

The Venus secret.

Creativity as a process of the conscious and subconscious in *Barrística* Art in clay.

Keywords: Creativity; primitive art; conscious; subconscious, Art brute; animal creativity.

Abstract

This work continues the investigation published in Laboratorios colaborativos¹ and aims to demonstrate the phenomenon of artistic *creativity* in Barrística (Art in clay) as a process of the *conscious* and *subconscious*. To this end we will analyze this Art from its manifestations in the Paleolithic to the present day, through the Primitive Art, Machado de Castro sculpture productions, Barcelos crafts, World Heritage Estremoz figurines, Art Brut and the *Aldeia da Terra* project. Why did the paleolithic man elaborate so many “Venus” female figures in stone, bone and clay? What is the secret of the Paleolithic Venus?

Clay as a material of expression

Sculpture is perhaps the oldest of the arts. If we consider the drawings spelled in stone, they too are a form of sculpture, rudimentary. As a primordial medium, which includes the four elements water, earth, fire and air, clay is a medium for creativity and expression. As a behavioral psychologist, who uses clay as a therapeutic material with his patients, João Luis Bucho² refers precisely to this characteristic of the material and our relationship with it³. He states that through clay, matter and creator establish a *Zone of Near Development*, according to Vygotskian (1987), which stimulates functions such as perception, attention, cognition, sensation and stimulation of the symbolic and imaginary. Clay acts as the "transitional object" between the world of fantasy and reality. "The expressions in clay ... represent the manifestation of thoughts, feelings, conflicts, anxieties, questions (...) and establish the dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious."⁴

Bucho says that mastering clay is an achievement. Especially for those who have never done it before. Transposition, which often occurs unconsciously, to the molded object of interior images allows us, rather than mastering matter even rudimentarily, to dominate

¹ Cabeça, Paulo, et al. 2020. Antologia de Ensaio LABORATORIO COLABORATIVO: Dinâmicas Urbanas, Património, Artes. VI Seminário de Investigação, Ensino e Difusão. Publisher: DINÂMIA`CET-ISCTE. Pp. 295

² Psychologist. Expressive therapist. Master in creativity and innovation. Consulted on December 29, 2018. Available in <https://www.joaoluisbucho.com/>

³ Bucho, João Luis. *Expressive therapies and clay: vehicle of self-knowledge, creativity and expression*. Institutional Repository of The Fernando Pessoa University. Master's dissertations. 2011. Consulted on 29 December 2018. Available in: <https://bdigital.ufp.pt/handle/10284/2260>

⁴ Ditto

emotions, sensations, traumas or anxieties. Thus appeasing, with a therapeutic effect also, the human mind.

We often come across this *appeasing* effect in artists and curious people who mold clay. Often starting a work of art is an imperative *craving for the artist*, a *necessity*, almost as eating or drinking. When the work is finally completed and sees the light of day comes then this *appeasement and tranquility*, this feeling of embodiment that settles in the artist. We have several examples, in art of this type of behavior, and in the *Barristica* we also find them. The advantage of clay, for analysis, is of greater temporal and historical amplitude of this phenomenon. Man has been using this material since the beginning of artistic expression, unlike other mediums. Inscribed in the timeline of art history, the artefacts in clay and terracotta, over thousands of years, are indelible records of this artistic expression that engraved on ceramics - the mud that becomes stone - these manifestations of the conscious and subconscious.

What is Creativity

Stating that anyone can be a creative person Sternberg and Lubart (1991, 1993, 1995, 1996) expanded the model considering six distinct but interrelated factors, which were considered indispensable resources for creative expression: *Intelligence, intellectual styles, knowledge, personality, motivation, environmental context*.

The one they called the *Investment Theory* will have some elements in common with⁵ other theories, namely Amabile (1983), Csikszentmihalyi (1988a, 1988b, 1988c). It also encompasses the personality traits originating in the contributions of MacKinnon (1965) and Barron (1969), who investigated personality attributes of professionals from diverse areas who stood out for their creative production.

In describing these six factors Sternberg and Lubart (1991) state that not all are individually relevant to creativity, but rather that they are interactive.

In Sternberg's words⁶ *the Theory of Investment* maintains that creativity is, to a large extent, a *decision*. In particular a decision to "buy cheap and sell expensive" in the world of ideas. Sternberg says creative people are like good investors, generating ideas that at the time are considered new or even ridiculous. Metaphorically *they buy cheap*, ideas that, after social acceptance, can be sold *expensive*, bringing them benefit, then starting to the new unpopular idea (investment).

Creative individuals thus always tend to challenge the crowd, walking in their own way, looking for ideas that are both new and difficult. For these the biggest obstacle to creativity, therefore, are often not exactly the restrictions of others, but the limitations that can be imposed on their own thinking. These often derive from acculturation and socialization processes, making it difficult to understand whether restrictions on

⁵ Sternberg, Robert J. 2006. *The Nature of Creativity*. Creativity Research Journal. Tufts University. Massachusetts. Vol. 18, No. 1, 87–9. Consulted on 15 January 2019. Available in https://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/AY2013/cs7601_spring/papers/Sternberg_Nature-of-creativity.pdf

⁶ Sternberg Roberth, New Jersey. *Investment Theory of Creativity*. Consulted on 15 January 2019. Available at <http://www.robertjsternberg.com/investment-theory-of-creativity/>

creativity are self-imposed or imposed externally. That is: *creativity is a decision*, Sternberg says, just as investing is a decision. One may have some characteristics of creativity, but not others. For example, you may not want to take risks, you may not like to face others, you may not be inserted in an environment conducive to creativity, in a political, social, religious or other way. This way one will not be creative.

Creativity, Sternberg says, is largely a decision. Being a decision, it is therefore conscious, aware, rational. And this suggests to Sternberg that creativity can be developed. To be creative one will have *to decide to* have new ideas. A person may have analytical, synthetic or practical valences, but not apply them to problems involving creativity. Consequently, will not become a creative person.

It's not enough to have the ability to be creative. The decision must be made to use the ability and, consequently, to be creative. For example the ability to switch from conventional to unconventional thinking is important for creativity. That is, it is not enough to be able to think in a less conventional way, it is also necessary to accept this type of thinking. Doing so means leaving a mental comfort zone to which you are accustomed to. Being creative involves treading paths that others don't take; Sternberg says.

Concept limitations

Creativity has many universes of expression. Art is one of them. However, this definition of creativity as something rational, conscious, optative, does not describes a phenomenon that artists experience. Analyzing *Barristica* – the art in clay, Cabeça Paulo (2018) refers to it as “visceral creativity”. And visceral we understand not something analytical, chosen, conscious, rational. But rather something intuitive, emotional, autonomous, subconscious. Creativity, and the *Art* that originates from it, is full of examples that sometimes in fact consists in a manifestation of expression intuitive, imperative, emotional and necessary. As if artistic expression were often more than a rational or conscious choice - as defined by Sternberg - rather something instinctive and subconscious. Pollock, Van Gog, Munch, and many others, appear to be conscious, analytical and rational manifestations? Or rather emotional, anxious and *visceral* expressions?

Sternberg's theory of creativity was apparently correct, but he would lack something. It described the most *conscious* part of the phenomenon of creativity in art. Everything indicated that there was another less rational facet involved. A facet of creativity from the subconscious.

Invention of ceramics

Investigating the beginnings of the invention, by humans, of the ceramic process, we intersect with the theory⁷ presented by Mihael Budja⁸ who argued that the emergence

⁷ Budja, Mihael District - The transition to farming and the ceramic trajectories in Western Eurasia - from ceramic figurines to vessels (p. 183). Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Consulted a 8 January 2018. Available in http://www.academia.edu/2375716/The_transition_to_farming_and_the_ceramic_trajectories_in_Western_Eurasia_from_ceramic_figurines_to_vessels

⁸ Archaeologist of Prehistory. Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.

of the technology of firing clay was not related to the dynamics of agriculture, actually it may have been the opposite to succeed.

Yaroslav V. Kuzmin, quoted by Budja, notes that the emergence of pottery was almost simultaneous in southern China (13700-13300 BP), Japan (1350 BP) and the Russian Far East (13300 BP). On the other hand, the invention of ceramic technology in Europe is associated⁹ with the elaboration of female figures and animals, in the Gravetian period, 26000 years BP¹⁰. That is, the elaboration of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures in ceramic preceded the invention of *pottery*¹¹ in approximately thirteen thousand years.

In this same work Budja cites Vandiver, P. B., Soffer, O., Klima, B., & Svoboda, J. as authors of a theory about the invention of the ceramic process.¹² According to this archaeological approach it was found that anthropomorphic figures, especially female, or zoomorphic, in ceramics, were elaborated by joining separate parts, such as arms, legs, heads and others. The temperature, firing of these objects, did not exceed 800°C. But of importance, the various archaeological tests showed that it was *thermal shock* and not casual breaking, which led to the subsequent fragmentation of the sculptures. This reaction, well known to ceramists, occurs when clay is subjected to sudden temperature increases during firing, when the parts are not properly dried. Water or air bubbles trapped inside the piece expand, by increasing the temperature, and cause very audible explosions, sending fragments through the air in all directions. These phenomena would eventually be exploited by sorcerers and shamans as manifestations of something transcendent and magical. Budja point out, that the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures would be used in devotions, had the purpose to appeal to strong children, fight diseases, hunting and fishing in abundance. Priests, shamans, or sorcerers used sculptures perhaps to cast out evil spirits or beg for good favors. The particularity of the figures elaborated in clay cast in fire, by contrast with those of stone, bone or ivory is that, whenever the clay was moist, the spirits would *answer*, in the form of these ceramic explosions.

The Baroque and Machado de Castro

Machado de Castro was considered the greatest and most wise of the Portuguese sculptors of his time, 18th century.

⁹ Budja, Mihael (2007). *Op. Cit.*

¹⁰ Before the Present - Before Present (BP) is a time scale used primarily in archaeology, geology and other scientific disciplines to specify when events occurred in the past. As the "current" time changes, the standard practice is to use January 1, 1950 as the start date (epoch) of the scale reflecting the origin of radiocarbon dating in the 1950s

¹¹ Pottery (Olaria in Portuguese) - S.f 1. Manufacture usually handmade clay parts; potter's industry; 2. Clay crockery factory or place where clay parts are made; 3. Set of parts so manufactured (From lat. Olla-, "pot" +-aria). In: Infopedia, Porto Editora dictionaries. Consulted on 2 February 2018. Available in <https://www.infopedia.pt/dicionarios/lingua-portuguesa>

¹² Pamela B., Vandiver, Olga, Soffer, Bohuslav Klima, Jiri Svoboda (1989). The Origins of Ceramic Technology at Dolni Věstonice, Czechoslovakia. Consulted on 8 January 2018. Available in <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/246/4933/1002>

Born in Coimbra on June 19, 1731¹³ he died in Lisbon in 1822. He was known as the "Sculptor of Lisbon".

It was in his hometown that he received the humanist training of the Jesuits and, son of Manuel Machado Teixeira - master sculptor of saints, organ player, man possessing knowledge and encyclopedic genius - in the city Castro learned to work clay, plaster and wood, revealing from an early age great aptitude and dexterity for sculpture.¹⁴

Machado de Castro entered Mafra where the *work of the regime*, the construction of the great Convent Palace, was the center of attraction of virtuous sculptors namely Italians as Alessandro Giusti. Castro became Giusti's helper to *model*. And modeling is *working the clay*, not the stone. He arrived in Mafra to materialize drawings in three-dimensional form, on the transition material (clay) between the sketched idea and the final stone. To introduce *creativity* into the works.

It is also worth mentioning that clay, although a transition material for grand sculpture, becomes artistic medium in this time, namely in the Nativity theme or also called *Curiozities*, which, although despised by the artist as a minor art:

There will be no shortage of those who say it is insignificant, and ridiculous, the work of Nativities.¹⁵

originated great works, namely the Nativity Scene of the Basilica of Estrela Lisbon, with more than five hundred figurines. These would not only originate market for this type of art, but would be important in the next years, considered precursors of the Portuguese National schools of Barrística, such as Barcelos and Estremoz¹⁶.



Fig.

Nativity from Basilica da Estrela

Machado de Castro

¹³ In *Biography of Machado de Castro*. Machado de Castro National Museum. Coimbra. Consulted on January 31, 2019. Available in <http://www.museummachadocastro.gov.pt/pt-PT/museu/miss/ContentDetail.aspx>

¹⁴ Infopedia. Machado de Castro. Consulted on 31 January 2019. Available at [https://www.infopedia.pt/\\$machado-de-castro](https://www.infopedia.pt/$machado-de-castro)

¹⁵ Missive to an indeterminate recipient, as referred to by Alexandre Nobre Pais in *O labirinto da memória*. In: Faria, Miguel Figueira. (2014). *Machado de Castro: da utilidade da escultura*. Caleidoscópio.

¹⁶ Classify by UNESCO *Intangible Heritage of Humanity*

Choice versus necessity

However, Miguel Figueira de Faria reveals¹⁷ to us Castro's relationship with stone and clay already after becoming a consecrated artist. Almost obsessively, in the *Analytical Description*¹⁸ and obtaining the award of the most glorious work in the nation's capital, - the equestrian statue of D. José I, Lisbon - that wasn't idealized by him, Castro regrets the conditionings to which he was subject, in the work, denouncing the imposition of the model he had to follow:

" they cut away the freedom of an artist (...) whose captivity is very damaging to all works of spirit."

From which there was a *need* for expression in the artist, which had no freedom to exist, due to the obligation to follow a previously imposed model.



Fig.

Equestrian statue of D. José I

Machado de Castro 1775

Here we can distinguish between a *choice* and a *necessity*, because it is in this difference that lies, perhaps, the key to the issue of *creativity* also in Machado de Castro.

¹⁷ Faria, Miguel Figueira: *Machado de Castro e Domingos Sequeira: Poder e Arte das luzes à revolução*. In Faria, Miguel Figueira. (2014). Machado de castro: da utilidade da escultura. Caleidoscópio

¹⁸ CASTRO, Joaquim Machado de. 1810. *Descrição analytica da execução da estatua equestre erigida em Lisboa á gloria do Senhor Rei Fidelissimo D. José I*. Lisboa. Imp. Regia. Consultado a 1 fevereiro de 2019. Disponível em: <http://purl.pt/960/5/>

A *choice* does not, necessarily, have the urgency and anxiety of a *need*. Sternberg states that creativity is a *choice*. Here Machado de Castro affirms it as a *necessity*. *Choice* or *necessity* dictate, thus, completely different realities.

Machado de Castro, in his *Dictionary of Sculpture*,¹⁹ in the definition of *Expression*, refers to his father, who was also an artist and craftsman in clay:

(...) because the passion he wanted to express in the figure he modeled, that same, was he exciting himself in the muscles of his face.

It will also be in this detail, framing the mechanisms of clay expressiveness described by Bucho (2011), that this feeling of visceral expressiveness of artistic creation and creativity is more visibly glimpsed.

Not only does Machado de Castro regret the lack of creative freedom that is *harmful to the works of spirit*, but he describes his own father – an artist too – exactly the behaviors defined by Bucho, of imagery and creative expression. Once again here we find the same standard behavior that evidences creativity as something not only rational and conscious but also visceral and subconscious.

Rosa Ramalho and the crafts of Barcelos

Rosa Barbosa Lopes, was known as Rosa "Ramalho", and was born²⁰ on August 14, 1888 in the parish of Galegos, S. Martinho, Portugal. When she was seven years old, to make some money, worked in a pottery who modeled clay dolls. At the age of 18 she married a miller by profession, and left this activity. Rosa had eight children (three died at birth). During the almost fifty years which was married Rosa put aside her work as a clay modeler and devote herself to the same office as her husband. With his death, in June 1956, she was almost 68 years old, and abandoned the profession of miller. With the purpose of earning some money she went back to work on clay and devoted the rest of her life to it. The art of modeling "imagination" became her passion. Rosa never attended school, could not read or write, and the notion she had of the world and life was the one of the stories of parents and grandparents, of the myths, legends and orality brought from generations. And that's exactly what populated the imagery of her artistic creation in clay. The particularity is that the work of Rosa Ramalho, for not having other influences such as the Italian of the eighteenth century and the nativity's scene, expressed the genuineness of orality and national popular culture. Rosa Ramalho formed in clay all kinds of demmoniums, beasts, bestiary, anxieties and fears. Rosa was a woman without instruction, but possessing a popular culture strongly based on traditions of orality, transmitted from grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren.

¹⁹ Castro, Machado de, 1731-1822 Dicionário de escultura : inéditos de história da arte / Joaquim Machado de Castro. - Lisboa : Livr. Coelho, 1937.

²⁰ Biography of Rosa Ramalho by the Municipality of Barcelos. Consulted on 18 February 2019, available in: https://www.cm-barcelos.pt/cool_timeline/rosa-ramalho/

In psychology we find that babies, in most species, cannot identify the probable predators. So that initially²¹ *innate fear* is nonspecific, but quite present.

Adulthood, for Rosa, in a state of illiteracy, was lived helplessly and at the mercy of the fateful and deadly elements and events. This would certainly be of great anxiety, for her own physical integrity and of her closest family members.

Diseases, dangerous animals, violence by others, hunger, would be some of these permanent nightmares. Let us remember that speaking of Rosa Ramalho we are talking about Portugal in the 40s to 60s (1900). Social cleavages were very pronounced, infant mortality, illiteracy, poverty was high and even hunger was a regular visit in the country then.

Something close to that feeling would certainly be the vulnerability of paleolithic man, before the inclement forces of nature.

Thus it will not be strange to us that the main realities expressed in the popular art of Rosa Ramalho, were precisely representations of her fears and afflictions. Consciously.

Without other plastic references, she thus represented the missing link between the Portuguese *barrística* pre and post 18th century Italian influences.

The imagination, considered prodigious, of Rosa Ramalho, whose hands sprouted inexhaustible fantastic figures, would be the manifestation, brought from the deep of history, of the lost figurative popular expression in national Portuguese territory, before the influence by the Italian nativity scene and the *barrística* school of Mafra.

In other words, Rosa Ramalho would perhaps have in her hands and in her imagination, roughly speaking, the continuity line of popular *barrística*, which came to us so directly since the times of the votive figures of the late Paleolithic. From the days when ceramics had been invented.

Without the restraint, censorship and rigor of the aesthetic or religious expression and external influences, the work of the artist/craftswoman of Barcelos was dictated above all

*they transform their environment, manipulate phenomena and feelings, master anguish, control ideas or impulses, unleash torment, hatred and aggression...*²²

by the greater or lesser degree of anxiety that the themes caused her. Rosa Ramalho was considered

²¹ Gleitman, New Year H.Fridlund, New A., Reisberg D. 2014. *Psychology*. 10th Edition. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Lisbon. pp.788

²² Bucho, João Luis. *As terapias expressivas e o barro: veículo de autoconhecimento, criatividade e expressão*. Repositório Institucional da Universidade Fernando Pessoa. Dissertações de Mestrado. 2011. Consultado a 29 dezembro de 2018. Disponível em: <https://bdigital.ufp.pt/handle/10284/2260>

*The essential paradox and all the misconceptions of "popular art" are particularly fruitful in this short and vehement woman, who has never read a book, but embodies a culture and possessed the gift of symbols with which man has always sought express themselves.*²³

the link between the national popular expression pre and post Italian influences of the 18th century. Rosa Ramalho's *creativity* was thus not a rational and analytical *choice* coincident with Sternberg's criteria. It was a *need for* personal subconscious expression. And this was a seemingly common trait in the artisans of Barcelos (Ana Baraça, Rosa Cota and others..) as spontaneous and subconscious expressiveness of themes that would cause them anxiety and fear. Nowadays apparently lost, in the requests of the *touristic imaginary*.



Fig.

Ferocious animal

Rosa Ramalho

The Raw Art of Anabela

An article in *Expresso* of May 19, 2017, Christiana Martins describes us the mentally ill 48 year old Anabela Soares, "who has two days a week to work clay":²⁴

²³ PERDIGÃO, Teresa: CALVET, Nuno (2003). Tesouros do artesanato português – Olaria e Cerâmica. Verbo, p. 108.

²⁴ In Newspaper *Expresso*. Consulted on 28 February 2019, available in <https://expresso.pt/multimedia-expresso/2017-05-19-Anabela-a-mulher-que-arranca-monstros-do-barro#gs.01eMUSoz>



Fig.
"The Interview"²⁵

Mentally ill, 48 years old, Anabela Soares has two days a week to consummate in clay which has long plagued her.

(...) owner of a self-esteem gained by the force of her hands. "Many colleagues want to sell their works and can't, I got it, I love it!" she says. With the money from the first sale, she bought a washing machine. Then she got the glasses. And she's already planning to *take care* of her teeth, all at the expense of manipulated, crumpled, created clay.

When we hear Anabela tell her story, without even knowing how to name her disease, we seem to see one of the magical beings manipulated by her: a woman consisting of a talking mouth open to the world, anchored in a pair of large and agile hands, capable of gestar shapeless monsters, reflectors of their feelings without brakes. A sensory experience that invites us to think about other life stories and how society welcomes individual sadness. Anabela's gestures are rude, crude. The artist's face is banal, her works curious. A flow that doesn't seem ready to be stopped, only she knows when it's over. And Anabela continues to knead the clay on Thursdays and Fridays, breaking through her own pain, exposing the fears to all of us.²⁶

That's what we can read in the interview. And here we find the similarities with what Bucho describes to us as: the therapeutic manipulation of clay and the qualities of this material, cathartic for those who work it. Anabela is unaware of other artists, movements, expressiveness, yet none of this is needed to create her art. This springs naturally from her hands and the certainty that the object is finished lies precisely in the artist's certainty that this form has been completed. This piece of art has come to an end and it's time to move on to another.

The reporter Christiana Martins informs us that this type of art, which is born from the hand of the mentally ill, has a name: *Art brut*. This term was coined by the artist Jean Dubuffet who saw art dominated by Academism, which he referred to as "cultural art".

²⁵ Exhibition sculptures by Anabela Soares in dialogue with the film "Black cat, white cat" by Emir Kusturica, November 2016 pavilion 31 hospital Julio de Matos, Lisbon. in Expresso 19 May 2017. Consulted on 28 February 2019, available in <https://expresso.pt/multimedia-expresso/2017-05-19-Anabela-a-mulher-que-arranca-monstros-do-barro#gs.lg4nUn1A>

²⁶ Ditto.

For Dubuffet²⁷ *Art brut* - which included graffiti, the work of the mentally ill, visionary, the misfit, prisoners, alienated, children and primitive artists - was the crude expression of a vision or emotions, uncontrolled by conventions or academism.

Elaborated by the artists and patients themselves, for the artists themselves and patients, without pretensions to commercial success or criticism, this type of art, used as a therapeutic tool in psychiatric institutions, quickly became also commercially exploited, and today exist specialized galleries that are dedicated exclusively to it. Several designations also target it, depending on this marketing and production.

Returning to Anabela and her monsters, reporter Christiana Martins refers as examples of *Art Brut* artists the French playwright Antonin Artaud, the Swedish Strindberg, the painter of the *Scream* Edvard Munch, or the sculptor Camille Claudel, Rodin's lover - hospitalized in a psychiatric asylum the last 30 years of her life - to also compare and frame the creations of Anabela Soares at the Hospital Júlio de Matos in 2017.

That is, what for some may be *Art Brut* for others can be *Expressionism* or *Impressionism*, another movement. Some may consider this therapeutic expression of psychiatric cases, others can consider it a turning point in the history of world art.

This leads us to conclude that both *rationalized* and *visceral* are... *Art*. They are creative, they are interpretations. More or less cathartic. It doesn't matter.

Being both *Art*, everything else what that can be inferred, concluded or judge, are mere conventionalisms.

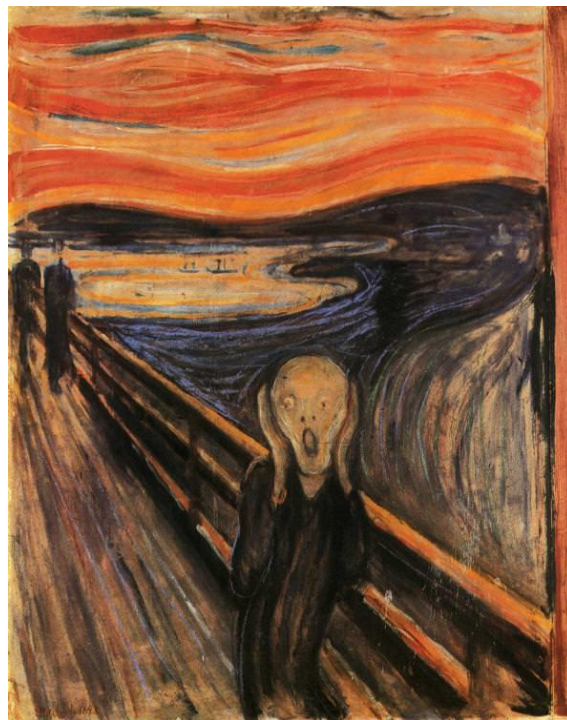


Fig.

Scream²⁸

Edvard Munch

1893

²⁷ In Tate. Org.uk. Consulted on 28 February 2019. Available in <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/art-brut>

²⁸ Image consulted on 1 March 2019, available in <https://edvardmunch.org/the-scream.jsp>

Christiana Martins, in this article interviews Ricardo França Jardim, former director of the Rehabilitation Service of the Júlio de Matos Hospital, President of the Board of Directors and Clinical Director of the Psychiatric Hospital Center of Lisbon, who to address the theme of this type of art, uses one of Vincent Van Gogh's last letters to his brother Theo:

Mental illness doesn't incapacitate me for painting. I paint like nothing's going on. I work as a true possessor, I have a deaf rage to work like never before. And I think this helps to treat me.

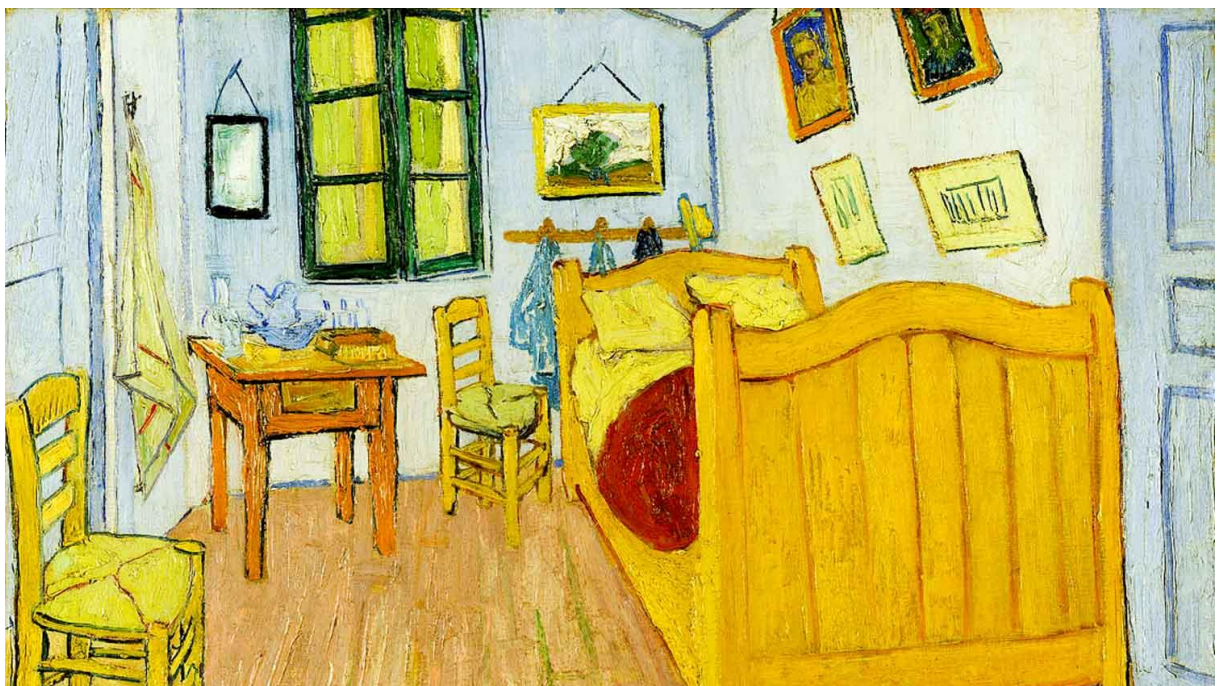


Fig.
The room in Arles²⁹
Vincent Van Gogh
1888

The journalist thus demonstrates that the approach of França Martins is situated between Art and Therapy. In the psychiatrist's words:

²⁹ Image: Van Gogh Museum, New York. Born in the Netherlands, Van Gogh moved to Arles, France, years later, seeking refuge from alcoholism. He painted the bedroom of his house, the Yellow House, while recovering from an illness. Consulted on 1 March 2019. Available at https://www.getyourguide.pt/van-gogh-museum-12695/?utm_force=0.

Most mental illnesses result in a skills gap and the prospect of rehabilitation work aims to recover some of these skills or even if the patient regains new skills. (...)

And emphasizes later in the interview:

Mental pathology can bring a certain pathoplasticity, which reflects what they feel, which does not mean that it is always.

From the Greek *páthos*³⁰ means disease. Patoplasticity will be the plastic capacity derived from the disease, which the specialist identifies as eventually something perhaps fleeting. Nevertheless Christiana Martins states that the psychiatrist confesses that apparently there will be the conviction that the artistic genius may arise associated with a pathological context and in this logic "certain investors", in raw art, "asked him not to medicate certain patients so as not to limit their creativity". To which the clinician replies that "as a doctor can not forget the therapeutic aspect", also ensuring that "art and disease are dimensions that can coexist".

In 2019 Alexandra Prado Coelho sign another article in Público³¹, where we discover Anabela working in a new place. *Manicómio*³² is a coworking space in the Beato, Lisbon. Was created by Sandro Resende and José Azevedo who, from several years of work at the Hospital Júlio de Matos, are people "with experience of mental illness" and put these special artists, to produce also with commercial intention.



Fig.

³⁰ Infopedia. Consulted on 1 March 2019, available on <https://www.infopedia.pt/dicionarios/lingua-portuguesa/pato->

³¹ "I've never felt happier saying I'm going to the madhouse" Public 16 February 2019. Consulted on 1 March 2019. Available in <https://www.publico.pt/2019/02/16/culturaipsilon/noticia/senti-tao-feliz-dizer-vou-manicomio-1861890#gs.zfXaNkrx>

³² Madhouse

From left to right: Claudia Sampaio (drawing and poetry); Pedro Ventura (writing and photography);
Anabela Soares (clay sculpture)³³



Fig.
The Madhouse³⁴



Fig.

³³ Image consulted on 1 March 2019. Available in:
<https://www.publico.pt/2019/02/16/culturaipilon/noticia/senti-tao-feliz-dizer-vou-manicomio-1861890#gs.zfXaNkrx>

³⁴ Ditto

According to the article Anabela Soares suffers from a mental illness long ago, a childhood of suffering and ill-treatment, which fifty years have not erased and that sometimes dominates her in the form of anger or pain. Anabela transposes into clay what torments her. In one of the sculptures were born heads of monstros that seem to fight each other and snakes to curl up in monsters, as well as other beings. She says that the time spent away from the clay feels like suffocate because she can't get the monsters out. When she looks at the pieces, she sees herself, and claim that there is no piece other than her. She also says that monsters don't all come out at once. But when they come out "it's a relief, an appeasement."

Survival and continuity

Art is, in fact, an *expression*. And an expression is a *necessity*.

Those who express themselves necessarily need to do so. It is as fundamental as breathing, eating, drinking, sheltering from the cold.

Animals express themselves too. They communicate by sounds, movements, rituals. The human learned to do it in a more complex way, through the language, the writing, but also the Art. Creativity in Art mirrors this complexity. If we also consider human existence reduced to its essentials, and we strip our expression of subtlety, we will have at the root of everything the most basic instincts: fear, hunger, cold, procreation, survival. Essentially they can be reduced to two major anxieties: *survival* and *continuity*. The primary constraints inherent to all living beings: *survival* and genetic *continuity* are the major anxieties of any species. Not only humans.

Creativity exists in other animal species. Chimpanzees create and use basic tools³⁵, Orcas develop³⁶ extremely complex hunting and predation techniques, observing, testing and using for their benefit fluid dynamics³⁷ hunting seals, or tonic immobility³⁸ hunting sharks. These observations reinforce that creativity is a *biological* phenomenon. The human, apparently, is the only one who can express creativity in *Art*. When he did so, for the first time in clay, the Paleolithic human represented precisely these two major anxieties: he represented *the animal* and the *woman*. The *survival* in animals that were food or feed on us, and the *continuity* of the species representing the woman that gives birth. He didn't rationalize the images. He just expressed them.

These animal expressions emphasized the beasts with their claws and attributes, movement, sociability in very explicit flocks or herds. In the figure of the woman – the so-called Paleolithic *Venus* – also the attributes of the female of the life-generating creature were particularly emphasized: the voluminous breasts, the prominent hips, the

³⁵ National Geographic. 2015. Photo Ark. Chimpanzee. Consulted at may 4, 2020. Available at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/c/chimpanzee/>

³⁶ National Geographic. 2015. Photo Ark. Orca. Consulted at may 4, 2020. Available at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/o/orca/>

³⁷ Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic. 2018. Wave Hunting: Orcas Prey on Seal. Antarctica Consulted at may 4, 2020. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K16lZU0agbg>

³⁸ National Geographic. 2020. *How orcas hunt great whites fascinates biologists*. Consulted at may 4 2020. Available in <https://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/animals-source/0000016b-f723-d5f3-a1fb-f7ff14210000>

rather explicit sex. As opposed the head or extremities (feet, hands) were always represented with less relevance.

Thus the first artistic creativity was *visceral* and originated in the *subconscious*. Everything that questions our existence causes us greater anxiety and that must be expressed, otherwise we will be suffocated by *monsters*. The appeasement, in the materialization of these anxieties, in the physical manipulation of them is revealing of this urgency and absolute need. The expression brings us reassurance. It's not a choice. It's imperative. It is, as João Bucho points out, the possibility of bringing from the subconscious to the real world these images and events, which we can not otherwise control, but like so we manipulate, transform, dominate. This is the norm in all art, not just in psychiatric patients. This is in fact, apparently, the underlying reality of creativity for all artistic movements, where there is in fact *originality* and *interpretation* by the artist. This is the reality of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Expressionism, Impressionism and other movements. It is also the reality of the artistic and popular *Barrística* in Portugal, from the cases of Barcelos, figurines of Estremoz and the project *Aldeia da Terra*. Creativity is originated consciously and rationally, according to Sternberg's criteria, but not only. There is certainly a more rooted component. The *subconscious* component. This has been described as *visceral*, in Cabeça Paulo (2018), which can in fact give rise to art languages, styles, diverse forms, influences. Conscious and subconscious are the two fundamental components of creativity.

Social filters

Creativity is thus, in fact, a conscious, rational process of choice, as Sternberg says. And it will be all the more so the greater the capacity of *defense*, of the artist, to social judgments. That is why the Paleolithic man, without the concept of social judgment, represented the two major conditioning factors or *anxieties* of his existence: animals and feminines, repeatedly and without constraints. The *survival* and *continuity* of the species. The human is apparently the only animal who can materialize in images his anxieties. In case of children, the same thing happens. Healthy children with happy lives represent in drawings the heroes of the TV series of their choice or imagination. However, the most fragilized ones, by mistreatment, domestic violence, or others, precisely express the ghosts of this violence. Children, usually, have not developed these social defenses as adults. In case of the most fragile, psychologically, and those with mental illnesses, these filters are also not as effective or even exist. So creativity, in these cases, is not so much a dialectic, conscious subconscious process. It becomes predominantly more visceral and emotional, more intuitive and instinctive too. More subconscious.

Anabela's monsters are an example of that. But they might not be monsters. It could be dotted skies, raging clouds, swirling moons. Cases of such artists are many: Pollock, Van Gog, Munch... It can perhaps be said that creativity will be both: as more conscious, rational and chosen process, the greater our social defenses are. It will be more visceral, emotional and intuitive, the smaller these defenses. Popular art in clay points out the historical behavioral patterns conscious/subconscious of creative people, that are evidenced in the chronology of the *barrística*: the *art in clay*.

The idea of the artist as the eccentric individual, of genius, dissatisfied, expressive, with original thinking and out of the box, sometimes controversial, was already mentioned for millennia:

"There's never been a great genius without a touch of madness"

Seneca (4 BC - 65)

It can certainly be reduced above all to questions of the subconscious and the greater or lesser capacity or need to express them. We must never underestimate the enormous power and even possible damage that anxieties and their repression do to the mental health of the human.

Neurologic clues

The way creativity seems to arise, usually spontaneously and without consciously causing it, is described precisely by Andreasen³⁹ N. C. (2011). She states that creative episodes arise in individuals when they do not seem to be thinking about the problem that requires creativity. Andreasen tried to map the human brain in situations of apparent rest or mental relaxation of the creative individual.

The neuroscientist considers that the ability to originate new ideas, concepts, inventions and objects of art is perhaps the most important attribute of the human brain. However, she confesses that we know very little about the neural basis of human creativity.

The neuroimaging studies that conducted the brain during the REST period (*random episodic silent thought*, also referred to as the *default state* – standard state) suggest that the association cortices are the main active areas during this state and the brain at that time is a system in spontaneous reorganization and self-organizing action. That is, it appears to be at rest, but, it is in intense activity. Andreasen states that if we try to understand this type of descriptions, using the framing of our knowledge about the functioning of the human mind and brain, then we are confronted, Andreasen states, we are led to the conclusion that creativity is originated mainly in the subconscious⁴⁰. In her studies she confirmed that the extremely high Intelligence Coefficient of 130 to 200 (genius value) is not a sufficient condition for more cases of creativity to arise. In a sample of 757 most creative individuals they tend to find themselves at IQ 120, a figure that although it is considered 'superior' is not rated as 'genius'.

In her observation creativity not being directly proportional to the value of IQ will be a more "primordial" process. And above all, a process that occurs when our conscious is in apparent relaxation or rest, without our intervention. So, this describes a phenomenon that is somewhat involuntary. According to its conclusions, the creative process is characterized by flashes of discernment that arise from subconscious reservoirs of the mind and brain. Neuroimaging studies that conducted indicate that these reservoirs reside in association cortices.

Thus, she concludes, during the creative process, the brain functions as a self-organized, autonomous system. The subconscious way in which the phenomenon takes place suggests a *biological mechanism* in command of the process. Once again Sternberg's *will*, and its components of the conscious are called into question. Not because they do not participate in this, but because the evidence indicates that there are other intervention factors upstream.

³⁹ Nancy Coover Andreasen is an American neuroscientist and neuropsychiatrist. M.D.; Ph.D. President of the Psychiatric Consortium of Neuroimaging, University of Iowa School of Medicine, Carver College of Medicine.

⁴⁰ Andreasen N. C., (2011), A Journey into Chaos: Creativity and the Unconscious. In: Brain, Mind and Consciousness: An International, Interdisciplinary Perspective (A.R. Singh and S.A. Singh eds.), MSM, 9(1), p42-53..

Laura Sanders⁴¹ in ScienceNews⁴² magazine describes a surprising revelation. The cerebellum⁴³, which receives stimuli from the environment and reacts accordingly, coordinates the movement of the human body, performs functions associated with the control of movements, ensures the harmony of the movements commanded by the brain. It also regulates muscle tone, and intervenes in the maintenance of balance. It is said of the cerebellum (from Latin *small brain*) that being the original and primordial processing organ of the original primate, it controls the instinctive reactions of the body in the surrounding environment. The brain, which increased in volume with human evolution, subsequently enveloped it, is usually associated with more complex reasoning and abstraction. For according to Sanders, the cerebellum may also be at the basis of the creative process.

An experience⁴⁴ of Manish Saggarr⁴⁵, Stanford University, gathered 30 participants, invited to draw verbs (levitate, exhale, whisper). They were subjected to brain scans. It was concluded that the more creative the design was, the greater the activity detected in the cerebellum. Thus gains strength the gradual conclusion that creativity is something genetically intrinsic to the human being. Creativity is a biological tool that accompanies us since we are primates.

Conclusion

Considering the art in clay one posed the question: what are the greatest anxieties of any being that exists on the planet, either a human, animal or vegetal? The answer is evident: *survival* and *continuity* of the species. These are the first and visceral constraints of any biological or social being. These are the constraints that originate all the others. The human hunter gather was the only animal that was able to expressed himself by *Art*. Which were the first representations (or at least the most frequent) elaborated in clay and ceramics?... *Animals* and *women*. The representations of the *animals* that guarantee the survival, and the *woman* that guarantees the *continuity* of the species. The first *Art*, it's first creativity, is thus demonstrably *visceral*. An *expression* of two first and ancestral anxieties. So creativity was *subconscious* before everything else. According to Bucho this is, precisely the manipulation, of images that condition us. Original constraints of our existence. The first Art was visceral. The first artistic creativity was originated in the subconscious.

Examples of subconscious manifestations exist in barristics over the centuries, from Paleolithic to Baroque, from folk crafts to Art Brut.

⁴¹ Laura Sanders, a neuroscience writer. PhD in molecular biology from the University of Southern California.

⁴² Sanders, Laura. 28 May 2015. *Cerebellum may be site of creative spark*. Sciencenews. Consultado a 26 março de 2020. Disponível em <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/cerebellum-may-be-site-creative-spark>

⁴³ Posterior, subterminal, brain, which is responsible for muscle coordination and balance maintenance. In Infopedia. Consulted on March 26, 2020. Available in <https://www.infopedia.pt/dicionarios/lingua-portuguesa/cerebelo>

⁴⁴ Saggarr, M., Quintin E-M, Kienitz E., Bott, N., et al. Pictionary-based fMRI paradigm to study the neural correlates of spontaneous improvisation and figural creativity.

⁴⁵ Professor Assistente, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Faculty Member, Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design (aka d.school), Stanford University.

We therefore can conclude that *Art* is originated by *creativity*. Creativity is *expression and a necessity* before it is a *choice*. Creativity is thus, first of all, an *imperative*. A subconscious urgency of manipulating images. An action that appeases us. Fundamental. Biological. So *creativity* is certainly more than Sternberg's rational criteria. Creativity has a rational and *conscious* component, described by those, but also has a component of *subconscious* expression that is not translated by those. Sternberg said creativity is a matter of *choice and* certainly is right. But the choice we make is, apparently, *conditioned*. Generating images and symbols is a subconscious process that enables us to materialize and try to manipulate what torments us and causes us anxiety. We solve problems, face fears, appease to solve them. Conquer the environment after that. This human capacity is perhaps of extraordinary importance. For any animal flees from its fears, protects itself from its anxieties. The human apparently has a mechanism that allows him to face those fears and thus dominate the environment. Without that he would not be able to do it. It will be proven so in the *barrística*, the art in clay. It can certainly be so in all areas of creativity.

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