

FEMINIST ARTS TO BRIGHTEN GLOOMY  
ALLEYS<sup>1</sup>: GENDER, DIY AND OTHER ART  
SCENES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

*ARTES FEMINISTAS PARA ALEGRAR  
BECOS TRISTES: GÊNERO, DIY E OUTRAS  
CENAS ARTÍSTICAS NO SUL GLOBAL*

*ARTES FEMINISTAS PARA ALEGRAR CALLEJONES  
TRISTES: EL GÉNERO, EL DIY Y OTRAS  
ESCENAS ARTÍSTICAS EN EL SUR GLOBAL*

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**ABSTRACT:** Understanding what it means to be a woman and an artist within (sub)(post)-subcultures in the Global South is a crucial task in the present. This approach aims to generate knowledge that diverges from the unidirectional perspectives produced for (and within) Global North countries. In this context, we explore how do-it-yourself (DIY) practices, in articulation with feminist movements

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<sup>1</sup> Title inspired by the poem “*Minha Cidade*” by Cora Coralina (2009).

from a decolonial and intersectional perspective, assert themselves as forms of cultural-artistic existence, as opposed to the traditionalist notion of such practices merely as modes of resistance. In the Global South, multiple and cumulative barriers to gender representation persist within artistic and cultural scenes, a result of long-standing patriarchal structures that sustain male hegemony. This article examines the narratives and perceptions of thirty Brazilian women artists who, despite the uncertainties and the symbolic and psychological violence they face, construct significant and multifaceted forms of cultural and artistic (re)existence in Brazil.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender. Existence and resistance. DIY. Artistic and cultural scenes, Global South.

**RESUMO:** *Compreender o que significa ser mulher e artista dentro das (sub) (pós)-subculturas no Sul Global torna-se tarefa crucial no presente. Tal linha de abordagem pretende produzir conhecimentos que se distanciem das perspectivas unidirecionais para (e nos países) do Norte Global. Nesse sentido, exploramos como as práticas do-it-yourself (DIY), articuladas aos movimentos feministas, num viés decolonial e interseccional, se arrogam enquanto formas de existência cultural-artística versus uma definição tradicionalista de tais formas de enfrentamento enquanto modos de resistência. Nos países do Sul Global, persistem diversas (e cumulativas) barreiras à representatividade de gênero nas cenas artísticas e culturais – resultado de uma longa tradição vigente, no âmbito das sociedades patriarcais, que perpetuam a hegemonia masculina. Este artigo reflete as narrativas e as percepções de trinta mulheres artistas brasileiras que, apesar das violências simbólicas que enfrentam, constroem formas marcantes e multifacetadas de (re) existência cultural e artística no Brasil.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Gênero. Existência e resistência. DIY. Cenas artísticas e culturais, Sul Global.*

**RESUMEN:** *Comprender qué significa ser mujer y artista dentro de las (sub) (pos)-subculturas en el Sur Global es una tarea crucial en la actualidad. Este enfoque busca generar conocimientos que se alejen de las perspectivas unidireccionales producidas para (y en) los países del Norte Global. En este sentido, exploramos cómo las prácticas do-it-yourself (DIY), en articulación con los movimientos feministas desde una perspectiva decolonial e interseccional, se erigen como formas de existencia cultural-artística, en contraposición a la noción tradicionalista de estas prácticas únicamente como modos de resistencia. En el Sur Global, persisten múltiples y acumulativas barreras para la representación de género en las escenas artísticas y culturales, resultado de estructuras patriarcales arraigadas que perpetúan la hegemonía masculina. Este artículo analiza las*

*narrativas y percepciones de treinta mujeres artistas brasileñas que, a pesar de las incertidumbres y la violencia simbólica y psicológica que enfrentan, construyen formas significativas y multifacéticas de (re)existencia cultural y artística en Brasil.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Género. Existencia y resistencia, DIY. Escenas artísticas y culturales, Sur Global.*

## **Prolegomena. Being on Stage in the Present to Change the Future**

This article aims to contribute to the debate on cultural, value-based, and political changes by highlighting how feminist practices within Brazilian artistic and (sub)cultural scenes challenge traditional institutions of consecration. We therefore discuss the extent to which these DIY (do-it-yourself) movements, by mobilizing feminist ideals (Reitsamer, 2019), exemplify new processes of legitimation and distinction (Janes & Sandell, 2019), questioning established modes of cultural recognition and attribution of symbolic value. In fact, our proposal demonstrates how, in Global South contexts, women artists and their DIY practices can delegitimize the entrenched androcentric vision linked to “the incorporation of an adverse bias against the feminine” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 28, our translation). We argue, therefore, that such movements not only resist hegemonic logics but also propose new ways of attributing symbolic value (Guerra, 2020, 2021), contributing to a renewed understanding of cultural and artistic distinction.

Beyond the analysis of feminism and DIY practices, this article discusses how recent cultural-artistic changes and political, economic, and social transformations in Brazil have impacted – and continue to impact – the processes of legitimation and distinction of these women’s practices and works. From this perspective, we examine how the artists portrayed here negotiate new values and redefine the criteria of cultural recognition as they build networks of solidarity and aesthetic counterpower practices (Janes & Sandell, 2019).

Drawing on Bishop (2012), we assert that cultural and artistic transformation, alongside political, economic, and social changes, has reconfigured traditional processes of artistic legitimation and distinction. Furthermore, by appropriating DIY practices and adopting a critical stance toward traditional mechanisms of recognition, these artists not only challenge homogeneous and patriarchal cultural norms, but also expand the boundaries of what is considered an artistic product. This opens space for a reinterpretation that, in turn, reflects contemporary dynamics of power and resistance. Guerra (2023a) offers a revealing perspective on the dynamics of alternative spaces, in which artistic practices intertwine with forms of political and social resistance, arguing that these underground environments – where the

interviewees operate – are laboratories of innovation that transcend conventional institutional models, enabling the emergence of counterpower aesthetics and the construction of utopian narratives. In this regard, the present work directly engages with discussions on feminism and DIY practices, advocating that underground scenes not only promote creative autonomy but also foster the construction of solidarity networks that amplify the voices of historically excluded groups.

Within post-subcultural scenes, particularly in the Global South – and more specifically in Brazil – being a woman and an artist entails different implications when compared to the modes of resistance observed in the Global North. Based on the contributions of Sharp and Threadgold (2019), it becomes possible to understand punk scenes as an *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1986), a notion that may also be applied to feminist movements and ideals insofar as they represent acts of resistance to normativity and dominant practices. In the post-subcultural scenes of the Global South, being a woman and an artist entails confronting challenges and developing resistance strategies that significantly differ from the practices observed in the Global North. In Brazil, feminism emerges as an anti-system stance that transcends mere reaction against established norms, aligning itself with the ethos and praxis of DIY as a tool for autonomy and self-assertion.

Although women have always played a role within the artistic field – more specifically in musical scenes – they have often been denied leadership roles, frequently relegated to subordinate positions. This phenomenon is historical, structural, and inherent to various musical (sub)genres. Following Anzaldúa (1990), Guerra (2024b) elaborates on this issue, arguing that there is a recurrent misunderstanding of the symbolic expressions of resistance to normative and hegemonic models. Such modes of existence allow each woman to become the main protagonist of her own story and artistic practice, in the sense that we are dealing with effective modes of being on stage. As Guerra (2023a) argues, resistance – often trivialized – needs to be rethought not merely as an isolated reaction, but as a stance inherent to one's way of living and expressing oneself, especially in the Global South. In this sense, we aim to demonstrate that modes of being on stage emerge as practices that transform everyday life, turning personal experience into a tool of cultural (re)legitimation and subversion of imposed standards, enabling the construction of sustainable artistic careers. By integrating DIY and feminism, we observe an intersection between affect and efficacy, where the art of existing becomes a dynamic process that challenges hegemonic structures and promotes a reconfiguration of power relations.

The political and economic transformations in Brazil, especially in the last decade, have created tensions in the modes of production and consumption of art, while strongly influencing the dynamics of autonomy and economic survival for women artists (Giannini & Bowen, 2019). These women, therefore, reconfigure

their modes of legitimation, whether through independent festivals, DIY collectives, collaborative productions, or other forms of artistic creation outside the mainstream circuit. In this regard, feminist practices of resistance also come to be seen as modes of existence (Guerra, 2021), meaning they constitute a set of values and forms of social organization that challenge the cultural distinction legitimized by dominant institutions (Bourdieu, 1986). By adopting a DIY ethic, these artists not only reject a capitalist industrial logic (Haenfler, 2006), but also create prestige and distinction criteria based on cooperation and commitment to feminist and anti-racist struggles. Thus, we observe the formation of a distinctive cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that circulates within independent networks and challenges the canonical consecration of major artistic institutions.

Our analysis is based on a non-probabilistic sample of thirty in-depth<sup>2</sup> interviews with women from different social backgrounds and age groups, whose discourses and representations were analyzed both diachronically and synchronically. What unites these women is their geographic location in the Brazilian Northeast: Fortaleza, Mossoró, Cairiri, Teresina, Recife, and Juazeiro do Norte. They are involved in various alternative forms of art and creativity: record label management, fanzines, cinema, performance, music, design, fashion, and visual arts<sup>3</sup>. The objective was to trace a genealogy of their engagement with the arts, while also exploring their views on the condition and role of women artists in Brazil and within the artistic scenes they are part of (McRobbie & Garber, 1997).

As in other studies (Guerra, 2024c), Brazil's economic and financial structure, along with its social, political, and cultural constraints, generates and exacerbates inequalities that deeply affect the creative sectors and artistic activities, making the DIY ethos more than an act of resistance. It becomes, above all, an act of survival-existence, since the possibilities of pursuing an artistic career are almost nonexistent outside the scope of this underground creativity – contrary to what is observed in the Anglo-Saxon gravitational centers of the Global North.

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<sup>2</sup> We proceeded using a snowball sampling approach, whereby the first interviewee referred us to additional participants. All interviews were transcribed and subjected to categorical content analysis. The conduct of the interviews adhered fully to the ethical guidelines of the Portuguese Sociological Association and the American Sociological Association. Informed consent was obtained from each participant for the use of selected excerpts in sociological analysis.

<sup>3</sup> The interviews with these women were conducted between 2018 and 2024. Initially, they took place under the Transnational Cooperation Project Under Connected: Luso-Brazilian Musical Scenes Online and Offline, developed by the Institute of Sociology at the University of Porto and the Graduate Program in Communication and the Department of Communication at the Federal University of Pernambuco. From 2021 onward, they became part of the ongoing project *Sons Pe(r)didos*: Lost and Found Sounds: Cultural, Artistic and Creative Scenes in Pandemic Times at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Porto. For further details, see <https://www.kismifcommunity.com/pt/>. I would like to acknowledge Ana Oliveira and Sofia Sousa for their support in transcribing and analyzing the interviews.

## Survive/(live). A Rhetoric of (Re)existence

The absence of women in several areas has significantly contributed to the establishment of male hegemony over the histories of popular culture (Guerra, 2023c). One way to break with this perspective lies in the analysis of the *riot grrrl* movements, in their global scope and multiple expressions (Downes, 2012). Based on this premise, a parallel can be drawn between our interviewees and the women studied by Downes (2012), in the sense that they were constitutive members of *riot* movements. By moving away from a Eurocentric approach, it becomes possible – step by step – to identify similarities between women in the Global North and those in the Global South, particularly when we understand them as women seeking to express themselves through art, whether by way of music, fanzines, photography, or dance.

Feminism and *riot* movements tied to a DIY logic are historical elements that allow for a deeper understanding of the present (Reitsamer, 2019), precisely because they have consolidated and supported a “shift in the subordinate positions of women within punk subcultures, from consumers or observers to producers” (Piano, 2003, p. 244). The influence of the *riot grrrl* movement transcends its original context, paving the way for new forms of resistance and artistic creation that persist today. The DIY practice – defining this movement – continues to inspire artists to build alternative spaces where criticism of power structures emerges in an organic-symbiotic way (Marinas, 2022). In parallel, the feminist movements and ideologies promoted through *riot grrrl* circles have fostered a significant reconfiguration of power relations within artistic environments. This transformation has led to the creation of solidarity and collaborative networks that connect activists and artists locally and globally, enabling new narratives and amplifying feminist voices in fields historically dominated by sexism (Allison, 2017).

In relation to these movements, it is important to highlight the relevance of the Third Wave of Feminism and its emphasis on inclusive feminist demands (Marinas, 2022). Within this topic – and as a key element for understanding the trajectories of our interviewees – it is important to note that Crenshaw (1991) was responsible for introducing the concept of intersectionality. This concept identifies all the forms of oppression or privilege a person experiences based on the various social categories they belong to (Marinas, 2022). In other words, depending on race, gender, sexual identity, religion, place of origin, sex, among other factors, a person will or will not face discriminatory experiences (Rice *et al.*, 2019). This theory was developed to explain the distribution of power and privilege across different axes, re-signifying identity politics and critiquing the dominant white feminism of the time (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006).

In contemporary debates, the concept of intersectionality has been applied both to the empirical analysis of inequalities and to the formulation of political

and activist strategies. Collins (2022) expanded this approach by emphasizing the importance of situated knowledge and critical consciousness for social transformation, highlighting how experiences of oppression are intertwined and shape unique realities for each individual. More recently, Cho et al. (2013) offered a deeper reflection on the challenges and possibilities of intersectionality as a field of study, emphasizing the need for an approach that incorporates the complexity of interactions among different forms of inequality. Simultaneously, DIY practice is widely associated with punk, especially when considered as a (sub)culture or music scene (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012). In the Global South, however, DIY practice goes beyond association with a musical scene – it is seen as the only viable path to a career or a professional identity. It becomes a *modus operandi*. A connection can be made with the ethical code outlined by Ambrosch (2011), as the intersection of feminism and DIY implies a concern with social injustices and individual rights, such as patriarchal issues, LGBTQI+ struggles, or sexism, which are central themes in the artistic expressions of these women.

*Riot grrrl* movements have always positioned themselves in opposition to the structural mechanisms of gender inequality that were imposed from early on (Schilt, 2004). However, when considering countries of the Global South and all their social, political, economic, and cultural constraints, we must question how effective and successful these movements and oppositional initiatives have been – or continue to be. This question was one of the motivations for addressing this topic, building on the contributions of Angela McRobbie (2004). The author presents a series of conceptual frames and perspectives on what is known as post-feminism, highlighting how elements of popular culture have served to “undo” feminist gains achieved since the 1970s and 1980s.

Following McRobbie’s (2004) premise, we find empirical studies that support these observations (Wilson, 2004; Haenfler, 2006; Guerra, 2021): in these works, the number of women as creators and consumers is lower than that of men. These factors underscore the dominance and hegemony of men in the organization and management of local scenes, often relegating women to the background and perpetuating the notion of submission. As a result, their contributions and voices are rarely granted an active role. Beyond invisibility, there are processes of objectification (Kanemasu & Asenati, 2020). Even when women are not given prestigious or leadership roles within local scenes, it is not uncommon for their bodies and sexualized images to be used to promote events (Kristen & Elke, 2012). Simultaneously, they face numerous obstacles – from sexism to machismo – and are subject to a level of scrutiny regarding their work and abilities that is not imposed on male artists (Haenfler, 2006). Feminism and DIY practice are, frequently, responses to these pressures and social representations, such as being labeled “the girlfriend” or a “wannabe.”

## Do It Yourself, but FOR Yourself

With regard to space, Domosh and Seager (2001) discuss the various ways in which public and private spaces intersect, particularly concerning the social roles performed within them. These roles are coded, analyzed, and interpreted through a gendered lens. As such, men are predominantly associated with the public sphere and women with the private. What does this mean? Men are granted the opportunity to assert themselves in public spaces – that is, to perform live and present their artistic projects – and are granted prestige and credit for their work. Women, by contrast, assume roles tied to the private sphere, as they are often relegated to the roles of housewife, mother, caregiver, woman, and girlfriend, gradually being denied the possibility of asserting themselves as artists (Federici, 2019). The successful bands that are promoted, widely disseminated, and professionalized are predominantly male. Women’s bands, by contrast, tend to occupy prominent roles in underground scenes, and even then, their value is questioned. This reflects what Mullaney (2007) describes as the “supporting cast,” indicating the significant marginalization of women’s roles within musical scenes and the broader cultural and creative industries today.

Simultaneously, as observed in the trajectories and careers of these women, we are gradually moving toward the emergence of a new framework of DIY cultural practices. More significantly, the appropriation of DIY principles and practices by many individuals in late modernity reveals both a personal – and in many cases, collective – opposition to the tight grip of neoliberalism in a global context. By opting for a lifestyle rooted in DIY ethos and praxis, these women are able to articulate more sharply their sense of distance from institutional and cultural policies embedded in neoliberal existence, as demonstrated by Imray Papineau’s research (2023; 2024) in the Philippines.

Much like the historical consolidation of DIY in the UK, similar trajectories have been unfolding in Brazil and other Global South countries such as Argentina, especially through *riot* movements. These represent the assertion of new forms of protest and youth politicization – particularly among young women – while also creating fertile ground for the advancement of feminist cultural subversion based on DIY (Hankivsky, 2014). A notable example is the creation of radical feminist magazines and fanzines focused on gender, sexuality, and Black identity, such as *Hard Grrrls* or *Lambe-Buceta*. It is in these environments that DIY flourishes and, interestingly, where some of our interviewees began their artistic journeys: within independent production settings that later gave rise to collective formations. In the context of this article, “politics of location” is a concept aimed at uncovering a strategy that enables the construction and articulation of subversive identities and practices grounded in local realities. This concept implies that women artists, by embracing independent production means – such as the creation of fanzines, books,

or videos – locate their actions in a space where the cultural, social, and political specificities of their environment are acknowledged and valued. In other words, these politics of location allow for the exploration and negotiation of issues such as sexuality, gender, identity, race, sexual orientation, and class, giving voice to experiences that would otherwise remain marginalized or silenced (Lugones, 2010; Mignolo, 2000).

This approach not only legitimizes the diversity of experiences and the richness of individual lives but also cultivates fertile ground for the subversion of hegemonic narratives. In a global context where artistic and political practices are often subject to homogenizing discourses, politics of location offer an alternative that challenges the universality of dominant paradigms. By grounding their practices in the specific realities of the Global South, initiatives like DIY become effective instruments of resistance, enabling the reinterpretation of the symbols and discourses that shape power structures. Furthermore, these politics promote a dialogue between local experience and global dynamics, building bridges that facilitate – or attempt to facilitate – the exchange of practices and knowledge across contexts. This intersection between the local and the global enables the emergence of protest and activism practices that are both grounded in immediate realities and capable of engaging with international demands and challenges (Gibas *et al.*, 2025). Adopting this approach allows these artists not only to claim space for themselves but also to contribute to the transformation of the social and cultural conditions surrounding them. The use of DIY as a tool for intervention – and its corresponding importance for these young women – lies in its ability to construct different “concepts of femininity” (Kearney, 1998; Ussher, 1997).

Bell (2017) argues that although participatory art practices do not always lead to immediate or large-scale social change, their intrinsic value lies in creating spaces where alternative identities can be articulated and affirmed. In this sense, the construction of narratives in (sub)cultural contexts – such as those of our interviewees – serves, even with limited impact on broader social transformation, as a fundamental mechanism for self-representation. By exploring such practices, these artists not only challenge dominant models but also pave the way for new forms of cultural engagement, enabling the questioning and reinterpretation of pre-established hierarchies, as emphasized by Reitsamer (2019) and Guerra (2021, 2024b). DIY practice, drawing from the contributions of Giroux (1992), emphasizes experiences of resistance and existence, distancing itself from conventional punk-related acts of rebellion insofar as it presupposes a process of transformative reflexivity. Giroux also stresses that acts of resistance must include a denunciation of repressive ideologies, as well as critiques of the inequalities experienced – therefore, these acts may be considered utopian (Guerra, 2023a). It is within this framework that we assert DIY as a subversive mode of existence.

## Creating to (Sur)live, or (Sur)living to Create

DeNora (2000) explores the connections between music and the biographical trajectories of the women interviewed. In this regard, music and artistic practices emerge as a key component of identity formation throughout these women's lives, as they are shown to be "embedded in memory and continuously embodied through processes of reflexivity" (Bennett & Taylor, 2012, p. 233). From a brief sociographic overview, we can affirm that these women come from various states in the Brazilian Northeast – as previously noted – and most belong to a socially valued and somewhat privileged class, given their high educational attainment at undergraduate, master's, or even specific artistic and musical training levels. In terms of profession, the interviewees represent a broad analytical spectrum, allowing for multifaceted insights into the importance of DIY practice, as well as perspectives on the condition and role of women artists. We are therefore looking at teachers, photographers, designers, producers, fanzine creators, and musicians. These characteristics become even more striking when we consider the condition of the broader population of female artists in Brazil today.

These women range in age from 28 to 49. Given this wide age range, it becomes possible to relate their experiences to Hodkinson's (2011) perspective, particularly his emphasis on the prolonged participation and engagement in a (sub) culture over time. These women expressed artistic interest early in life, and this interest has continued into adulthood. It is therefore essential to reflect on how acts of resistance, awareness, and struggle against patriarchal oppression have unfolded longitudinally – ultimately shaping a way of being and existing within a profoundly stigmatizing and unequal societal context. It is important to understand how participation in a scene and a subcultural field has enabled long-term immersion in the arts.

As we delve into generational subcultural immersion, it became relevant to explore how initial encounters with art occurred. In this context, the role of parents proved essential, as several studies highlight the family's importance in cultivating artistic appreciation. A notable finding from the interviewees' accounts is that it was often their mothers – despite not being artists themselves – who encouraged them to engage with diverse artistic and cultural productions, including music, literature, photography, cinema, and dance.

As DeNora (2000) also demonstrated, the interviewees emphasized that their interest in art is tied to identity-building processes, noting that for as long as they can remember, they have been drawn to the arts – particularly drawing and music, especially learning instruments. A second axis, which follows from the first and concerns male dominance and hegemony, emerged from a recurring theme in their narratives: men hold key leadership positions in the scenes they are part of, as seen in the quote below:

So, my interest in music wasn't necessarily about me as a woman, but about me in my relationship with a man. I mean, I had some interests and liked some things, but I didn't really know the Noize scene until I met Pedro, who organized these things here in Recife – and it was through him that I discovered Noize (Lucília, 32 years old, Bachelor's degree, Music and Event Production, Recife, our translation)

Reddington (2007) discusses reasons why young women entered the music world and formed all-female bands, already giving us a glimpse of some DIY practices – whether in promoting the band, organizing shows, or investing in equipment and building an artistic career. These accounts gradually reveal an emerging ethos (Guerra, 2023c) rooted in resistance and assertion, as the interviewees themselves express. Recognizing this initial interest in the artistic and cultural field allows us to present the various DIY dimensions reflected in their narratives.

The logic and practice of DIY are not limited to learning instruments or developing skills related to other artistic practices that often emerge after initial exposure to the arts. This primary interest, which evolved into a need for learning as the interest deepened, resulted in a form of professionalization. The interviewees sought to invest in their artistic education, transitioning from cultural consumers to cultural producers (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012). As this transition consolidated, a need emerged to activate do-it-yourself practices in order to sustain artistic activity, which, over the long term, came to be perceived as an obstacle. Women ended up taking on multiple roles – such as production, management, and others – which led to a gradual loss of their original creative focus.

When you're on tour without a manager, everyone has to do everything. [...] We're only able to make a living from our band because we don't have a manager or a sound technician, etc. If we had to pay those professionals, we wouldn't have money to live (Rute, 39 years old, Master's degree, Music, Teresina, our translation).

We did everything we needed to make it work, and that causes a lot of wear and tear. We didn't always do what we wanted to do, especially in our early twenties when we were trying to make other life decisions (Alice, 33 years old, Master's degree, English Teacher and Zine Maker, Fortaleza, our translation).

In addition to the challenges faced in entering the artistic field, these women also experience other barriers related to race and sexuality. Most of the interviewees are or have been involved in projects connected to the LGBTQI+ community, whose main goal is to promote dialogue around sexuality and combat the stigma surrounding homosexuality. Another relevant point concerns the gendered and sexual

composition of the artistic field, again reinforcing the importance of DIY and artistic practices as both forms of resistance and existence, as they challenge gender norms.

Yes, a little... people don't usually do exhibitions...it's more performance or drawings and things that are more connected...I think minorities in general... they want their space, they want to be heard, to have a voice, and the moment calls for that... to show that we pay taxes too and deserve our rights (Lídia, 30 years old, Bachelor's degree, Music, Music Producer and Zine Maker, Mossoró, our translation).

Along with the strong women's movement came the LGBTQ movement, and in that sense, there's the discussion that beyond being a woman, gender itself becomes relevant at this moment... when we talk about women, we're talking about a gender and about people who need to be included in that gender. We even started to have artists who rose with this banner, and they're not necessarily from Recife. [...] In São Paulo, we have Liniker and Linn da Quebrada, several artists raising this issue, who connect with women like Larissa, and sometimes we see connections not just about women in general, but also about Black and Indigenous women (Laura, 28 years old, Undergraduate student, Music Producer and Cultural Manager, Recife, our translation).

More than fights for equality, these are fights for subjectivity – especially when focusing on issues related to the LGBTQI+ movements and the importance of representation. The goal lies in personal fulfillment and the establishment of a self-defined identity (Ferreira, 2016). The struggle, starting from a marginal existence within conventional social structures, is a central axis that defines the existence and resistance of these women. As Becker (2007) states in the specific case of art as a way of speaking about society, these discourses and positions serve as denunciations – and more than that, they represent ways of acting upon the social world, leveraging their disadvantaged position as women artists. These are the so-called “arts of making a living” (Ferreira, 2016, p. 74).

The next two dimensions are closely interrelated. They refer to women's perceptions of sexism within the industry, but also to the condition and place of women in the artistic field. Regarding sexism, the main issue highlighted in the narratives concerns the objectification of female artists (Wilson, 2004) – in the sense that women are often judged by their appearance rather than their artistic abilities or potential. This is compounded by the problem of social roles and representations. The women's narratives reinforce what was stated earlier: they are often seen as “the girlfriend.” However, these stereotypes are not only perpetuated by men, but also by other women. This reflects what Ahmed (2017) discusses regarding forms of resistance to power, where such constraints and claims are understood as manifes-

tations of a non-hegemonic existence aligned with the need to establish reciprocal intersubjective structures. This struggle for the social recognition of individual difference does not naturally align with the institutional side of the political system, nor does it constitute a claim in the realm of legal rights. The sense of activism present in contemporary youth scenes is mostly lived out in everyday and mundane ways by its young participants, reflecting individuals' daily needs for social respect, affection, and reciprocity from those around them.

Duncombe and Lambert (2021) offer a comprehensive analysis of activism, describing it as an innovative strategy that transcends traditional forms of protest and denunciation. According to the authors, activism involves transforming the constraints imposed by dominant structures into a creative form of resistance, in which aesthetic expression becomes a powerful tool for social transformation. This approach, which values creativity and self-management, enables feminist movements and other initiatives to reconfigure and adapt to constantly changing contexts, promoting a form of activism that, though embedded in everyday life, has the power to destabilize hierarchies and stimulate new forms of dialogue and solidarity. Similarly, Guerra (2022a) reinforces the idea that activism not only denounces stereotypes – such as those that perpetuate the marginalization of women in the industry – but also fosters the development of resistance practices rooted in creativity and collaboration. Despite the existence of such constraints, the interviewees also emphasize a significant increase in the number of women in the fields of artistic creation and production, particularly in photography and cinema, but also in areas such as theater and literature. However, this trend is still not as visible in punk or more alternative and underground music scenes, even though there are now more female instrumentalists. A clear example is the band *Damas Cortejam*, composed of eleven women:

I think it has recently become a relationship that is seen as more normal [...] much more normal because more girls are now doing everything they didn't used to do before (Ana, 29 years old, Bachelor's degree, Music Editor and Photographer, Recife).

Within the creative-musical field, an ideal still persists that a woman's place is in the home, and that socially and culturally, she is not afforded the freedom to explore other paths. This reflects what was previously stated about the differentiation between private and public space, according to social roles and gender representations (Domosh & Seager, 2001). In the context of Northeast Brazil, households are predominantly led by women, who are responsible for taking care of the home and children, which makes it impossible for them to pursue a life in art. The interviewees' perspectives align with Mullaney's (2007) characterization of women in

the arts as part of the “supporting cast.” Furthermore, once an artistic career is established, motherhood often interrupts or even halts that trajectory (Bratich, & Brush, 2011). There is a notable bias among publishers and event organizers against hiring women who are mothers. From a cultural and economic market standpoint, this is not seen as viable, unlike for men. Coincidentally, another aggravating factor, which is particularly exacerbated in the Global South, especially in Brazil, is the issue of rape culture. Barriers also arise from societal norms: going out is much more dangerous for a woman than for a man. There is an internalized fear of being assaulted in public spaces – especially in concert venues and social gatherings. All of these processes are intertwined with the psychological and symbolic violence exerted on women.

## A possible conclusion

The trajectories presented here reveal the complex articulation between processes of resistance and existence in the Global South – specifically in Brazil. Our aim is to shed light on how these women, embedded in sociopolitical contexts marked by historical and patriarchal inequalities, create alternative pathways for visibility and cultural legitimacy, which fundamentally aim to subvert dominant power structures (Downes, 2010; Ferreira, 2016; Guerra, 2022b, 2021, 2020). Feminism and DIY practices emerge, in our analysis, not only as strategies of opposition to the status quo, but above all as ways of being and creating artistically and culturally, reclaiming autonomy in artistic scenes frequently dominated by men (McRobbie, 2004; Haenfler, 2006).

Rather than being isolated resistance movements, the artistic practices of the interviewees reflect modes of existence (Guerra, 2024a, 2023a, 2022b), grounded in values such as horizontality, cooperation, inclusion, and politicization. These dimensions form grammars of action that challenge the entrenched hierarchies affecting gender roles across various artistic fields (Griffiths, 2020; Bratich & Brush, 2011). Instead of seeking approval from major institutions or cultural markets, these women build parallel circuits that enact a politics of location (Piano, 2003) – that is, a politics that emphasizes the value of their own lived experiences and territorialities. In this sense, the creation of networks, collectives, and collaborative actions is not merely a way to escape entrenched patriarchal structures, but also a means of proposing new criteria of distinction that have the potential to foster micropolitical transformations (Imray Papineau, 2023, 2024).

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