

INSTITUTIONS

Escola Brasil:

Other Names: Escola de Arte Brasil

Abertura: 1970 (Brasil, São Paulo, São Paulo)

Fechamento: 1974 (Brasil, São Paulo, São Paulo)

Analysis

History

A 'centre of artistic experimentation dedicated to developing the creative capacity of the individual' announced the catalogue of the Escola Brasil: [Brazil School:] in the year of its creation, 1970. The project, conceived in 1968 by a group of São Paulo artists, José Resende (1945–), Carlos Fajardo (1941–), Luiz Paulo Baravelli (1942–) and Frederico Nasser (1945–), was based on the idea that training in art was above all about the experience within the studio and not the formalised training in history, techniques and methods that had been established by traditional art schools. An anti-academic principle drove the proposal and researches of the school, translated both into its physical space and its work routine. 'We have abolished chairs, subjects, the rigid divisions and the fragmentation of artistic knowledge', affirmed the text of the catalogue. The two full stops at the end of the name indicated the openness of the proposal, something indefinable, and according to many, an irony in the face of the nationalism of the military governments. On the political climate of the day, Baravelli indicated that: 'In 1968, when we began to conceive the school, things became seriously repressive with AI-5 and we were at that age when you have a longing to travel, emigrate, etc; The temptation was great and the conditions favourable, but we decide to dig in here and face up to our condition as Brazilians, with AI-5 and everything else'.

Working in the building of a former pharmaceutical laboratory in Santo Amaro, the School prized large spaces due to the flexibility of use that they permitted. Without defined disciplines or a single orientation, the training of the pupils took place in stages of various lengths as a function of individual progress. The central axis consisted of four workshops, each one directed by one of the artists, organised on the basis of different foci and conceptions, but whose independent functioning assumed the possibility of dialogue between distinct visions. The first stages of teaching were structured through proposals for collective exercises. The next stage consisted of studios in which the student chose a professor to monitor his/her work on a daily basis. Someone could enrol for courses in the morning, the afternoon or the evening', explained Baravelli. 'The course took up five days, three hours a day, with one day for each of us and one day of free work. Enrolment was permanently open. The pupil took part in one of these collective exercises and continued with the course from there onwards'. This formal structure was accompanied by optional workshops outside regular hours: in engraving, directed by Babinski (1931–) and later by Dudi Maia Rosa (1946–); in wood and metal under Baravelli; in photography under Claudia Andujar (1931–) and George Leary Love (1937 – 1995).

The project's origins went back to the meeting of the four artists on the courses of Wesley Duke Lee (1931–), at the start of the 1960s. In 1966, they were responsible, together with Geraldo de Barros (1923 – 1998), Nelson Leirner (1932–) and Wesley Duke Lee, for the creation of the Grupo Rex [Rex Group], for the bulletin/magazine Rex Time and for the opening of the Rex Gallery and Sons. In José Resende's words, 'the school provided continuity for the professional activities of each individual and was driven by independence and rejection of the art world'. All of this, he added, was 'driven by Wesley Duke Lee, and the corrosive and critical humour of his works'. Between 1968 and 1970, Fajardo, Resende, Baravelli and Nasser exhibited

together at the Petite Galerie (Rio de Janeiro), at Art Art (São Paulo), at the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art (MAM/RJ) and at the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo (MAC/USP). The collaboration between the four artists, before and during the functioning of the Escola Brasil, was based on the articulation of different artistic visions. If this is true, some ex-pupils would attempt to pinpoint a 'Brasil: style'. According to the critic, Ivo Mesquita, the characteristics of those who passed through the school may be seen in 'drawing, acrylic-liquid colours, broad and marked brushes, many hand-made canvases, a taste for the handmade and a concern with finishing'. Artists attending the school between 1970 and 1974 included: Boi (1944-), Dudi Maia Rosa, Sérgio Fingermañ (1953-), Flávia Ribeiro (1954-), and the gallery owners, Luisa Strina and Regina Boni, among others. This reveals the importance of the school in training individuals who would assist in revitalising the São Paulo art world. The testimonies of the founders mention a total of approximately 400 pupils. Despite its brief duration, from 1970 to 1974, the Escola Brasil: has entered the history of the visual arts in Brazil as an innovative and unique experience. If it did not inaugurate movements or trends, it trained a wide variety of artists. When it closed, the four artists responsible for the project also ended their professional collaboration.

Research Source

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Realização

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