

Aula Magna: Dance + Visual Arts

(An Interview with Márcia Milhazes and Beatriz Milhazes)

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This interview, conducted with Beatriz Milhazes (BM) and Márcia Milhazes (MM) on July 3, 2016, resulted in eight hours of conversation, interrupted only by a lunch in a restaurant near Beatriz Milhazes's studio, in the Rio de Janeiro district of Horto. Henrique Rochelle, the assistant editor of this ARJ volume, transcribed it, resulting in 40 pages of documentation, which were edited by Cássia Navas (CN). She and Beatriz Cerbino (BC) conducted the interview — an **Aula Magna**¹ that dialogically runs between two great contemporary artists. The previously unpublished interview fits into this issue's editorial focus and is part of the Dance, **Body Art and Other Bodies in the Arts** dossier. In this case, the emphasis is on the inter-territoriality between dance and the visual arts, surveyed in a "laboratory-dialogue," an immersion in the art of Beatriz and Márcia.

Both tell us about their career paths and point out similarities, differences, and inflection and divergence points. An interweaving of their careers and the history of contemporary art flows in parallel through the narratives. Thoughts, ideology, concepts, precepts, procedures, techniques and methodologies from two fields run separately, until they establish interfaces on stage and beyond in a meeting of artists. It is important to emphasize that in this context, Beatriz does not label herself as a set designer, as this type of creation is different from her usual projects.

The artists' upbringing is one of the first aspects of this interview-text. They lived in a family in which their parents taught them "to look at all sides," in Marcia's words, seeing many cultural topologies — including those of the universes of Brazilian culture and art. This aspect also appears at the end of the interview when Beatriz

¹ The title was inspired by three texts: one of philosophy, another of modern dramaturgy and a poem. They are: *Aula*, by Roland Barthes (1st ed. São Paulo: Cultrix, 1980), *Master Class*, by Terrence McNally (1991) and ***Aula Inaugural*** by Mário Quintana (Apontamentos de História Supernatural. 5th ed. Porto Alegre: Globo, 1995).

and Márcia refer to questions of identity of their languages, composed of multiple dimensions (geographical, emotional, and professional) and focus on Brazil while avoiding the trap of a one-dimensional entity, as described in Armatya Sen.²

Information about their educational backgrounds is given next. Marcia emphasizes the importance of her studies in the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theater's dance school, currently the Maria Olenewa Dance School, described as a modern vocation education center, almost illuminist, based on a classical view. The importance of the school made her change colleges, as did her itinerant studies elsewhere in the country. Secondly, she describes her studies at the Laban Center [London], stressing the thought of Rudolf Laban as a key point in her formation as a choreographer. During her time in this English center, she changed "from dancer to creator."

Beatriz describes her education at the Parque Lage school [Rio de Janeiro] during a period of transformation, in which the school moved away from the notion of the "fine arts" towards a modern program which included "artist's studios," which would operate as a shelter for young vocations and talents.

Differences between the validation, diffusion and marketing circuits of the visual arts and dance have been evident since this initial period of their education, as have been the contrasts between creative and production formats, with the dance studios extending from Márcia's body to the dancers of her company, and Beatriz's studios being structured in solo paths in the visual arts.

Each creator's awareness of a vocation in art is a second aspect to emphasize. Dance seems to have captured Márcia. Led by this feeling, she began to study at the age of six at the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theater. Art seems to have made the decision for her, as is often heard in speeches by the creators of dance.

As a young woman, Beatriz discovered herself in art after being placed at a crossroads of three possible academic fields of study for which she took entrance exams: history, journalism and physical education. The deadlock led her to Parque Lage, where her talent found a vocation and the opportunity for consolidation. At the beginning of her adult life, Beatriz "chose art," starting her path as a painter. It is her master profession, where she has returned after the deployment of her language, as depicted in Marcia Milhazes's shows and in *Sempre Seu* [Rio de Janeiro, 2016], the artistic installation at Oi Futuro [a museum].

A third aspect to be highlighted concerns questions of the origin of art, raised by Márcia in a dense moment of the text-interview, in which she discusses a kind of

² SEN, Amartya. *Identidade e Violência: a ilusão do destino*. São Paulo: Iluminuras/Observatório Itaú Cultural, 2015.

"zero degree of [her] expression,"³ pointing also to a "mix of matrices,"⁴ referring to the place of sense as a topology "without dance, without music, without set designs, without literature," a sort of preconfiguration of art, a territory that is also known (and therefore shareable) in the creative processes of Beatriz, before the works of each one are merged into the intertwining to some extent of their expressions.

This place of art's origin is the starting point for the interlocution between the two artists through a "very noisy silence," which Márcia uses as a basis to build the space of her choreographic expression, based on the interpreters' space. Also based on this place, Beatriz's scenic-visual expression is constructed, presented first on canvas, which has visual dramaturgy's converging lines, and then through scenic art objects (the candlesticks), present in *Tempo de Verão* (2014), considered by both a landmark of their partnership. Finally, we have the construction of the space of *Ocupação Sempre Seu* (2016), in which dance, multimedia and audiovisual, scenographic and public art interact between the two creators and on many levels.

Later, in a conversation about internal space and external space in art, the moment that Beatriz's scenery enters her sister's stage is described, when the structure of the dance already presents "many layers" marked by the space of each dancer. The "chandeliers" demonstrate the support of the choreographic composition: planes, lines, angles and above all the gesture. This triggers the dancers' bodies and is "a word that pulls the senses," a knowledge bridge that leads, with much effort, to the potentiality of each one.

On the other hand, the interview indicates the influence of the three-dimensional scenic space on Beatriz Milhazes's work, especially in her productions after *Tempo de Verão*, in which the question of an art where people in movement circulate (not only dancers on stage) is established as one of her current protagonisms. In creating art for people who use spaces, Beatriz also finds herself in a challenging situation, encountering rules — of dance and of its pictorial context as scenic art — that are different from those of her field of origin, taking her to other territories.

Throughout the text, we see that the encounter establishes itself in processes of superposition of layers of art — through specific dialogues of silent conversation — through which arts from distinct topologies establish contrasts and conflicts and reaffirmations of themselves and between themselves.

³ See BARTHES, R. *Le degré zéro de l'écriture. Œuvres Complètes. Livres, Textes, Entretiens*. Nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et présentée par éric Marty. Paris: Seuil, 2002.

⁴ SANTAELLA, L. *Matrizes da linguagem e do pensamento*. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2001.

Such processes take place by means of a "gap" — almost free — to be filled with thoughts from two fields of art; an interval space that points to a topology between structures supported by different margins, to establish a third margin in the space of the scene.

In this sense, one has the impression of one work of art flowing over another, forming a tidal bore that pours senses onto the audience, given the flow of the work's artistic rivers engulfing us.

Finally, when asked about their current themes, Márcia and Beatriz point to one of the pillars of structure of the arts: the audiences before whom their works are presented, appealing to the senses at each recital, contact, experience and exhibition. Marcia tells us about tracks of her choreography, tattooed on new works, so that perhaps more people can be in touch with the senses of her ongoing works. Beatriz brings us her vocation for painting unfolding in other techniques structured by other supports and in other environments and contexts, notably those of public art, in various places on the planet.

To conclude, this text-interview – an Aula Magna (master class) generously spreading knowledge in art – reveals that art is at the forefront of the work shared between both artists. In works that interflow, they stand out as professional creators for whom the challenges of knowledge (and their incarnation in artistic structures) are vital.

CN- Márcia, what was the first moment you chose dance?

MM- I don't know how dance struck so strongly and absolutely inside me. I asked my mother if I could do ballet, when I was 6 or 7 years old. But I don't know how we arrived at the City School of Classical Dance. It was the first school I went to and the only one. And there I met teachers of the highest level possible. The director, Lydia Costallat, opened the way for educators and deflated the question of classical ballet. Get out of a pas-de-deux class, dreaming about Swan Lake, and go straight into a Mercedes Batista class. Take off the bloody sneakers, roll up the socks and get into the drums. That was so powerful for me! You leave the first class wanting to dance the Lake. But dancing isn't just that. It was hard. There, Lourdes Bastos showed me the intellectuality, the theater. It all depends on the source. It was a nucleus of art: art history, music history, rhythmplasty. A core of generosity, which is what I think is missing today. Lydia never denied anything — Spanish dance, jazz. A universe that was very rich. I couldn't wait to go there. I changed schools to do that. I did a test to study social sciences at UFRJ, changed

to law at Cândido Mendes, and then studied at FMU, Faculdades Metropolitanas in São Paulo. There was a point, when Maurice Béjart came to Brazil for the first time, in 1979 or 1980, if I am not mistaken. At that time, I was still very young, but I had experience. And that's when I thought, "I don't know if it's the Lake..." But I always knew it was dance — that doubt didn't exist. Heloisa Vasconcelos called me to audition for the cast of Bolero [Ballet du XX ème Siècle, choreography by Maurice Béjart], and they needed four dancers for Romeo and Juliet. I did both. With the biggest company! With the gods of Béjart. Then I got it. No one could talk to me. I got into the alpha state. At the moment, I thought maybe it was not Lake (and I love the Lake; I wanted to dance Giselle). But there are questions that are shadows within you and only the work, only the exercise, gives you the answers. That's what I tell the dancers. The deeper you go, the more you can understand if you really want to be in this space; you cannot stay on the surface. Go deep and question your laziness, your doubts. Don't deny anything.

CN- How was the experience with Béjart?

MM- They had to pinch me so I could see that it was true. Watching the dancers come onstage with me, my partners. Immense men, whom Béjart had hand picked. Doing ten pirouettes in front of me. There were small pas-de-deux, with the corps de ballet, which was a tribal, ritualistic thing that had circularities with pair changes. That was in Maracãzinho [an arena], and they changed a lot of things. But think about it: you hadn't see anyone, and suddenly you were among these gods. You saw this place of the man, which was a serious issue at the dance school, where there were almost no boys. Dona Consuelo Rios told me, "Go!" But that boy was not going to hold me, he was not at that level, and she warned me that the problem was mine too. She taught us responsibility. Béjart showed me another level and another dance. I didn't even know what dance it was, but I had to seek it out. Maurice Béjart was an ode to men. We could separate "men on stage" before and after him. I stayed on a little ladder used in the lighting, in rehearsals, watching all the ballets. It was a long season, with two or three programs. After Béjart, I went to São Paulo. Before, I spent three months in Salvador, already in search of a job. And I realized that I needed to at least go to São Paulo, because of my career. I went to audition for the Balé da Cidade de São Paulo (São Paulo City Ballet). I went at the end of the audition. Décio Otero was on the bench. I went to Stagium, kind of like I was interning. While I was there, my mother advised me of a choreographic contest in Rio for new choreographers, which had a big award plus a contact with Márcia Haydée. The Stagium, through Liliane Benevento, lent me

the space to choreograph. And there I rehearsed, alone. I received an award at the festival. From that moment on, if you analyze my works you see Márcia Milhazes. In the musical question, for example, with works that are not very easy, dealing with a sometimes unknown Brazil in the question of themes — the taste for Brazilian culture, things from my world. After this award came the Ballet Carioca, my last thing here before going to England. And there, yes! It's a total turnaround. I encountered a new place. Here, I felt a lack of intellectual echo for my work. There, I was turned upside down. I found a ballet in which I revered my Brazilian memory. Here, I was a student of great teachers. So, I began to go to auditions, which were on a much larger scale. It was not ten others and I; it was another three or four hundred people and I. At that moment, I had a ticket for Michael Clark, who told me that I needed to go to the Laban Center, to rethink my issues, because I was turning into the dancer again, only that. Laban was a heavy investment, and I couldn't go back to Brazil so soon. I think England is my adopted country. I was happy, but I think the idea of being a foreigner is very bad. I am very happy with the recognition I got in Laban. Valerie Preston-Dunlop, for example, filmed my monograph professionally for use in lectures, but I also fought with her over there.

BC- What did the Laban Center mean to you?

MM- I did postgraduate studies in "Dance Studies and Choreography", in a full-time mode. It was a heavy year because I wanted to go back to Brazil soon. But it fell to my group of post-graduates to be people with careers, stage careers and theoretical careers, people of a high intellectual level. We were given more challenges, starting with the technical classes, which were separated by levels. I loved being there. I am a curious woman and everything that is knowledge is interesting to me. At Laban I could be in a group as a choreographer and no longer struggle to be an interpreter. That was what I needed. However, the choreography for me was not a need to move forward; it was a matter of entering my own world, of working on a search for a language. I would not say I do Laban. I don't use this structure, these principles, like a William Forsythe or Trisha Brown, who has a structure formed from Laban. These people have places that start from that. This never happened to me. For me, it was an intellectual question. But, at the same time, the people of Laban see the things he wanted to do in my work – in part because he was not a choreographer. The things he had to say, as a great teacher, were something different. There, I was able to dive into this universe. When I did the monograph of Valerie Preston-Dunlop, in the discipline of "Choreology," I was already deep into Bronislava Nijinska. Valerie distributed the activities, and it was

something completely theoretical, technical, repetitive, defining what we had to do. But I told her that I had been analyzing Bronislava's work for a long time, and I proposed doing a choreography because I was thinking about it as a choreographer. Then we had almost a year. She told me to be careful not to show the choreography a lot and forget the elements of choreology, which was our goal. It was a minimalist choreography, assembled from a Laban choreological menu. And there is a link between [Rudolf] Laban and my life. It was the theory that this body could think, not just what he brought me technically. I didn't necessarily use his theories to find what I do today. My thing was something else.

CN- Beatriz Milhazes, where did you start your career in arts?

BM- I started very early. In college, I majored in journalism and had never really thought about being an artist. I arrived at college a little young and I had to choose. I didn't think of art, but at home my mother was an art history teacher, and she introduced the cultural question into our lives. My father was also always very interested in culture — film and music — so it was something we always had together. But I never really thought about working with art. I did the college entrance exam for three fields of study — journalism, physical education and history — and finally I decided to do journalism. I was disappointed. That was not exactly what I wanted. In the second year, my mother suggested that I go to the Parque Lage visual arts school. There I did a summer course in 1980. I felt connected. That was the environment I wanted. As I also wanted a university degree, I graduated from the Escola de Belas Artes [School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro]. I think it was the only option of that time in terms of a university. It was quite academic, quite old. I had a great time at school at Parque Lage; it was a very special time in my life and I never looked back. From then on everything in my life was organized. From there I chose art or art chose me. It seems that I received a calling and my life was organizing itself from there. We were still in the dictatorship so this whole cultural part was extremely strange. Everyone who worked with culture had a special, alternative, rather odd situation. My colleagues in the '80s generation who studied with me from that time on had demands at home that I didn't have. My mother and father thought it was great that I was an artist, but that was not the case with others. [Rubens] Gerchman [1942-2008] made the revolutionary move of taking the Institute of Fine Arts out of there so that it would cease to be an academic thing and return to contemporary art. The school became a network of people who somehow wanted to breathe a little freedom. We had gone to the park with our family and seen the events. The school was clogged with people sitting

there, a kind of hippie thing. Later Rubem Breitman [1932–2001] came and he also implemented the change for it to become a visual arts school. In this story, let's say, people practically lived inside Parque Lage. This space was formalized as a school, within a free school scheme, which already came from Gerchman. It was just this moment that I caught. It had what was called a "Permanent Workshop," a summer course that extended itself, where you had five teachers, one per day, each oriented towards sculpture, engraving technique, etc. I did this course, and from there — after that click I mentioned — Charles Watson, a Scotsman who was my teacher, opened a painting course in which I became his student in 1980, right there in the Parque Lage. I studied there from 1980 to 1983. In early 1983, I left and opened my studio. During that time, it was impossible for you to think, "I'm going to be an artist," "This is my profession," or "I'm going to make money from it." At that age I still lived with my parents, and you don't have this awareness of what it is to make a living, to pay the bills, even more so as an artist. And what did we have as examples? At the same time as the school suddenly had very few students we had a very special moment. I already taught elementary school, but those who had more time spent the day there. It had a homey atmosphere, where friendships were created that have lasted until today among most of the artists who passed through. By the end of 1982, I was already developing my language; I had to leave school, despite having a very privileged situation there — as had Daniel Senise, Luiz Pizarro, students who stayed. They made their language, and they sort of had studios within the school, as it works in American schools. It was a paid school, but it was accessible. It was a mixed system: it belonged to the state, but there was a monthly fee, and several teachers, for example, had come from public education. At that time, the school was a quiet place, very different from what it was in the Gerchman era. It was home; it was our home. Everyone was there all the time and we had a very interesting coexistence. My exit was a moment of deciding whether to stop or to continue. For me there was no doubt, I was going to leave and open my studio. Now, I think our generation was almost pushed to make decisions very quickly, and why? Because of the '80s generation. It was the end of the dictatorship, the liberalization had begun, and a great movement started that came from outside Brazil to return to the art market, something about which we had no information in Rio. Communication was a distant thing. It was not the "Internet age." Even the telephone was difficult. We had no information about the market, but, contradictorily, we became the generation that almost opened the art market in Brazil. It's hard for people to understand, because they think we were already focused on it. No. No one was focused on that. We were focused on the work, because there was no way not to be. There was no other

choice. At the same time, art galleries opened here in Rio. It already had Luisa Strina and Ana Maria Niemeyer. César Aché and Thomas Cohn and others opened. Yes, with people who were trying to copy a bit what was happening outside Brazil with the boom market. The American and European '80s generation was already older, already 30, when this boom happened. But no one here in this generation was that age, everyone was very young; I was 24 years old in 1984, some were older. Almost everyone was still in their early '20s, especially women like me, Leda Catunda, Frida Baranek, and Cristina Canale. We were all born between 1960 and 1961. Then came the market. Then, soon after, came the galleries. But I was not one of those mother artists, because my work didn't fit with the expectation of the time, it was something more neo-expressionist. In 1983, there was a national show where everyone presented their work. And there the "generation" was created through the "How Are You, '80s Generation?" show in 1984. The critics, the jurors of that show, already had that antenna pointed towards the young. It was they who saw that there was a strong generation in painting. There, Paulo Roberto Leal, Marcus de Lontra Costa and Márcia Lontra (then Marcus' wife) got the idea of an exhibition. And the show was a gigantic event in the city. There were lines, crowds, madness really. And overnight, we — this group of 120 artists from the show, from all over Brazil — started to have success. I always protected myself from it. I never believed in success, I still don't believe in it. I think it's good, great, but I've protected myself. I tried to protect myself the whole time of the galleries; I didn't think my work was ready or anything. César Aché was my first gallery. He was very calm — he wasn't like Thomas Cohn, who already thought differently. Caesar was a classic, conservative person in the gallery. I went very step-by-step, trying to protect myself, because I still didn't believe in that success; I didn't think I was ready for that.

CN- Did you study dance, Beatriz?

BM - I studied dance, yes. I always liked exercise, so much so that one of the entrance exams I did was for physical education. I always liked to exercise the body. I did some classical ballet as a child; I even did modern dance. But I'm more into sports, but not competitive. Ten years ago, I focused on bodybuilding, aerobics and swimming because of work. People don't understand, but painting requires a lot from a physical standpoint. My screens are large, so I use the body. The painting has to have an energy. It doesn't seem like it, but it's a physical thing.

BC- When did the partnership between Márcia Milhazes and Beatriz Milhazes begin?

MM- It was my first job, even before I went to England. The company was the Ballet Carioca; it was called Dançando Villa Lobos (Dancing Villa-Lobos), with rare works by [Brazilian composer] Heitor Villa-Lobos, from the Week of Modern Art of 1922. That was in 1986 and 1987, and the debut was in MASP [Museu de Arte de São Paulo]. There were three ballerinas and one of them was me. The costume was a pink bikini, and we finished the choreography with parangolés, with Beatriz's direct painting on the fabric. I still have two of them, and the other is with my partner and dancer from that time, Eliana Cancela, who is in São Paulo now. They were three original Beatriz paintings. It all begins with being sisters. But it isn't only that. Beatriz is my best friend. We are a family that talks about life, about our existence. We talk a lot. We talk about ourselves. We have no barriers. The age difference between us is small, and I've always been nearby. When she talks about how she ended up in the plastic arts, the story is already different. I asked to do ballet at age six; I already knew I wanted to be a dancer, even though I didn't know where it came from. I remember talking to Beatriz about painting my Ballet Carioca parangolés. I was close to a sister who is an artist, a sister who is an example, a sister of whom I was a fan. Sometimes I try to see how I would be in relation to her work if she were not my sister. But Márcia Milhazes today would be a fan of Beatriz Milhazes's paintings, a fan of the way she thinks of spaces and colors. I think it was I who went to her, who dragged her to my work. We never worried much about the minutiae of work differences. Maybe because we are different but have a very similar essence. We are hard working, disciplined women. We see the world in different ways, but sometimes we are kind of like Siamese twins. We're quiet. I was never much for shows, to exhibit myself. I did a final phase of the dance school, with it already attached to the Teatro Municipal (Municipal Theater), so I went through experiences that various friends had not had. There I had a place as an individual, who bumped into the individuals that today I seek for my company, investing in people in whom we believe. I think my desire for Beatriz to be around is a crossbreeding thing, which involves affinities. Not literally, but you are devoted to something, and you have a certainty that she will handle the work in this intelligent way. I ended up needing this free flight with Beatriz. What she brings through her work and adds to mine. In this space that isn't formal.

CN- In this place of art, among these many layers, there is a corridor of communication, of artistic dialogue. Does this corridor allow languages to grow closer?

MM- Dance is the art that instigates me, but what is dance really for me? It isn't a set of steps; it isn't working the body well. When I think of a play, Beatriz isn't doing the scenery. I don't have a soundtrack, I don't work with literature, but I use all of that. It is a place with layers like an onion that is a place of meaning. For that, I'm going to use the word "refinement." It is a place where one makes all efforts in the search for the unknown, for knowledge, a place to be attentive to what passes by you, to what crosses you. You fill this corridor with these screens, with these materials that cross you. When I look at Beatriz, for a few seconds I can see the shapes, the images. But I don't necessarily think about the colors she's going to bring. I don't get stuck on how I could work with this; it's a place of dramaturgy. When I think of Beatriz, what matters is that she will bring meaning to my gestures, which have already passed through this initial space, of feeling, where one doesn't dance, one doesn't move, one doesn't hear music. In this sense, the choreography *Sempre Seu (Always Yours)* [Artistic Installation, Instituto Oi Futuro, Rio de Janeiro, 2016] is a milestone, as a piece that I did in silence. It's something that people don't always believe, so I invite the dancers to talk to the audience about this experience. Because the goal was also that each interpreter, with his or her questions, could get a little closer to me in this place. And, yes, we're talking about language, trying to go after language. How to build this corridor? I don't worry that I have to have Beatriz's stage design. Just as I don't care about the music. It won't give me these questions about my choreography. So it's hard to answer this question, even if it's something I know. It is a difficult rationalization. This corridor is a very open corridor, but it gives me even more ground, because it addresses this issue of freedom, which is important to me in the company. I use that word with them now. But I realize that the sense of freedom scares you, because it requires you to be more disciplined in your life and that you work harder. It requires a commitment, a confrontation with things that may not even interest you. It makes you run up against things you may not be prepared for. This requires generosity and flexibility. Although my work is collective, I feel very lonely in these moments, even being with my dancers. These are times when we are both in and out at the same time. In the process of creation, for example, the external side begins to get more complicated, even in my personal life. I'm here, but it's very easy for me to no longer be. It's very easy to escape to this place inside, which is of solitude, of talking only to myself. It is a studio space. Just yesterday I could not sleep because I was organizing the dancers inside me.

BC- On the question of dramaturgy, it is a dramaturgy in the body, not the scene.

How was the dramaturgic developed in your work?

MM- I don't retreat from two big questions— the body of the artist and the gesture. The gesture is who, really, from this sacred body that is my interpreters, will build this place, these bridges of knowledge and meaning. The moment I'm up until two in the morning thinking about the dancer, I'm already inside him. He's already inside me. I am thinking of how this individual, with this body, with its experience and culture, will receive an archive of gestures, which need these subterraneans. This underground space is what interests me. When we go deep into it, I guide the interpreters to focus inside themselves. I'm leading you to a fuller body. For this I don't need music, nor literature. Machado de Assis, with "Dom Casmurro" [in Santa Cruz, created by Márcia Milhazes], was something specific in this sense, but it was because it also creates a depth for the characters. The gestures activate this body-archive of the interpreters, and they draw from it, as if it were text. You write through the gestures. You can see where the semicolon is. That was something I was told in England, and afterwards I could see it too. It is a body-word, of the world where we live, where the word is banalized in its truth, as well as the text, in stage issues. There are so many words, but what do they actually say, if they are used lightly? I think we need to look inside. In this sense, that this gesture is a word and must have depth. Verbs need to be well placed — adjectives with their nouns. Sometimes in a crazy way, in a concrete way. This bumps into the interpretation that the interpreter's body has of what it does. I see it in Beatrice's work. A stage designer's view that may still have to be studied in her work. I think Beatrice's work, when she is with me, is exuberant in many ways. Not an exuberance of Carnival or Tropicalia [the Brazilian arts movement], but an exuberance that has a drama for me. What people can feel, because of this freedom, is a span, not a corridor. What we want is never to freeze the works in a simple sentence. We want it to be taken home, so that you make it yours, your pillow, which takes you to other places, to other languages. Like an example I use with the dancers, saying that they are no longer speaking Portuguese, but a language they don't know. And when Beatriz comes in, this space is getting visceral. It generates those meanings, because I believe there is a viscosity in those bodies, in fact. They are valuable; they are not an object of a choreographer. They are an instrument, but not in a pejorative sense. Then this drama is happening. A drama that is mine, but which is also Beatriz's, even if she doesn't see it, and which at times provokes the other one. And that also isn't decorative. It isn't a lamp, it isn't a sofa, and it isn't a candlestick. It's a subjectivity that is flooding the stage and that perhaps provokes a doubt, on the other hand. Many people cannot label it, cannot put it in a box. A lot of people think the dancers are improvising during the whole show,

but they aren't.

CN- About these labels, perhaps it is a lack of knowledge and not always a certain "arrogance," right?

MM - What is dance? Literature can move you, instigate you. You call it complex, say that you have never seen it before, that it is singular, that it is the book from your own mind, that you are reviewing yourself. Music — it goes without saying. Cinema? Wow! Phases, groups, generations. And why can't dance have this? We have to discuss what dance is, what role it has. I think we have to discuss this. I'm saying this, but I think it's a thought of many. For me, there is an immense deformation of the role of dance in art. It is transformative art, which becomes history, and which will nurture in the same way that I nurture my sister and she me. It hasn't changed almost anything. It's a bit as if dance still remains, before being entertainment, in the place of the beautiful, of the healthy, of what is connected with physical conditioning for the child who is going to do ballet soon, but will be impeded from continuing in a career. What is the role of art in Brazilian life? This speaks of our construction of our identity. I think there's a deformation, a laziness in thinking about this dance, that art is work. Because there we are going to mess with formative groups - of bodies and of minds. Who is forming us, even in dance? Do dance teachers question and intellectually stimulate their students? I meet old dance colleagues who don't even go to the theater to watch anything. There is a bitterness, an acidity. And the people close themselves towards this space that should be much bigger and impact their sensations, and question femininity and masculinity. Because it speaks of those bodies that are exposed there. My interpreters and I are there: viscerally wide open. And that's generous. They're not showing off. But on that note, watch the productions, these pseudo-ideas of a super-contemporaneity, which I sometimes think are an atrocious stupidity and an incredible arrogance. What kind of confrontation is it that appears when someone wants to dance Swan Lake and cannot dance anymore? Dance is multiple, but it isn't light. The world of dance mediocritizes the art of dance. I have no doubt. I live together with people from the plastic arts and music, great professionals at a high level, and I don't see people suppressing each other. They have their personal tastes, but they don't negate the work of others. And I see Brazilian dance negating itself. For me, it becomes blind, inside itself, and that way it can survive in the mediocrity in which it lives. I don't know how things are now in London, for example. But it wasn't that way. People wanted identity. There was identity in other places, like France, Germany, Belgium, a little in Portugal. But I didn't see

this kind of negation; I saw a displacement. And here we have a negation. People won't see each other. I find this discussion very pertinent. What hyper-contemporaneity is this that people are living? We never had so much access, through the Internet, through so many communication channels. We see this hyper-communicativity as an access, but what is being made of this access? I sense a society that is copying, that is frightened, lazy. If people today talk about art, they are talking about media. Okay. But they need to have their existences. In each existence, in particular, there is an immense world of work, of a devotion to that *métier*, for these re-interpretations to happen. I see this society as lazy, limited in specific interests. A comfort thing. To reach this place, we must go deeper. This person who dances: soon she is a choreographer and soon she is a teacher. And what's she going to communicate on stage? How will she train others? We have very modern people with their hair, their makeup, and with subtexts that they quickly get on the Internet to be accessible, to have access to groups where they see contemporaneity. They form a flabby modernity.

CN: In your partnerships, could you name a favorite moment, such as a tipping point?

BM - I think it was *Tempo de Verão* (Summer Time, 2004), which was where I made a kind of chandelier in the center of the stage, it was the first time I invaded the stage. Before it was always a panel, it was a more passive thing, the scenery. The decision to invade the scene, to go to three-dimensionality, only came to me there. Márcia doesn't perform shows for a specific theater, so it had to be that way. The installation *Sempre Seu* (Always Yours), [2015-2016], was the first time I could do a specific project [for a space]. But it's always scenery that has to work in many places. And in places you don't even know. This also enters into my question: don't make something that weighs ten tons and cannot be moved. I try to consider all this at the time of development, partly because I don't participate in rehearsals.

BC- What is the creative process like for Márcia's works?

BM: It's very much a conversation with her; she gives me an outline of what she's developing, and from there I begin to think about the image. As I said, an occasion when I invaded the scene only occurred for the first time in 2004. So we needed a bigger conversation. It wasn't only the image, the object, but also the movement of the dancers. But based on this general conversation I generally develop what

I think can work. We talk from there: you can think and talk and not necessarily follow the rehearsals. Of course, the moment you have a specific space, such as in *Sempre seu*, you need to go to the space. It is conceived for a specific space or theater, made for this theater, funded by that theater, and I will have to conceive something that is for that theater. In a collaborative project, I am open to discussion, but I always have the question of mobility, of storage: how to deal with it without undermining the creative part of the work. I'd rather do something adaptable than a fantastic thing that would later be impractical, which is what happens most often. The artist has no limit, can do what she wants, and then an endless discussion begins that hinders the two sides, or even makes the work not happen. As I think the most important thing is that it happens - and well - it is best to start with this marriage.

BC- But about the conversation, for example, to get to the panels of Joaquim Maria [2000], where did you start? To do it that way and not another?

BM - I'm going to talk about *Sempre Seu* (2016), which is more recent because from it I remember, I remember Márcia's questions, the conversations that we had. In *Tempo de Verão* [2004], for example, it was the first scenery in which I brought dance information to my work. All others were in the reverse order. It was from it — *Tempo de Verão* — that I began to introduce three-dimensional thinking into my own work. In my show in New York last year (2015), for example, I showed my first three sculptures. This set has spawned a host of other things. It was the only set to do this, creating a different route within my work: it invaded my territory. So there was no way it couldn't affect me. And in *Sempre Seu*, what happens? We had a site-specific, already well-populated environment, and I participated in the general thinking of this environment, along with Chico Cunha, who is an architect, and helps me with public works. He was part of this conversation, on how to make the spaces work. For the dance set itself, I wanted something tranquil. The scenes already had people divided, which is an issue with which Márcia works. So, I wanted to start from this set, but without doing something too imposing, too dazzling. And then came the idea of the stripes. But working with vinyl was a problem because I depended on imports. To make them with materials from here, there were seven changes of color combinations, and I almost gave up. Seeing the colors I used on the bottom panel of the Oi Futuro building, you clearly see two shades of gray, one brown, one orange, and one red that anyone would identify as red. I did what I could. We based it on one of the ideas that I gave to the whole of *Sempre seu*: that orange sofa, from the same space. It all came from that orange, from that

sofa. From there I got the idea of making a unit. They were basic colors, but that's what I had to work with. I wanted the pastel tones to get a little into the issue of femininity: there were two women, a delicate moment. So I kept, let's say, those colors for the set. The mirror was a way for you to reflect, to split, even to divide, and the striped is already a division in itself. As I am an abstract artist, I like to leave room for the creation of the viewer. Márcia works a lot with literature, while I don't. This is one thing that never entered my studio: literature as a reference. I thought of the work as something that was going to enter this choreographic, literary space. But I thought about how this could communicate independently of any literary, theoretical, or poetic explanation. I like to use that as a tool. I think it's important.

CN- Were the letters literature in *Sempre seu*?

BM: They were, but I also like to ignore this. In the public works where I work, when it comes to a space under construction, you cannot go there and see the space. At most, you see the area, the surroundings. With Márcia, I listen to the works, but when I go to the studio, I work with the imagination, the same way I work with public works, regardless of what the architect thought, but respecting it.

CN- But for Márcia's shows, do you imagine things from the point of view of the audience or the dancers?

BM- All of it. There is the story, which Márcia will develop, the stage movement she gives me. Not in the sense of the choreography itself, because I don't follow the rehearsals. But I know there are people walking around. In this sense I said that I can change this issue, of visiting, of going to rehearsals. Because if there really is an invasion of that space, I'll have to start seeing where the dancer is going, not to put a "boulder" in the way. I don't work with theater, nor do I have an interest, precisely because of this question: I have difficulty accompanying rehearsals; they are something I don't like. It's a very collective thing, the whole time. I have difficulty dealing with this. I have difficulty thinking about how you make a set for a space, entering the three-dimensional, and that you will deal with choreography, not knowing where it will be shown. From a certain point you start to invade a professional area, which is that of scenography, and I don't have that expertise. Then, from a moment: one needs to add another person: an architect who has an understanding of space, a set designer, a consultant - people who know how to handle it. In fact, it's an issue that goes beyond accompanying rehearsals. There

is a technical question that is fundamental. It is like the dance itself: there are also the limits of the human body. The limits are giving the specificity, and they bring solutions. For me, as an artist, what is interesting is exactly the specificities of these worlds, in the sense of reasoning about it. Because in my own work I am free. It is I who create the norms for myself. There are invitations that I have accepted, for things I did and tried, and which I don't feel like continuing, because they don't bring me a reward. In the case of dance there is a return — to sit and watch the show, see the dancers in the middle of it. This somehow fills me, brings me a reward.

CN- Márcia, what was your favorite moment of the partnerships with Beatriz? Was it *Tempo de Verão*?

MM - No, it's not just in *Tempo de Verão*. But this work has a singularity that the others may not have had, in the sense of such a big impact, because in it Beatriz enters in a more three-dimensional way into the scene, in the physical space. And there is another issue, which still appears today, in my *Cebola* project [premiered at MAM- Museu de Arte Moderna / São Paulo / Ocupação Vesica Piscis, July, 2016]. It is the place of circularity, which is very latent, deep in my work. In *Tempo de Verão*, at that moment, there was this great circular candelabrum, full of wheels that took up a space. For me, the physical space is the interpreter. The space in my dance isn't the theater or the art gallery; it is the interpreter. When Beatriz brings this three-dimensionality, which for her was already an issue, it could actually bother me, because it delineated a physical space that I don't like to outline. At the same time I celebrated it, because it only showed me how much my work isn't based on this theatrical physical stage space, wherever it may be. This only showed me the diversity of planes, angles, places where I am really supported. So I got rid of that candelabrum, to show that I was not stuck. Paulo Herkenhoff, a great thinker and curator, says this in Beatriz's book and I'm examining this also in my own work. He saw these instances of a strong interweaving between Beatrice's work and mine, in this work, *Tempo de Verão*. I think this work reveals this without shame. I remember premiering this work with one of the greatest performers I've had. She told me that she had never danced so hard. She was a refined dancer, with a richness, physical potential and technical power. And the work "projected" certain bridges of knowledge that she herself didn't know. We discussed this question, and with her, I could also see that it dealt with this expansion, and that these circular nuclei seek a stage freedom, a distancing, to which Beatriz's scenery forced us. For a duet, a duet that gave me a prize abroad, this dancer asked me if she could stay inside the

diameter of Beatrice's work, as that would ground her. At the time I said no, but then said, "Go, do it, I want to preserve you." Before I could expand what I wanted before. With Beatriz's scenery came a restraint on a person in which I saw a lot of freedom. There was change. Later this dancer was replaced by Fernanda Reis, a dancer very different than she, and this broke the scene out, in an imaginary line "expanding and exploding" that scenery, which is never a prop, isn't something static. It is a living, modular scenery, mounted "by the meter" in several panels. It can be mounted in several different spaces, in various ways, without losing its meaning. Which also happens with the *Tempo de Verão* scenery. It ends up having a relation with the work of the Beatriz, as in the sculptures that she does today, and is part of the shows. That came from this experience, which we see now and in *Meu Prazer* [My Pleasure, 2008]. *Tempo de Verão* brings this internal discussion to us, as sisters, in this unfrontalized partnership. Sometimes people don't believe it, but we don't talk much. I arrive here in the studio, after my work goes through several layers of research, to have a solidity that I seek. There is also a desire of mine that the work of this other artist might never be literal. So I never show all my cards. I don't reveal everything. I would say that this relationship, between Beatriz and myself, is a very noisy silence, which hangs very freely. We talk much more now, because of the installation *Sempre Seu* (2016). There is a lack of competition between artists, who look at the work of the other to instigate, not to compete. Beatriz was worried sometimes because she was very exuberant and that it could affect my work. But I was never afraid that this strong, exuberant work, which has its own light, could negatively affect my own work -- because a work, by its exuberance, can avoid perceptions in certain moments of subtlety. I never had this concern as far as Beatriz's work was concerned, so she could be quite free to bring this subjectivity and from that we could, and will, create. Our dialogue is centered on this quest for knowledge, in giving a slap to the face of the unknown. I think Beatriz made it very clear when she says that work needs to come back to her, to generate something, to challenge the knowledge she thinks she has at that moment. It is uncomfortable. Often the work was done in spaces where I didn't believe it should happen. This was no problem with the *Tempo de Verão* chandelier, which was modular. In *Camélia* (2013), the modules turned into a suspended forest, a vertical garden, a starry sky of rural areas. I would say that that for me was decisive. I was not going to enter into just any place with that, because it bothered me. I don't remember having been uncomfortable with anything other than this. In all the others, somehow, I found a harmony, even if it was not the ideal scene for the volume of Beatriz's scenery; I could get something out, without losing the work. But the opposite of a confrontation can happen. We took

Camélia to Italy. It was unexpected. It was in an atrium. I took the whole scenery of eight thousand elements and thought that I would disappear in the atrium, that the work was going to get lost. The whole assembly was a struggle: steel cables and chandeliers that were falling, but it worked. We were applauded for an hour.

CN- Márcia, if you were going to show us a picture of your art now, what would it look like?

MM- I like to finish the ideas in each of the works. There is little repetition between one and another. Even inside the works, what we see of repetition is something of a gesture, which is being worked over and digested by the dancers. At that moment we were past *Sempre Seu*, and I was working on a project, *Cebola* [São Paulo, July 2016]. For this event, which is with Laban's people, I took a close look to understand how my work affects others. With this, I arrived in a place I had already entered with the dancers. I have choreographic files that don't go on stage, a lot of things that we worked on but that I cut out of the shows. *Cebola* has traces of *Sempre Seu*, which is one of its roots. I died laughing at the idea of the onion. It's a root, it's round, it's got layers, and it makes you cry. I found a perfect image. I work with layers. It's a root because it's about my base. And my job is the kind that is emotional.

BC- Beatrice, what is the picture of your art at the moment?

BM- I am, first of all, a painter. My work base and development since 1983 is painting. But since 1996 I have been developing prints: serigraphs with Durham Press [a studio in Pennsylvania, in the United States]. I had a very important meeting with Jean Paul Russel – the owner of Durham, who works with me as a printer. I started collaborating with him – he as a technician and I as an artist, and it was a very good partnership. I was able to introduce serigraphy in my work, which I always wanted to work with. But I didn't have the kind of studio here that I wanted. In 2003, I made my first collages of paper on paper, which also came from a line of thinking back there in the 1980s, from school, and that I recovered in my painting technique, which I developed myself and which has a relation with collage thinking. I started to open my language to various techniques that began an interchange. From that comes the scenery that I make only for Márcia — it isn't a door that I am interested in opening, in fact. Thinking about how my work could participate in this dance environment, to introduce me to a new way of thinking. Like painting, it's something that really takes a lot of energy. More and more I feel

like I have to save that energy. Painting is something I will work on in a few moments. I cannot always paint in my routine. It's something that requires a lot of energy. I'm happy because I have the luck to be able to work in other languages, in other media, and to keep thinking about the work, to continue thinking about the work. These new media bring me new questions, new issues, which then return to painting. Initially they took things from painting so that they really could exist. From that point on, I brought things to the painting. In 2004, I introduced the idea of working with public space and architecture. It came from an invitation from Selfridges, the English department store. It was for an intervention on the facade of their building in Manchester [Gávea, Projeto Brasil 40º], which opened a new door for me, quite surprising for me. It was a super challenge, seven floors of facade, 30 by 40 meters. "How am I going to do that?" "What's going to happen?" I asked, and for some reason that motivated me. "I'm very much a studio artist, I don't like to be in the street, on the move, checking production. It's like I say to Márcia: [I prefer] anything to staying in a theater, in rehearsal. I have no patience. I'm a person from here, from the studio. Gavéa was the first. Then I introduced an old technique, which is no longer used because of digital, on adhesive vinyl for Peace and Love [adhesive vinyl panel for the Gloucester Road Station Project - Platform for Art, London Underground, London, 2005-2006], Guanabara [adhesive vinyl panel for the Tate Modern Restaurant, Level 7, London, 2005-2007] and Bailinho, [Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo, 2008]. It's cutting and collage, and that today has become an expensive technique, because it depends on the technician's hand, and there are almost no more craftsmen who do that sort of thing. I work with an English group from Manchester, it's a wonderful family venture, and it's always them. When I do these works, in collaboration, I like to settle with a group, who understands you, who knows, and from there I develop a relationship. In Brazil, I even found another one, because of the set of Sempre Seu [2016] by Márcia. It was the first one I did here with Brazilians. This possibility of public works is something I have been engaged in ever since. In recent years I started to be invited to do permanent works, because all these, like the Pinacoteca, were for the season. When the season is over they are withdrawn. The first permanent one was for the Taschen Publishing store [The Dream (O Sonho)- New York, in a project with Philippe Stark]. There were six panels. There the question of the permanent began, which is another aspect. In a permanent work you start to have to deal with architects and engineers, which is a brand new world. Of course, there is a new relationship with the public. You go with your art to a different space. Somehow this scenery for Márcia does the same thing. The audience went there to see the dance. Your work enters a story that isn't the story of my work exactly. You have to

be generous about it. The plastic artist is very lonely, within his universe, like me in my studio. In a project for a building, you have to think about what this building is for. For example, I'm working on a project for a large hospital in New York. I have to be open: I do what I believe in my project, but I have to be open to listening to what people are going to say. The color can be very strong. The hospital needs a welcoming environment in a delicate moment. This is interesting to me. In the scenery, the same thing: I cannot do my scenery and forget that there are dancers in the scene. This is the moment of my work: the question of public work dealing with architecture.

CN- What is Brazil, in the work of each one of you? As a source, inspiration, reference, environment? What is it to live here and make art here, and how does it reveal itself in your work?

BM- As a painter, thinking, it was very evident to me that pictorial thinking was not developed in Brazil. It comes from Europe, mainly, and after that the USA. Because it is a thought from another part of the world, those who deal with this medium need to go there, but starting from their own research. This all comes to you when suddenly, here in Rio in the 1980s, you decide to be a painter. The course of painting with Charles Watson always related to thinking, and with a type of thinking that wasn't done in Brazil at any time in our history, and which even he didn't know so much about. At the same time, at home we always had a contact with Brazilian culture and art. We could not avoid it, even if we wanted to. Besides, I was there in Parque Lage. Charles himself was telling me to take materials from here, from Carnival, to work. He could have said that it was folklore, it was corny, but no. Here, in this forest, in this heat, in this ocean, will you become Matisse? There's no way! It's the same question that Tarsila [do Amaral] must have had when she studied abroad and then returned to Brazil. The big question isn't the culture itself; it's the context. I am an international artist, I could work anywhere else in the world, but I never had this doubt. I nose dived in New York, where they invented the art market. At the same time, the Brazilian artists [who did this] ended up staying there. But for me it was important to have my home, to come back here. I needed this environment. I needed to be close to nature. I discovered this. Here I had a quality of life that wasn't financial. It was emotional, psychological. The family close by, my environment. I didn't want to give it up. In New York I looked at the studios of my contemporaries and I thought I didn't want to live there. So, Brazil had this issue, which was the context. Because you will never think as a European, even if you are international and your work communicates with diverse other cultures.

The context in which you are situated is what will make this story happen or not.

NM- I need to start with the family nucleus. As Beatriz said, it was impossible for us not to be contaminated by the valorization of our language, our thinkers, our hymns. As our parents are very strong people, Beatriz and I have been filled by this place of never forgetting who you are, and where you come from. This continually rubs up against your life, because Brazil is valued. Because your vision values your places. Also in the School of Dance [currently the Maria Olenewa Dance School, Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theater] we saw an immense appreciation of Brazilian art. When I started getting into issues as a choreographer - and this calls for another kind of decision in your life - it had to be Brazil! They were references to Brazilian artists who came, in principle, from our family. My father and mother have given us almost a mission: you have to look everywhere; don't ignore anyone. Meanwhile, in my work, this has never been an easy hook, neither for the expression, nor for the narrative layers, nor for the songs, always difficult, complex, which the public doesn't always see in Brazil. Now in *Semper Seu* (2016), it was the first work in which I put a musician who was not Brazilian. But about Brazil, I've always had the job of finding out -- I'm interested in knowing who I am, and for that I need to seek my roots. This is far from demonstrative, arrogant. On the contrary, it is a question of sharing this with the other Brazilians.