



**“Cinematic Contact Zone:**  
**a study on live practice in participatory documentary filmmaking with Portuguese-speaking diasporic artists in Lisbon”**

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# A ‘cinematic contact zone’ in Lisbon

“Lisbon has been widely known as a territory fertile to multicultural encounters from various communities belonging to Portuguese ex-colonies. However, racism remains significantly expressed in Portuguese society, as indicated by European Social Survey (ESS) from 2018/2019.”

The concept of “contact zone” refers to literary studies definition by Mary Louise Pratt as a space where “cultures, meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt, 1991, p34);

The real-time aspect of it as a main innovative aspect by live visuals. Live Visual Performances (LVP) as: “mediated experience fostered by the intermedial space of merged sound and image, shared during a live, specific, time-bound performance that will eventually come to an end” (Leishamn, 2022, p267).



Fig1. African Lisbon Tour on Transatlantic Slave trade guided by Naky Gaglo (13th April 2023).

## Main Objectives:

To contribute to film studies by exploring and expanding the concept of ‘contact zone’ through the live practice in participatory documentary filmmaking with Portuguese-speaking diasporic artists in Lisbon.



Fig1. Zelu's opening event at Fábrica Braço de Prata in Lisbon on the 21 January 2023.



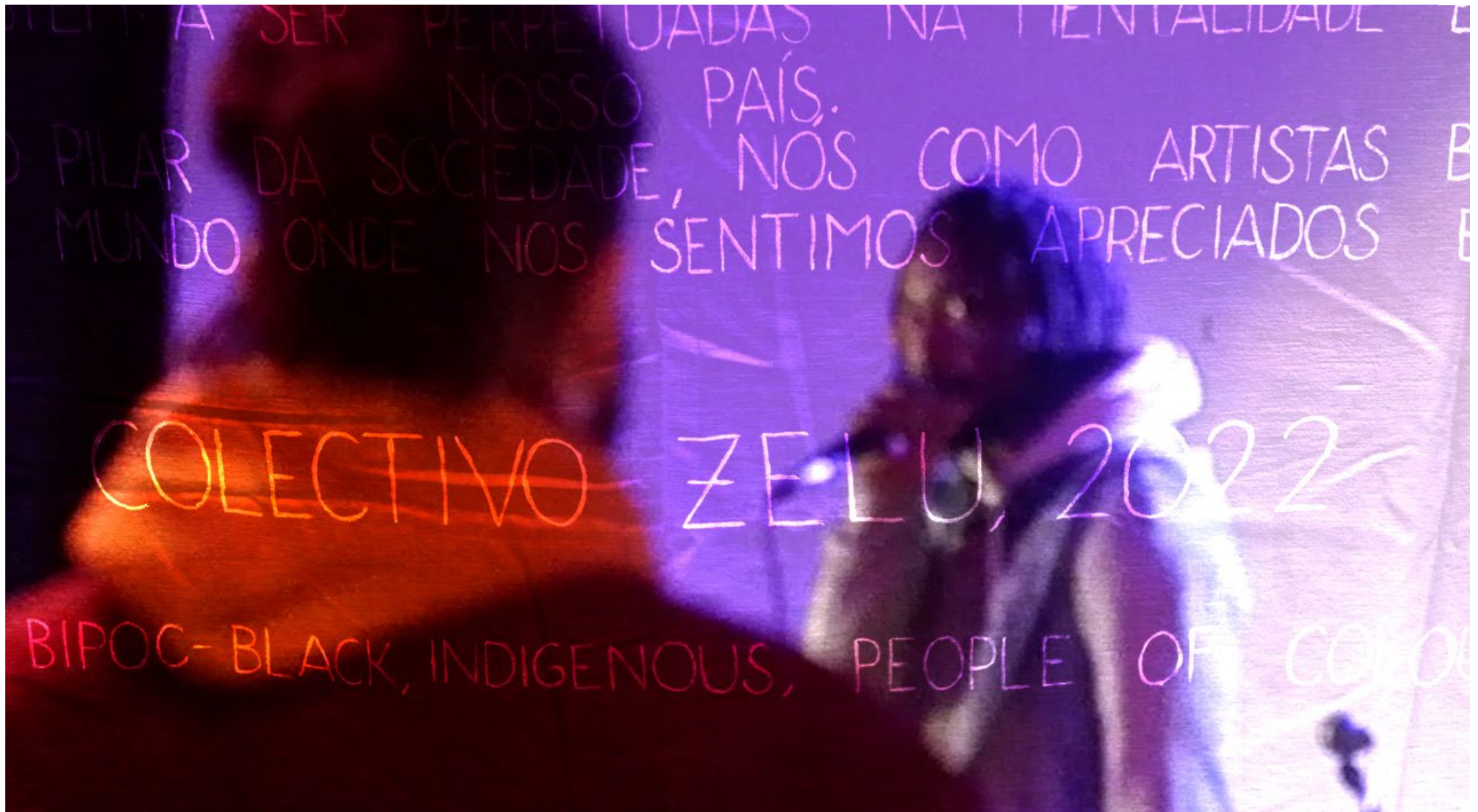


Fig2. Zelu's opening event at Fábrica Braço de Prata in Lisbon on the 21 January 2023.





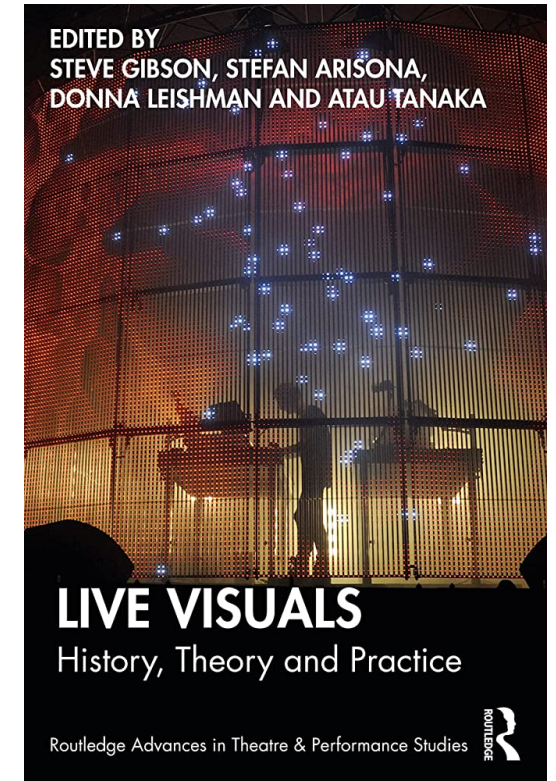
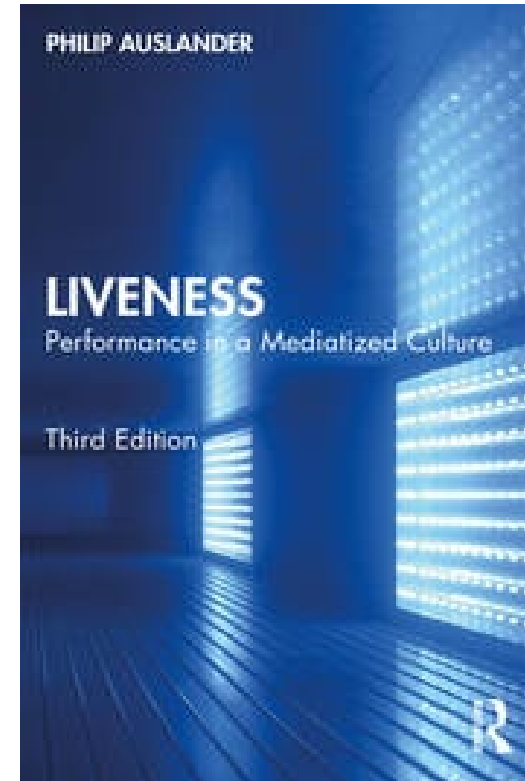
Fig3. Zelu's opening event at Fábrica Braço de Prata in Lisbon on the 21 January 2023 with music performances by Marco Medina and Synik.

# Liveness

- ‘Liveness’ by Philip Auslander(2023/1999) - the authors’ phenomenological perspective of it as relational to conditions of co-presence (temporal/ spatial) and based on ever changing technological advances and spectatorship subjective experiences;
- Chris Allen, a media artist who represents The Light Surgeons, remarked by the authors as the leading initiative of live cinema worldwide:
- “The concept of live cinema is still a fairly new and developing genre within media art that brings together experimental approaches to narrative and non-narrative filmmaking, with live music and the performing arts. Rather than screening a traditional, linear edited film, a live cinema performance allows artists the freedom to experiment and improvise within a selection of different material, prepared video clips, audiovisuals samples, or more generative code-based plugins that can be run in VJ software such as VDMX.” (Gibson, S., Arisona, S., 2023, p305);

## Aesthetic dimension of liveness:

- ‘Innerer Klang’ by Kandisky (2009/1911);
- ‘Artists as a Mediumistic being’ by Duchamp (1975/1957);
- ‘Emotion and technique’ by John Dewey (2010);





# Live Practices with Zelu's artists

## **Location:**

- Cultural associations hosting Zelu's events;
- 3 live sessions for each short-films exhibition;

## **Nature:**

- Music, Visual, Dance;

## **Participation:**

- Artists, Artist-Researcher, physical and remote audience;



Fig4. Zelu's round-table in remote format with the Portuguese-Angolan painter Élio Alezandre at Fábrica Braço de Prata in Lisbon and the psychologist Dra.Nádia Catarina Seidi from Madeira (21/01/23);



# Research Questions:

This research will develop a participatory documentary film combined with live practices as artistic methods to answer to the following questions:

- How do artists exercise agency through live practices in a contact zone? And how can this be engaged with through practices of participatory documentary filmmaking?
- What are the principles and practices directly linked to ‘liveness’ by Portuguese-speaking diasporic artists in Lisbon?
- How live practice in participatory documentary filmmaking can contribute to creating a sense of belonging to individuals in a contact zone?



Fig1. Self-Portrait of the chinese/portuguese artist Margarida Conceição (Daisy) exhibited in Zelu's exhibition at Fábrica Braço de Prata in Lisbon.





Fig1. Painting by the chinese/portuguese artist Margarida Conceição (Daisy) exhibited in Zelu's exhibition at Fábrica Braço de Prata in Lisbon.

## Specific Objectives:

- To produce audio-visual semi-structured in-depth interviews with Portuguese-speaking diasporic artists, who are members of the collective Zelu;
- To develop live editing audio-visual performances in collaboration with artists who participate of Zelu's activities;
- To produce a participatory documentary film which combine documentary short films with audio-visual material produced through live practice;



# Methodologies

## 1. Field Research and Documentary Short Films:

- At the first semester of this artistic research, the literature review and the field research will be developed. An analysis will be created based on field observations on Zelus' cultural gatherings in Lisbon.
- During the second semester of this first year of research, audiovisual material will be produced with artists members of Zelu, a multidisciplinary artist-run collective. A maximum of 7 in-depth semi-structured interviews will be collected, concerning these artists' principles and practices directly related to the 'liveness' aspect of their activities.
- Subsequently, three short-films of 15-minute average length will be produced, based on the collected audio-visual material. The short-films will be created by using the researcher's equipment for visual and audio recording and editing (Sigma FP-compact full-frame interchangeable lens camera, Zoom and Rode wireless recorders, and MacBook Pro 14-inch with M1 chip), as well as Adobe multimedia software, mainly Premiere Pro, already subscribed by the researcher. In parallel, at this stage of data collection, an analysis will be produced to inform the writing of the short films.

# Methodologies

## 2. Live Practice and Article Submission

- During the first part of the second-year of this research, I will start writing for article submission, based on the data collected by the field research and analysis on the short films produced during the first year of this research. In parallel, I will also initiate the preparation for the live practice by acquiring skills on Ableton Live, Touchdesigner and VDMX5. As I hold only basic skills acquired in previous courses focused in these softwares, a period to advance these softwares abilities will be necessary to perform and select the best practices of live editing while exhibiting short films produced in collaboration with Portuguese-speaking diasporic artists in Lisbon.
- At the second semester of the second research-year, I will organise a minimum of three sessions of live audio-visual editing, accompanied by multidisciplinary artists from Zelus in real-time context of cultural gathering of this collective in Lisbon. These sessions will include both local audience participation and live broadcasting through social media networks, such as Instragram, and/or, Youtube.
- At this stage, I will also participate in academic events related to cinema and media arts studies to disseminate the empirical contribution of this research.



# Methodologies

## 3. Hybrid Documentary Long-Feature and Film Public Dissemination

- At this research's third-year first semester, I will combine the documentary short-films with the audio-visual material created in a real-time context with artists and the audiences' participation during the sessions of live audio-visual performances in Lisbon. As well as start analysing this audio-visual material while writing the thesis.
- By the third year, a final thesis' review will be executed, based on previous analyses, empirical observations and literature review. Furthermore, the public dissemination of this artistic research results, such as sharing it to academic networks and wider public through platforms such as Academiaedu and Youtube. As well as, submitting the documentary film to festivals to disseminate the empirical contribution of this research.

# Expected Results

- Explore how different conditions of ‘liveness’ relate to an artist’s agency in contact zones, and, how the concept of contact zone can be applied to cinema studies through the live practices in documentary filmmaking.
- Contribute to film studies with empirical knowledge on live practice in participatory documentary filmmaking in the context of diasporic artists’ agency in a contact zone.
- Publish an article based on the data collected during the first year of this research.
- Participate in film festivals with the participatory documentary film of this proposal.
- Share the results of this artistic research to the academic networks and wider public in both online and offline formats, using platforms such as Academiaedu and Youtube.
- Participate in conferences to disseminate the empirical contribution of this research.
- Collaborate with the FilmEU consortium by participating in events and collaborating on interdisciplinary knowledge in inter-universities.



<https://youtu.be/uYcOlZqGEZs>



Timeline

| 2023-2024                      | SET   | OUT | NOV | DEZ   | JAN   | FEV | MAR | ABR | MAI | JUN | JUL   | AGOS |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|------|
| Literature Review              | 15/09 |     |     | 15/12 |       |     |     |     |     |     |       |      |
| Analysis on field observations | 15/09 |     |     | 15/12 |       |     |     |     |     |     |       |      |
| Semi-structured interviews     |       |     |     |       | 15/01 |     |     |     |     |     | 15/07 |      |
| Editing short films            |       |     |     |       | 15/01 |     |     |     |     |     | 15/07 |      |

# Timeline

| 2024-2025                          | SET   | OUT | NOV | DEZ   | JAN   | FEV | MAR | ABR | MAI | JUN | JUL   | AGOS |
|------------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|------|
| Writing and submitting an article  | 15/09 |     |     | 15/12 |       |     |     |     |     |     |       |      |
| Preparation for live sessions      | 15/09 |     |     | 15/12 |       |     |     |     |     |     |       |      |
| Participation in scientific events |       |     |     |       | 15/01 |     |     |     |     |     | 15/07 |      |
| Live sessions performance          |       |     |     |       | 15/01 |     |     |     |     |     | 15/07 |      |

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