, harmonious public space is – and has always been – an illusion, which builds on views of authors such as Claude Lefort, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, and Henri Lefebvre. Rather, public space is constituted through negotiation and struggle, and subject to constant change. The same is true for identity and community. In response, Deutsche – whose work resonates with Claire Bishop's approach – promotes a different kind of socially-engaged practice, which precisely wants to emphasize this antagonism, developing a sense of place that is non-essentialist and socially constructed. As Deutsche (1996, p. 53) writes:

[To describe] the city as a social form rather than as a collection and organization of neutral physical objects implicitly affirms the rights of currently excluded groups to have access to the city – to make decisions about the space they use, to be attached to the place they live, to refuse marginalization.

Similarly, Malcolm Miles (1997, p. 85) writes about public art: “Public art inevitably operates in the public realm and a lack of critical engagement with the construction of that realm leads by default to affirmation of the dominant ideology.” In Rio, as shown in the previous section, we indeed see an urgent need for more nuanced and critical accounts of the production of favela spaces – and many artists hope to contribute to this goal.

Importantly, however, Deutsche’s approach has also been critically treated. First of all, the practices she celebrates usually remain firmly embedded in the institutions and discourses of the art world, which risks inaccessibility considering the exclusionary nature of these contexts (to be discussed in the next section). In Rio de Janeiro, for example, several artists from favelas told me that they have felt unwelcome in museums and cultural centers (see chapter five). Accordingly, in this approach the differentiation between marginalized and privileged audience groups is not inherent to the format, but constituted and maintained in actual practice. Second, we should question the sole focus on art’s representational qualities, which are seen as a relatively neutral space from which it is possible to criticize. As Hall and Robertson (2001, p. 22) write:

There is a fundamental silence at the heart of Deutsche’s critique concerning the links between the realms of signification (the representation of space) and production and experience of space. Put simply, Deutsche’s reading [...] is ultimately limited because it fails to give any sense of the ways in which alternative space, once created through signification, might be incorporated into the practices of everyday life or might intervene in the production of space.

In other words, while these works might critique inequality and injustice through their representational message, the practices of display frequently *reproduce* these very inequalities.

Following chapters will consider exactly how the above-mentioned observations apply to artistic practices in Rio de Janeiro. As noted, the work of artists in favelas is related to favela-based activism and social work, as well as to the rather problematic practice of putting poverty on display for privileged audiences. To theorize this entanglement, I’d like to close this section by having a brief look at Lefebvre’s (1996) notion of the right to the city,

which has been employed by a number of favela-based actors in recent decades (e.g. Lopes de Souza, 2012). The research institute *Observatório de Favelas* (n.d.), for example, frequently employs the phrase, seeing its relevance for inequality in the fields of urban politics, education, communication, culture and human rights. As David Harvey (2012, p. xvii) describes, Lefebvre envisaged the right to the city as a transformative moment, namely “the spontaneous coming together in a moment of ‘irruption,’ when disparate heterotopic groups suddenly see, if only for a fleeting moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically different” (see also Purcell, 2002).

At the heart of Lefebvre’s right to the city is a notion of appropriation. As Purcell (2014, p. 149) writes, Lefebvre uses appropriation as “a way to rethink the concept of rightful ownership, to radically transform our notions about who rightfully owns the city.” Put differently, appropriation is the public claim that the city belongs to all of its inhabitants. However, the right to the city entails more than a question of ownership regarding the existing city, or the inclusion of marginalized groups into dominant structures. Rather, Purcell (2014, p. 149) continues, appropriation “reorients the city away from its role as an engine of capital accumulation,” pointing instead to “the urban” as a space that “nurtures use value and [...] is a space for encounter, connection, play, learning, difference, surprise, and novelty.” As such, it signifies a radically alternative urban space that “[asserts] use value over exchange value, encounter over consumption, interaction over segregation, free activity and play over work” (Purcell, 2014, p. 151).

To summarize, the right to the city is seen as a step towards a transformation from the capitalist and formalist ‘city’ to the more creative, socially inclusive ‘urban.’ For Lefebvre (1996, p. 173), art is part of this process of appropriation, and should “[reconsider] itself as a source and model of appropriation of space and time” (see also Purcell, 2014; Marcuse, 2014). A number of scholars have made these claims about art and appropriation more concrete. Kurt Iveson, for example, discusses the right to the city in connection to what he calls “micro-spatial urban practices.” Using the example of an Australian street art collective, the author shows how original, deliberate and politically motivated acts of creative appropriation can create a kind of “city within the city” in which artists publicly declare their right of appropriation in spite of existing legal frameworks (Iveson, 2013, p. 949; see also Young, 2014). The success of Iveson’s particular example was based on three main factors: (1) a collective identity distinguishing the artists’ work as a movement with a political

purpose, (2) the public staging of their activities despite their illegality (claiming they had a ‘right’ to do so), and (3) organizing legal public activities around their street art practice, for example interviews in the mainstream media that reached a larger audience (Iveson, 2013, pp. 949-951). Such strategies allowed the public to take their appropriations seriously as part of a legitimate movement that was both aesthetic and political.

In my view, Iveson’s reading of the right to the city summarizes and elucidates the main arguments made in this section. First of all, he recognizes art as a material and ideological practice that contributes to both the physical form as well as the imagination of cities. Furthermore, he challenges the rigidity of the paradox mentioned at the outset of this section, namely that art either aestheticizes, legitimizes, and reproduces dominant power relations and inequalities, or opposes these conditions. While we might recognize these functions as two possible extremes, in practice such a dualistic position is unproductive. The vast majority of art projects operates both within and against existing power structures, and does so as part of an explicit social and/or political strategy, which resonates with accounts of complicity described in the introduction to this thesis (Drucker, 2005). At the same time, the chapters of this thesis will argue that the broad applicability of Lefebvre’s the right to the city – while undoubtedly part of its appeal and popularity – can conflate distinct issues under a broad umbrella-term. Among other things, artistic favela representations act against (1) a history of simplified representations; (2) social, economic and racial inequality on a global and a city level; and (3) the loaded distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture. With this entanglement in mind, I argue that art’s societal impact is inextricably related to both a critical, aesthetic message (following Deutsche, Bishop and others) *and* a cooperative practice that is in dialogue with non-artistic activism (as Lacy and Kester argue). This thesis employs a critical yet pragmatic approach to artistic favela representations, addressing these varied issues and the different social and representational strategies that resist them, which might include forms of complicity with dominant structures.

Art/World

A key characteristic of many art projects in or about favelas is that they operate and gain meaning in highly different sites and context. As Marsha Meskimmon (2011a, p. 50) writes about socially-engaged art in general, these works “confound the dichotomy between the local and the global as they are inscribed through an opposition between participatory arts

practice, as material engagement with concrete others, and the international art market, as conceptual engagement with generalised others.” Crucially, I am not suggesting that either of these contexts exists in isolation. As I pointed out earlier, favelas are socially, politically and economically incorporated in citywide, national and international processes, and the same is true for institutions of the art world, here understood as a network of people, institutions and discourses that spans diverse regions. As Pamela Lee’s (2012, p. 186) book *Forgetting the Art World* argues, the world of contemporary art is not only fully embedded in, but also actively contributing to the “world that we once thought it surveyed” (see also Smith, 2011). Unlike the title of her book suggest, however, Lee contends that we cannot turn our back on art world institutions and discourses. Similarly, this thesis argues that we should foreground the relations, interactions and exchanges that link art world institutions and discourses to the ‘real world’ of the favela, emphasizing the need to be attentive to specific possibilities and limitations offered by these different sites.

To do so, we should start by having a closer look at how we define the ‘art world.’ Charlotte Bydler (2004, pp. 34-35) gives the following definition:

[The art world is] a community that creates and guards its own central object in discourse and practices, and assigns value. This community is held together not only by a shared manner of speaking and behaving around art, but is also united by a common economy, that is, a market for the labour of cultural workers, and an international division of labour.

This is related to Bourdieu’s (1989, 1993a) influential notion of a “cultural field,” in which taste serves as a marker of distinction (see also Buchholz, 2016). Importantly, Bydler distinguishes two ways to define the globalization of the art world: (1) as a *discursive* network that builds on common discourses and “sense-making strategies,” and (2) as an *economic* network consisting of an art market as well as a growing international labor market (Carroll, 2007, p. 140). These two networks are closely entangled, and together they determine the slippery concept of artistic value (Velthuis, 2003). Finally, the sites in which they take shape are spread across varied geographic locations and differ greatly in focus and accessibility: art institutions (e.g. museums, biennales, art schools), art markets, curatorial and scholarly discourses, and public or private funding agencies.

The center-periphery relations within this network of people and institutions are a central topic of this thesis. Without a doubt, the issue of globalization has been at the forefront of global debates and practices in art history and curating for at least two decades, departing from numerous critiques of Eurocentrism expressed against the discipline (e.g. Onians, 1996; Araeen, 2000; Bydler, 2004; Lee, 2012; Elkins, 2007; Carroll, 2007; Zijlmans and van Damme, 2008; Harris, 2011; Dimitrakaki, 2012; Wainwright, 2011; DaCosta Kaufmann et al., 2015; Iskin, 2017; Newall, 2017). Rather than merely ‘adding’ previously excluded art practices to art historical canons, exhibitions and curricula, so several authors note, working towards a more inclusive art world raises complex ethical and epistemological questions (e.g. Martins, 2013; Ring Petersen, 2017). It implies critically examining what is considered mainstream and exceptional, mandatory and optional. As Anne Ring Petersen (2017, p. 73, emphasis in original) notes, this politically sensitive debate often takes the form of a “discourse on cultural identity [that] is informed by a very *complex network* of entangled, intersecting and antagonistic concepts,” such as ethnicity, migration, globalization, multiculturalism, ‘Otherness,’ Western/non-Western, difference, and recognition.

In contrast to Europe and North America, the relation between art world centers and peripheries has been at the forefront of art production and art theory in Brazil since the early twentieth century (Ferreira Gullar, 1978; 2002; Schwartz, 2004). Much more than in the global North, art historical writing in Latin America was always closely related to broader cultural criticism, explicitly related for example to national and regional identities (Giunta, 2007). Important to keep in mind here, as Paulo Herkenhoff (1995, p. 70) writes, is that “in Brazil the hegemonic centres exert on the peripheral regions of the country the same relation of power to which they would be subjected, as peripheral cities of the world, by the international hegemonic centres.” This history of local and global peripheries will be thoroughly examined in chapter two, focusing particularly how favela images and imaginaries of favelas have figured in it. At this point, I merely wish to highlight that the meaning and function of concepts such as intercultural exchange, exoticism, and marginality have long been theorized and negotiated by various Latin American authors – precisely because this is not always acknowledged in current debates on the globalization of the art world. As noted in the first section of this chapter, a famous early example of this is Oswald de Andrade’s “anthropophagic manifesto,” which has in recent decades found a widespread

popularity in art debates and institutions across the world, especially since curator Paulo Herkenhoff revisited it in the 1998 São Paulo Biennale (see Lagnado and Lafuente, 2015).

For the topic of this section, two particular points made in the anthropophagic manifesto are noteworthy, as they shed light on the current popularity of de Andrade's philosophy. First, the manifesto explicitly confuses dominant notions of spatial and temporal development. For example, it states: "We already had communism. We already had Surrealist language" (de Andrade, 2017, p. 22). As such, de Andrade questions common assumptions of who influenced whom, writing that "[w]ithout us, Europe would not even have its meager Declaration of the Rights of Man" (de Andrade, 2017, p. 21). This relates to recent scholarship that has critiqued the ways in which art from global peripheries has been interpreted and framed in Europe and the US as "belated" or "behind the times" (Wainwright, 2011, p. 4; see also Sheller, 2003). Second, as the opening sentence of the manifest states, de Andrade's (2017, p. 20) strategy of cultural appropriation is imaged as the only thing that "unites us." The idea of unity in difference has been key to later imaginings of Brazil's national identity, but also resonates with optimistic imaginaries of a multicultural, 'global' art world. Needless to say, in both contexts these ideals have proved hard to realize and even served to obscure persistent forms of discrimination. As Ring Petersen (2017, p. 195) writes: "Although multiculturalism represents a more egalitarian and inclusive institutional policy, it has also produced [...] new and more sophisticated forms of exclusion masquerading as inclusion," such as tokenism and new forms of (commercialized) exoticism (Ring Petersen, 2017, p. 195). This is especially important considering that many terms associated with globalization and diversity have now become "buzzwords" with commercial potential (Buchholz and Wuggenig, 2006).

To get a more concrete sense of how this plays out in art institutions as well as what it implies for scholars, I turn to Sarah Ahmed's (2012) work about diversity and racism in academic institutions. As briefly noted in the introduction, Ahmed (2012) shows how speaking about diversity (e.g. in policy documents, statements of commitment, or official speeches) can substitute action or even serve as proof that equity action is no longer necessary (as the institute is already 'committed'). Moreover, because diversity has now become a buzzword, an institution's focus on it "can become a way of promoting the organization *as excellent*" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 110). With this in mind, Ahmed (2012, p. 117, emphasis in original) introduces the notion of the "non-performative":

In my model of the non-performative, the failure of the speech act to do what it says is not a failure of intent or even circumstance, *but is actually what the speech act is doing*. Such speech acts are taken up as if they are performatives (as if they have brought about the effects that they name), such that the names come to stand in for the effects. As a result, naming can be a way of not bringing something into effect.

A relation between past and future is key here: “The speech act is a commitment that points to the future it brings about [...], but the past that accumulates overrides this futurity, as what the institution is committed to do, by sheer force of habit.” At their worst, statements and even actions of inclusion can thus serve to obscure the persistence of the very inequalities they address. In her account of art world attempts to diversify, Iskin (2017) notes similar non-performative tendencies, for example when museums temporarily experiment with new forms of collection display, only to return to the traditional format at a later stage, or when art historical textbooks include so-called non-Western art practices, which are then skipped by university curricula. As Ahmed (2012, p. 140) notes, this transforms “diversity work” into “[making] institutions ‘catch up’ with what they say they do.”

Crucially, however, this does not mean that verbal commitments to diversity are inconsequential, as they can function as a “reference point,” allowing for repeated emphasis on this issue (Ahmed, 2012, p. 49). For Ahmed, repeating such statements is crucial to making them mainstream. At the same time, however, repetition can hollow out the terms used and cause fatigue within institutions – which is also highly relevant in the art world due to its validation of ‘newness’ and ‘originality.’ With this in mind, Ahmed (2012, p. 80) argues that diversity work entails both the search for a broad following for issues related to inequality – which might include the strategic, celebratory use of a term such as diversity – while simultaneously “[reattaching] diversity to the meanings it may lose on or in its travels.” As chapter five will show, the tension between a strategic usage of the momentum gathered by mainstream popularity and a ‘politics of reattachment’ strongly resonates with the work of artists from Rio de Janeiro’s favelas – who pragmatically employ the widespread interest in their neighborhood while struggling to bring across their more critical message. Again, this is complicated by the fact that these actors address both middle- and upper-class Brazilian and international audiences, who can have very different associations and imaginaries of favelas.

Crucially, this conceptualization of diversity work has methodological consequences for scholars studying these practices. Considering diversity policy documents, Ahmed (2012, p. 85) writes: “We can ask what documents do by considering how they circulate within organizations, creating vertical and horizontal lines of communication. To ask what documents are doing, we need to follow them around.” Building on this, this thesis aims to ‘follow around’ artistic favela representations, an approach that resonates with calls from anthropology to respond to an age of global mobility by employing a “multi-sited ethnography” (Marcus, 1995; Falzon, 2009), as well as the so-called “mobilities paradigm” or “mobilities turn” that we see in different areas of the social sciences (Urry and Sheller, 2006). The latter research focus is based on the realization that “[i]ssues of movement, of too little movement or too much, or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are central to many lives and many organizations” (Urry and Sheller, 2006, p. 208; see also Urry, 2002). Similarly, some art historians have also focused on intercultural connections and circulations, precisely to “escape from the Western, or even Northern Atlantic limitations of art historical questions, methods, and institutions” (DaCosta Kaufmann et al., 2015, p. 17). Finally, a number of recent publications in the interdisciplinary field of Latin American Studies have described the global and regional processes of exchange and collaboration that have long shaped the region (e.g. Lima, 2015; Preuss, 2016, Félix and Juall, 2016).

Considering what anthropologist Bianca Freire-Medeiros (2013, p. 111-122) has called the “traveling favela,” these approaches are highly relevant. Artists and art objects from favelas circulate the world, as do project participants, curators, mediators, and, importantly, academics researching these practices. In this process of circulation, as the chapters of this thesis will show, the meaning and function of artistic favela representations are negotiated. With this argument, this thesis explicitly opposes the idea that artistic or aesthetic work ‘speaks for itself,’ as represented by the ideal of artistic autonomy. This does not mean, however, that we should not make a distinction between the aesthetic content and the socio-political context. As Rustom Bharucha (2007, p. 415) writes:

To conflate – or to collapse – the social, the political and the economic into the ‘artistic’ field is to diffuse their intricate relationships. One needs to recognize the limits of disciplines, activities and modes of thought in order to assess the actual impact of creative transgressions across borders.

As argued in the previous section, putting the aesthetic in full service of social, political or economic goals risks instrumentalism and often leads to simplified or even essentialist definitions of key concepts, which severely limits the critical and transformative potential of art. Merely seeing the socio-political dimension as a critical aesthetic message, on the other hand, denies the politics involved in the production, distribution and reception of art, and might reduce artworks to a mere illustration of critical theories.

In addition, I argue for the importance of studying the exhibition framing and media reception of artistic favela representations. Despite the fact that art spectatorship is a personal, affective experience, I contend that politically motivated works about specific locations always require framing and explanation, especially when they are ‘exported’ across the world. As Leon Wainwright (2011, p. 113) notes, such framings are particularly important when they span across center-periphery relations:

There is political pressure on art history to understand the role of cultural counter-cans and the experience of marginalization, and yet this needs to be met by vigorous analysis of the range of ways, present and past, to contest commoditised difference. Artists and their work are too easily inscribed – through display and remembrance – as significations of national place, ethnic ‘belonging,’ and cultural difference.

Paradoxically, a lack of proper framing distracts from the aesthetic content of the work, which tend to become “little more than a visual litany of ethnic and cultural diversity” (Wainwright, 2011, p. 112). Wainwright’s (2011, p. 112) argument about the Caribbean therefore applies to the context at hand: “A leading priority is to find some way to understand the Caribbean not simply as a geographical region of special interest, but as having a global status that contributes more widely to reaching art historical problems” (see also Sheller, 2003). Similarly, this thesis studies Rio de Janeiro’s favelas as “worlding nodes,” starting from the premise that artistic representations of these territories can be both – and sometimes simultaneously – a project of recognition and of exoticization (McCann, Roy and Ward, 2013, p. 584).

Conclusion

This chapter has argued for a broad and interdisciplinary approach to artistic practices in and about Rio de Janeiro's favelas, building on a wide range of authors and arguments. To summarize the main arguments presented, I firstly turn to the concept of "contemporaneity," as formulated by art historian Terry Smith (2008; 2009; 2011). Smith argues that what we call contemporary art is not just produced in the present; it is "shaped most profoundly by its situation within contemporaneity" (Smith, 2009, p. 6). This contemporaneity is defined as follows:

Contemporaneity consists precisely in the acceleration, ubiquity, and constancy of radical disjunctures of perception, of mismatching ways of seeing and valuing the same world, in the actual coincidence of asynchronous temporalities, in the jostling contingency of various cultural and social multiplicities, all thrown together in ways that highlight the fast-growing inequalities within and between them (Smith, 2008, pp. 8-9)

First of all, this focus on contemporaneity can challenge dominant art world narratives about temporal/spatial developments, particularly concerning the "belatedness" of global peripheries (Wainwright, 2011, p. 167-176). In addition, it highlights three "sets of forces" that fundamentally define contemporary art practice, as highly evident in the spatial context of Rio de Janeiro's favelas: globalization/hegemony, inequities and spectacle (Smith, 2009, pp. 5-6).

First, both favelas and the art world are "definitely and distinctively *worldly*" (Smith, 2011, p. 175, emphasis in original). In other words, we cannot see them as isolated fields, but should instead emphasize their links to broader political, social and economic structures and discourses. Second, both are defined by persistent inequalities and hegemonic power relations that have a profound impact on their daily life and practice. Crucially, however, as I have tried to argue, this does not mean that they "simply [exist] in bondage to hegemonic structures of meaning, knowledge or subjectivity," as these power relations are also continuously challenged and criticized (Meskimmon, 2011b, p. 195). Third, as part of the contemporary world, they are "immersed in an infoscape – or, better, a spectacle, an image economy or a regime of representation" (Smith, 2009, p. 6). In other words, both favelas and

the art world are facing a rapid commercialization and globalization of the representations produced by and of them. As we have seen, these three conditions certainly provide limitations and difficulties for visual art practices in and about favelas. At the same time, as Marsha Meskimmon (2011a, p. 8) writes: “Understanding ourselves as wholly embedded within the world, we can imagine people and things beyond our immediate experience and develop our ability to respond to very different spaces, meanings and others.”

As this chapter has shown, to study these artistic practices in different spatial and temporal contexts, we must ‘follow them around,’ which requires an interdisciplinary research methodology. This resonates with calls to transform research methods made in the field of socially-engaged and site-specific art practices, precisely because “various dialogical *processes* [are] integral to the content of the work” (Kester, 2011, p. 10, emphasis in original; see also Bishop, 2012, p. 7; Siegenthaler, 2013). Ethnographic methods are often mentioned here, and are indeed crucial to understand the particularities of individual artistic projects. However, ethnography alone is not enough to understand – as I intend to do in this thesis – artistic production in a context that is highly particular from a global perspective, but extremely diverse when considered on a local scale. Rather, an in-depth study of the social, economic, political and historical processes that surround these art practices – i.e. their ‘extended field’ – is necessary, requiring a similarly interdisciplinary theoretical framework. Finally, I contend that any interpretative framework of favela representations can and should be informed by broader, non-academic debates about cultural activism in favelas, as found for example in community journalism, blogs, and social media.

The study and display of favela representations – as is the case of any non-dominant group – is a highly sensitive, political matter, especially if conducted by and largely for actors that are physically and symbolically removed from those ‘on display.’ As the introduction to this thesis has argued, recognizing the complicity of foreign artist and scholars with the structures of inequality their work addresses is therefore crucial. At the same time, social, cultural and economic inequalities are inextricably entangled and operate on a number of intersectional scales, which complicates a strict separation between ‘central’ and ‘peripheral’ actors and practices. In an attempt to analyze how these multiple scales of inequality impact the production, display and reception of artistic favela representations, this thesis will build on the analytical distinction described in this chapter between three groups of actors in this field: favela residents, middle- and upper-class Brazilians, and foreigners. It has been shown

that each group is diverse in itself, but actors within them possess distinct forms of agency and often position themselves in relation to the other groups. For this reason, and as will be illustrated by the following chapters, I argue that this tripartite focus can offer much-needed nuance and complexity to the study of artistic favela representations, bringing to the fore not only how inequalities are reproduced and maintained, but also how collaborations and conversations between these groups can work towards disrupting dominant power relations.