

Grasping the ungraspable, a journey through time and space

Many places I have been and many marvels I have witnessed in my life, but perhaps none of these have been as significant as the encounter with the object I'm about to tell. This discarded little envelope I found myself in the library with, not suspecting how it would become my fixation. An envelope that contained the world inside it. It both revealed and mocked it as if laughing at man's use of reason. What I present now is nothing more than a humble attempt to grasp the secrets I suspect lie here.

For I have managed to take full pictures, I shall show them so the reader can see, but beware not to be so naïve as to believe, an image can help you attain what kind of object this is, for not even me, who for months feverishly studied this artefact am not able to say.

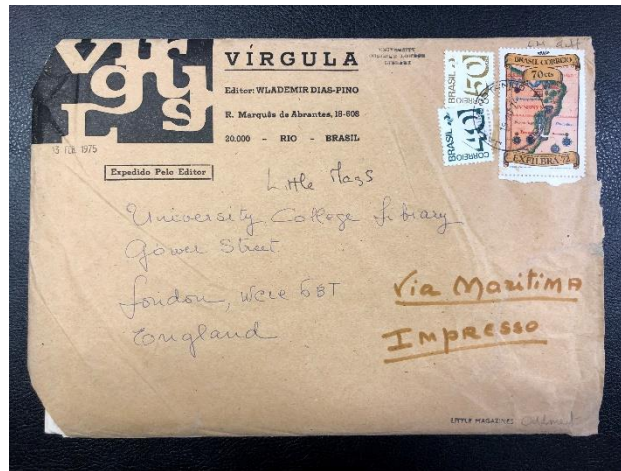


Figure 1. Exterior appearance of the object. (Photograph taken by me)

The first thing I encountered was a brown travel envelope half letter size, delicate to the touch and with wearing marks on it. Sent as a mail, I could see from the stamps on the top right corner it came from Brazil. The source address being R Marquês de Abrantes street 18-608, in Ríó. A common street owing its name to a nobility title recalling Portuguese colonial rule, and the place where the 13th of February 1975 Wladimir Dias-Pino came to send the package. Though of this event there is now no more trace, finding instead today only a residential building with a café. As for the destination, it is where it is has been since a University library with no one paying much academic endeavors to it. The reason for the sending, whether a present or an acquisition remains still a mystery to me.



Figure 2. Envelope with the content out. (Photograph taken by me)

Opening the envelope, I found myself grappling with a series of loose-leaf papers without beginning or end forming an endless cycle of re-readings. These were topped by inscriptions that lingered between symbols and an unknown language. The transparency of the paper is something I haven't been able to forget, allowing for a successive overlapping that equally confused the front and the back, the past of what has been written and the future of what is bound to come. Along with it, the blankness of inner pages, that with the precise distribution of the characters turned the representations physical, aware of their own being object, content and form intimately intertwined.

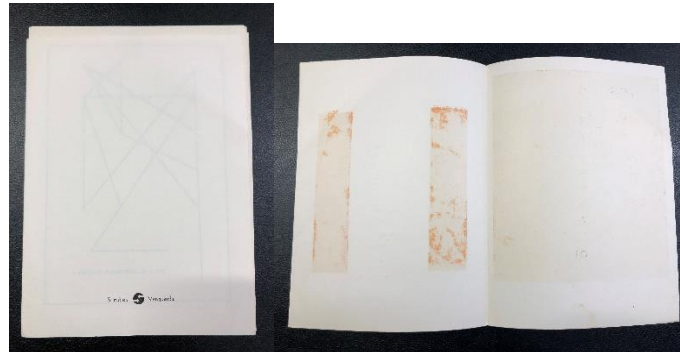


Figure 3. Transparency and blank pages. (Photograph taken by me)

After further inspection I began to notice it was a compendium of different authors, the papers being individually signed. Who these people were, I have been partly able to uncover. A group of artists, they call themselves, though the term doesn't appear to mean anything nowadays. They identified under the movement of poema-processo and were determined to set man free of all authoritative regimes. This included a military dictatorship that had taken place in Brazil at the time, but was not restricted to it, it pretended as well to liberate man from the oppression set by the conventions of space and time, by how we have codified reality. Not knowing what I would find I judged the project as ambitious and wondered if it was really possible for an object to reach beyond itself, and I laughed at the irony of this revolution slaved in a collection room almost inaccessible to the public.

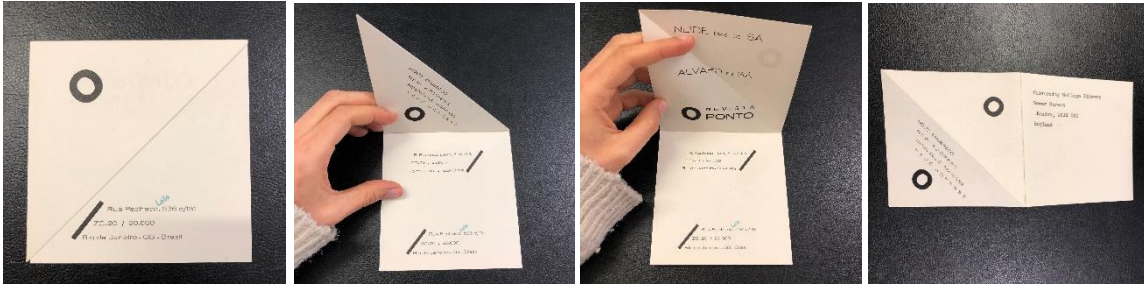


Figure 4. Mini booklet. (Photograph taken by me)

But the first booklet, a tiny maze, stopped my arrogance right away. The piece was supposed to be only a sort of presentation card, but already questioned the position of the reader in regard to the handling of the object that had to be opened, rotated, explored, and that at the same time gave an appearance of symmetry, while being slightly out of phase, showing a big 'O' to coincide across the pages, but not really matching diagonally

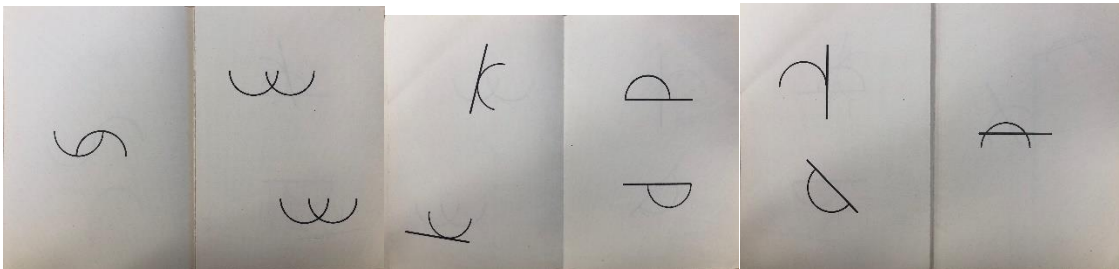
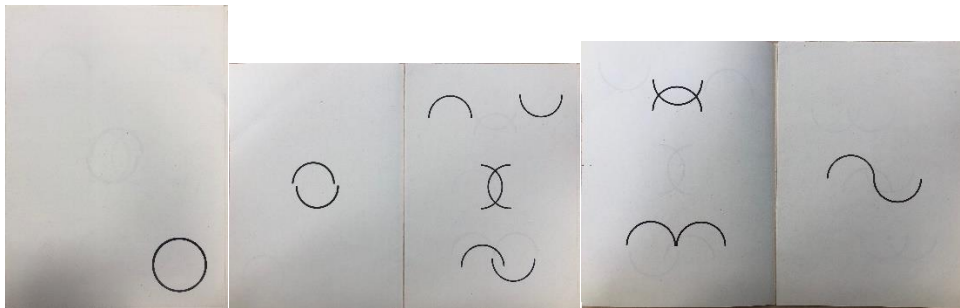


Figure 4. Poem by Neide Sa. (Photograph taken by me)

The same mocking of movement I saw on the second booklet I inspected, constituted primarily of geometric forms. Some of the forms seemed cropped and rotated alphabet letters, that seemed to float, and then seemed to move, to separate and rearticulate during an eye blink, they were synchronizing once again and deviating, a reference to an ancient symbol a rune or to a computer type that now had been displaced. These recalled the notion of plane, of circle, but measuring them did not help to fix them. Neither can we say they spoke solely the language of geometry, for it could be calculus and algebra as well. Calculus the branch that concerns itself with change, a change of precisely the diverging and converging sequences and series, carried to a limit, here only it's the limit of

meaning. Algebra, the one concerned with operations of adding, multiplying and subtracting elements, here in space, from space, through space.

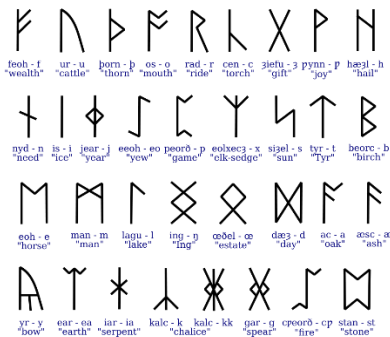


Figure 5. Rune alphabet. (Wikipedia, 2008) Figure 6. Chinese Seals (Ingold, 2007) Figure 7. Evolution of the symbol of an ox to an 'a' (Ingold, 2007) Figure 8. Creation of a typeface in Illustrator (Thomas, 2014)

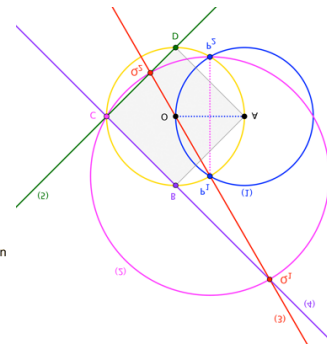
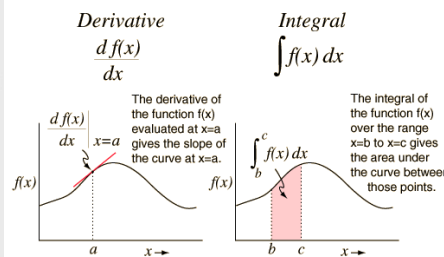
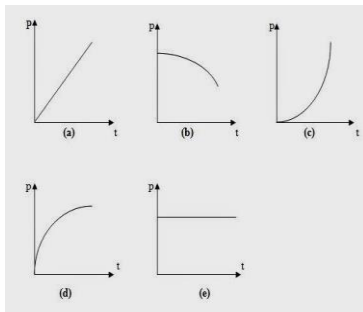


Figure 8. Graphs showing the possible momentum of an electron according to Newton's second Law (Useful resources for physics examinations, 2014) Figure 9. Explanation of derivative and integral functions (Derivatives and Integrals, n.d) Figure 10. Euclidean Geometry (Exchange stack, 2016)

This disintegration of meaning was also present in the third piece through the irony of *solida* (solid). Already read in an awkward way, upward, and with such a shape that wouldn't imply solidity at all, the words come apart, the sound comes apart too. The linear reading becomes an instant one and then the eye flickers among the constellations like possible line graphs created by the joining of the dots where there were once units of meaning, the meaning is blurred as in a game, the codes are mixed and then beneath are only left the traces, commas (Virgula in Portuguese) visual and literary signs at the same time, stripped of sound in the interstice, hovering.

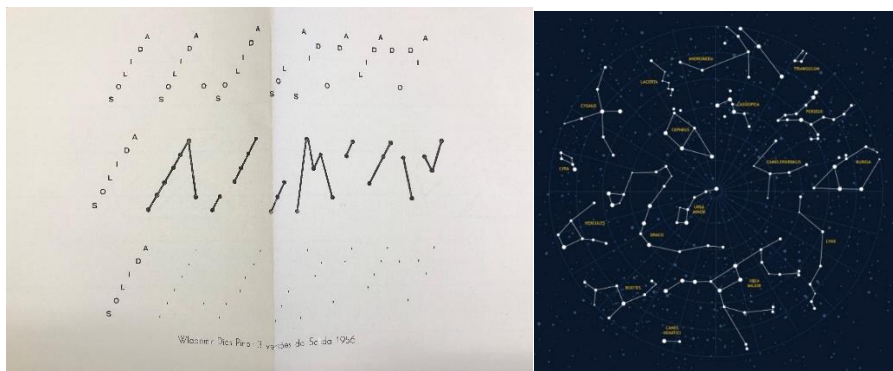


Figure 11. Poem by Wladimir Dias-Pino (Photograph taken by me) Figure 12. Constellation map (Blanchard, n.d)

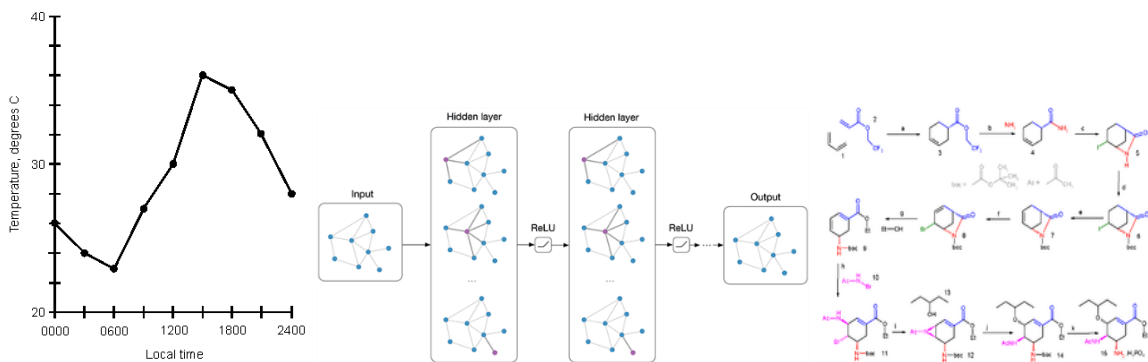
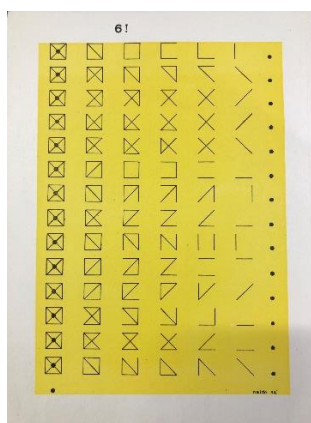


Figure 13. Line Graph (Tech target, 2011) Figure 14. Convolutional network (Kipf, 2016) Figure 15. Organic chemistry reactions (Wikipedia, 2006)

These could be paired with the paper sheet apparently titled 6! Only here there are multiples directions of reading. The possible ways of disintegration for the same form, here indeed a solid form with stability, are shown from left to right until what is left is only a point, the basic unit (at least there is one!). But the configuration serves as a matrix, it could also be read from up to down, even diagonally. The 6! could reference the mathematical factorial operation of multiplying the numbers smaller to the given one, and that is used in combinatorics and in algebra for the study of the possible combinations of numbers as well as of mathematical symbols and their manipulation, only here regarding the possibilities also of space.



$$\begin{aligned}
 1! &= 1 \\
 2! &= 2(1) = 2 \\
 3! &= 3(2)(1) = 6 \\
 4! &= 4(3)(2)(1) = 24 \\
 5! &= 5(4)(3)(2)(1) = 120
 \end{aligned}$$

Figure 16. Poem by Neide Sá (Photograph taken by me) Figure 17. Example factorials from 1 to 5 (Tutorials, programs, examples, n.d.)

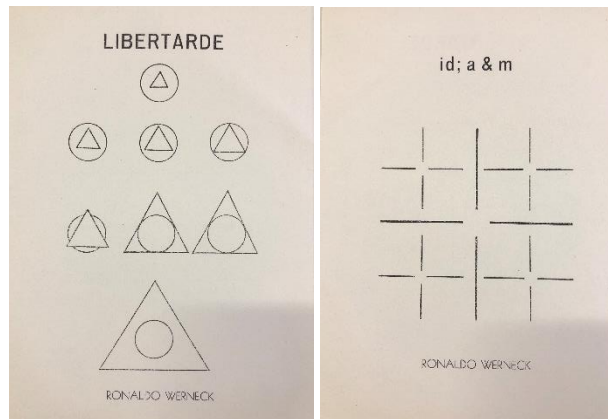


Figure 18. Poem by Ronaldo Werneck (Photograph taken by me)

Libertarde reads the next booklet, which does not appear in the dictionary, but could be a fusion between Liberdade (freedom) and Tarde (late), showing sequentially as if in stop motion the triangle from inside the circle growing in size until confining it completely. Again, another irony of changing from one type of confinement to another, to freedom not being able to arrive, to manifest. The back side of the booklet has a more obscure meaning, with letters and orthographic symbols which relation cannot be traced and a kind of structural grid is portrayed, but the centers are missing. How can man orientate himself without a center, how can it hold? It's a cartesian plane without origin, a reference grid without reference.

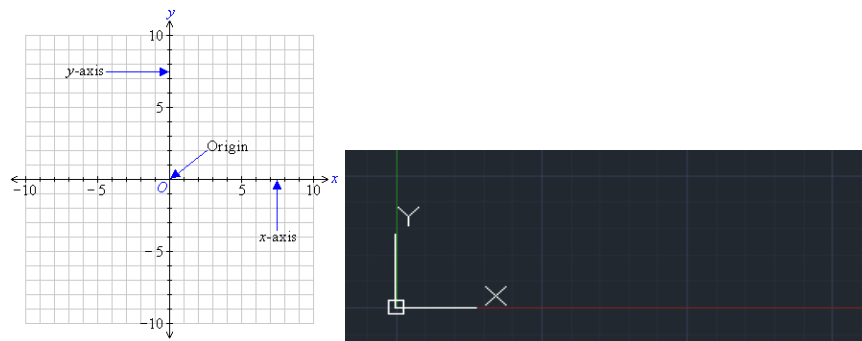


Figure 19. Cartesian plane (Mathsteacher, 2018) Figure 20. Autocad Plane (Morrical, 2011)

In contraposition runs Arimathea's poem, where a clear symbolism is stated between meaning and image on the left side of the page. It could be read as a convention table from a map. The mocking in this case is done within the code and constructs a story. It could read as follows: the man is in the world, the man is hungry, its hunger grows bigger than himself, bigger than the world, it is death. The last symbol, a kind of cosmogony of man in the world and a representation of death.

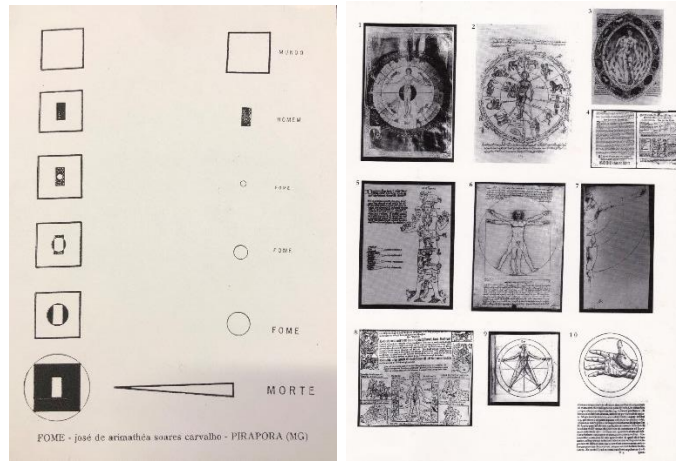


Figure 21. Poem by José de Arimathea Suarez Carvalho (Photograph taken by me) Figure 22. Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne atlas showing the evolution of man in relation with cosmos (Centanni and Bergamo, 2017)

UBD Map Symbols			
Airport - Domestic	Private College	Lookout - 360° view	Scout Hall
Airport - International	Public College	Lookout - 180° view	Service Station
Ambulance Station	Express Post	Masonic Centre	Shopping Centre
Barbecue	Fire Station	Memorial / Monument	Swimming Pool
Cycleway	Golf Course	Motel	Taxi Stand
Boat fueling point	Guide Hall	Picnic	Telephone
Boat Ramp	Hospital	Place of Worship	Toilets
Bowling Club	Hotel	Playground	Weighbridge
Bus Stop	Information Centre	Police Station	Wineries
Camping Area	Kindergarten	Post Office	Distance from GPO
Caravan Park	Library	Private School	Roundabout
Car Park	Lighthouse	Public School	Traffic Lights

Figure 23. Legend of a map (Greenfield, 2008)

Another kind of reading is based on chance. The paper reads: Um coup de dés, moins l'hasard (a dice stroke, reduces chance) then we see what could be a box with dots, the most similar things to a dice, and then shape becomes bidimensional, it now has six sides, the dots have come out and in the end they form a circle, no longer being six but many as if chance itself were playing me. The back of the booklet strongly contrasts, and it is possible to see a countdown next to Apolo written on it. There is order and linearity but at the same time it is talking about the exploration of space, through the movement of the eyes as one reads and though the reference to the spaceship.

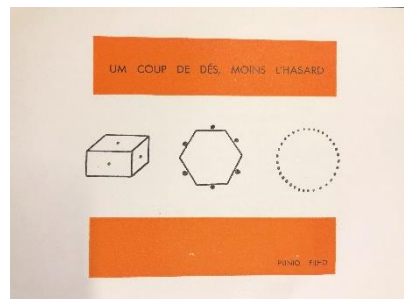


Figure 24. Poem by Plinio Fino (Photograph by me) Figure 25. Dice (Winds blow MahJongg, n.d.)

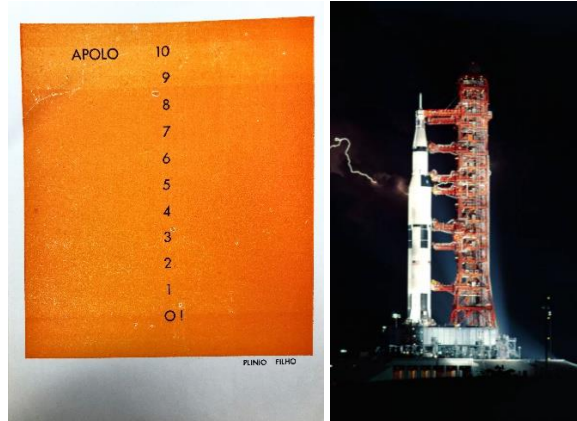


Figure 25. Poem by Plinio Fino (Photograph by me) Figure 26. Apollo spaceship (NASA, 1971)

A different further ahead also relates numbers with space. What seems a random organization of numbers is then discovered to have a structure in sets of four. What creates the confusion is the rotation of each number, but at the end they form a kind of weft. It's the most stable composition of the whole, the only one that ascertains order. Somewhat similar is the weft by Bertolino functioning not through symbols, but through the presence of the ink itself. The word is replaced by the pigment, and the proximity and saturation of the pigment read, forming a pattern, the pattern forming a drawing, a visual. This constitutes a mode of visualizing as in graphs that are read as bar codes, but also of understanding as the concentration principle in chemistry, regulating many of the natural systems

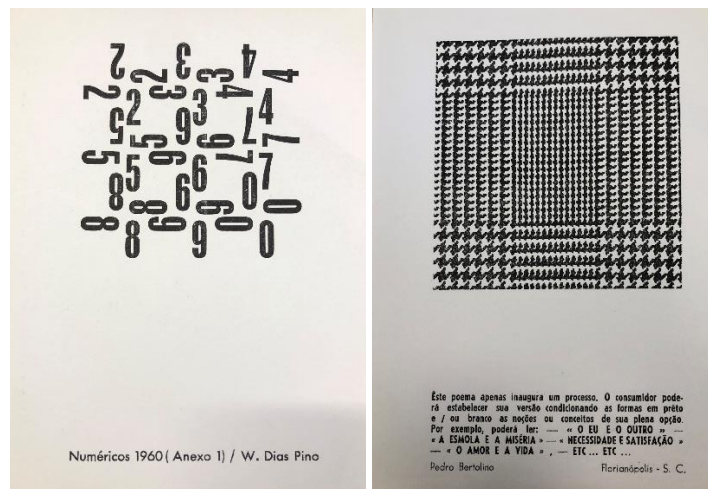


Figure 27. Poem by Wladimir Dias-Pino (Photograph by me) Figure 28. Poem by Pedro Bertolino (Photograph by me)

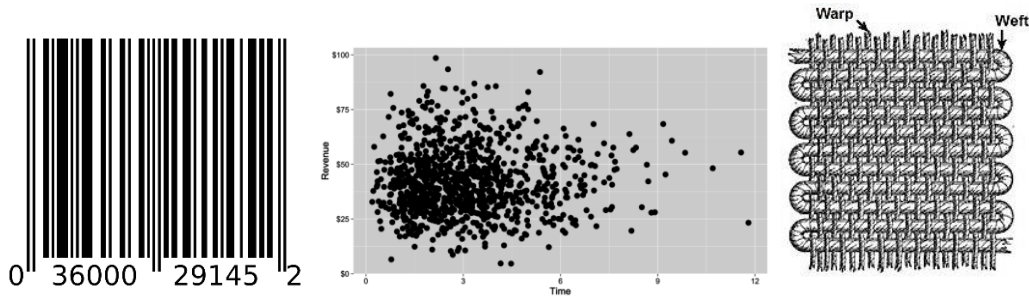


Figure 29. Barcode (Wikipedia, 2018) Figure 30. Dispersion Graph (Outlier, n.d.) Figure 31. Weft (Wikipedia, 2012)

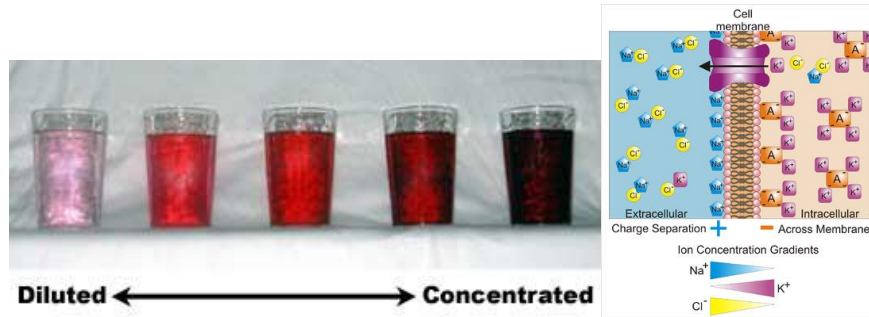


Figure 32. Dilution concentration samples (Wikipedia, 2004) Figure 33. Functioning of a membrane potential (cells communication system) through concentration ions (Wikipedia, 2011)

The poem of Carvalho does something similar translating the line of a circle in dots and then segmenting it, showing a circular rhythm rather than a linear one, but at the same time stripping it to it's fundamental forms until all movement is not created but lost in the bottom part. All the meanwhile, the dotted structure on the right resembles a DNA, an atomic configuration and a satellital system of orbits. Furthermore, the relationship with astronomy is enhanced with the middle figure, recalling also an orbit as well as time with the numbers from 1 to 12 counterclockwise, that are paired with currency signs. The reverse side of the paper reading cosmic Platonism in a more linear way disintegrates an image into letters, that as ladders, allow us to climb, from the heavy weight of matter perhaps into the ideal

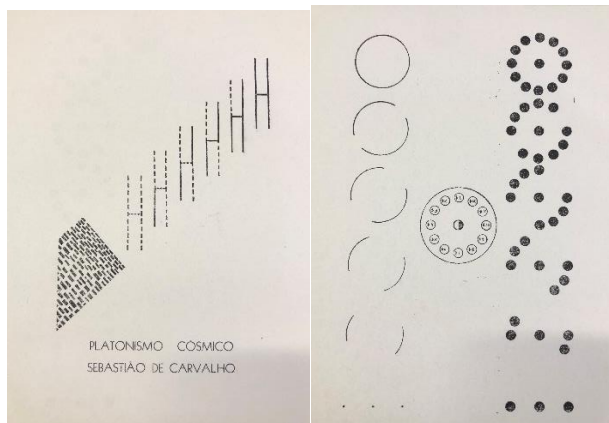


Figure 34. Poem by Sebastia de Carvalho (Photograph taken by me)

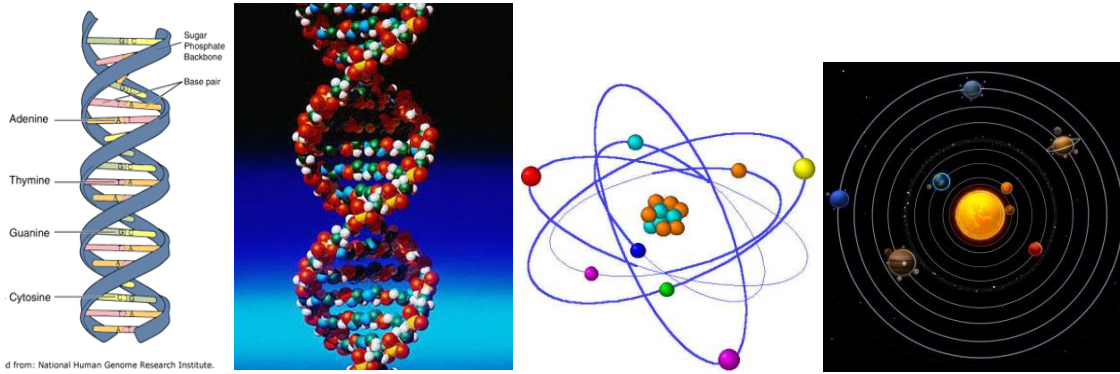


Figure 35. DNA (Virtual genetics education center, n.d.) Figure 36. DNA (Zimmer, 2009) Figure 37. Atom (Techwikihow, 2008) Figure 38. Solar system (Creation is love, n.d)

However in contrast to this directionality, lies Ribeiro's poem Here Troy was (a quote from Virgil's epic poem Aeneid) where it is not clear what the form portrays. As the perspective is confused by the dots and by the lines that should inform it, here the struggle of the conflicting signs could relate to the search for the city of Troy, which location has not been identified yet. The composition tends then towards denial, but more intently to some kind of hole with a vanishing point in the ground.



Figure 39. Poem by P.J. Ribeiro (Photograph taken by me) Figure 40. Volume shaded with depth (Skulptura, n.d.)

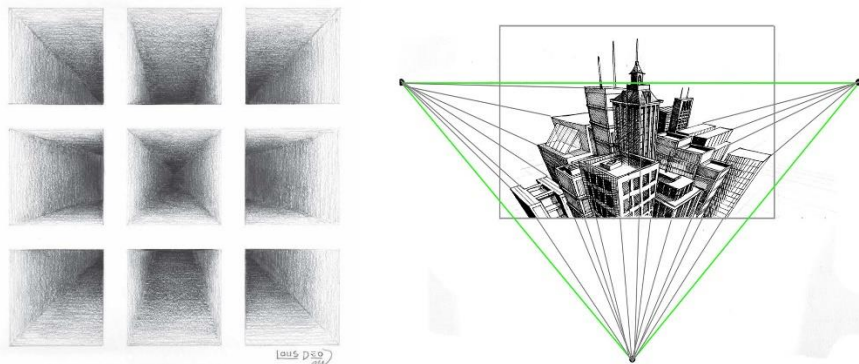


Figure 41. Depth shading (Deo, n.d) Figure 42. Perspective (Heaston, 2018)

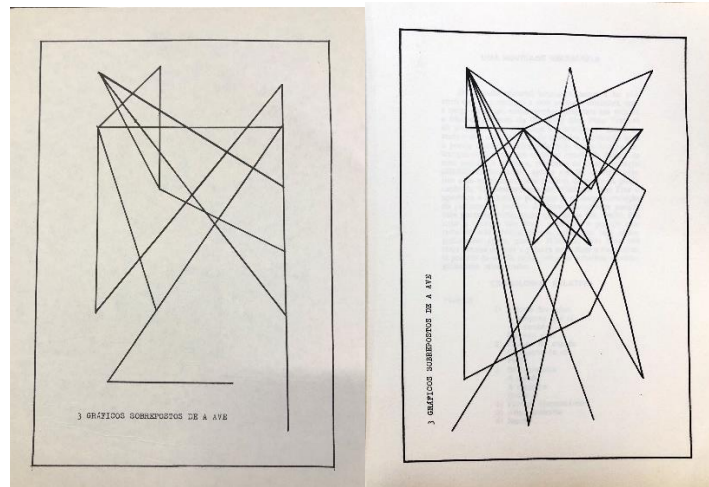


Figure 43. 3 Graficos sobrepostos de a Ave (Photograph taken by me)

In a different way the “3 overlaid graphics of a bird” reconfigure themselves and plays with how we read depth. It is not known which are the three graphics, but trying to find the bird opens up the lines as if folds in space, like an imaginary origami trying to take flight and enclosing or like this booklet pages both in a literal and metaphorical way. It plays with superposition and perspective but also with transparency like the last poems name. In here the picture of transparent boxes withing other boxes and reaching the sky presents itself and then resonates with the materiality of the paper, the layers of color, the layers of paper. It is this intuition that something is behind but is veiled.

So one is left to wonder what is the real artifice, is it really an artifice what I’ve been trying to look up and down and around in this journey. Could it be that this object is more transparent than life? It’s truth deeper? Where does infinity lie? For me, I believe this is the actual space-time travel.



Figure 44. Perspective with construction lines (Vredeman de Vries, n.d.) Figure 45. Muybridge, E. (1887) Bird in Flight. Figure 46. Origami bird (Charhen, 2012)

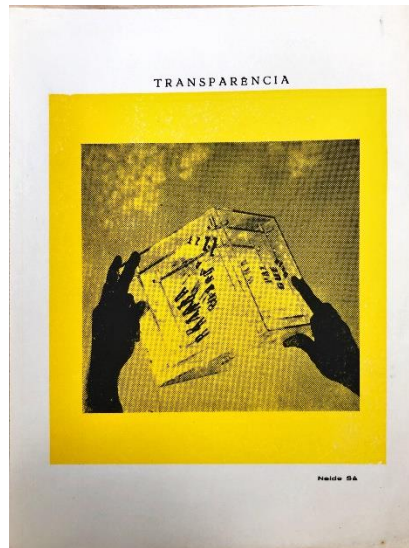


Figure 47. Poem by Neide Sa (Photograph taken by me)

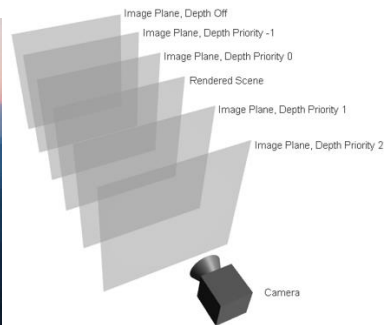
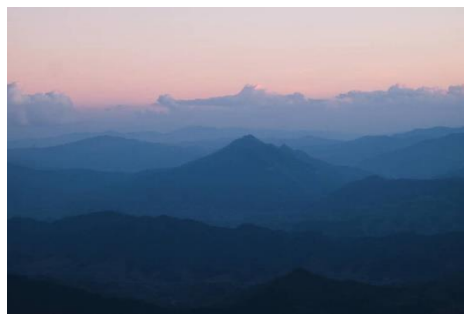


Figure 48. Sunset with color by layers (Papkoom, n.d) Figure 49. Cut section of space (Autodesk, n.d)

Appendix

Name: Virgula

Date: 1972

Author: Wladimir Dias-Pino (Ed.)

Materials: Paper

Art Movement: Process-Poem

Location: UCL Library. Special Collections. Little Magazines

Sources and Further Reading

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