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## Contemporary Art and Game Installations: a theoretical review

### Arte Contemporânea e Instalações de Jogo: uma revisão teórica

### Arte Contemporáneo e Instalaciones de Juego: una revisión teórica

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**Abstract:** This article is the result of research that, based on Social Studies of Childhood in conjunction with contributions from the field of contemporary art, aims to analyze possibilities involving contemporary art and early childhood education, in line with the work of Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2011; 2019). It is a bibliographical study whose focus of analysis is the concept of game installation and its development. Based on Bardin's (2016) content analysis, the article consists of three units of analysis: 1 - Installations according to the work perspective introduced by Mariana Mucci, María de los Ángeles Arce and Paulina Lapolla; 2 - Installations based on work in initial teacher education; and 3 - Reverberations of game installations in academic research with children. The results of the research pointed out how different possibilities of work with installations can provide contexts for games and exploration, production of playful activities and performances by children.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education. Contemporary Art. Installations.

**Resumo:** O artigo é decorrente de pesquisa que, a partir dos Estudos Sociais da Infância em articulação com contribuições do campo da arte contemporânea, tem como objetivo analisar possibilidades envolvendo a arte contemporânea e a Educação Infantil, consoante o trabalho de Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez e Abad Molina (2011; 2019). Trata-se de um estudo bibliográfico cujo foco de análise é o conceito de instalação de jogo e seus desdobramentos. A partir da análise do conteúdo de Bardin (2016), o artigo constitui-se por três unidades de análise: 1 - Instalações segundo a perspectiva de trabalho de Mariana Mucci, María de los Ángeles Arce e Paulina Lapolla; 2 - Instalações a partir do trabalho na formação inicial de professores; e 3 - Reverberações das instalações de jogo na pesquisa acadêmica com crianças. Assim, inferiu-se como diferentes possibilidades de trabalho com

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instalações podem oportunizar contextos de jogo e exploração, de produção de brincadeiras e performances pelas crianças.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Infantil. Arte Contemporânea. Instalações.

**Resumen:** El artículo es el resultado de una investigación que, partiendo de los Estudios Sociales de la Infancia en conjunción con aportaciones del campo del arte contemporáneo, pretende analizar las posibilidades que implican el arte contemporáneo y la Educación Infantil, en línea con los trabajos de Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez y Abad Molina (2011; 2019). Se trata de un estudio bibliográfico cuyo foco de análisis es el concepto de instalación de juego y sus desarrollos. Así, a partir del análisis de contenido de Bardin (2016), el artículo consta de tres unidades de análisis: 1 - Instalaciones desde la perspectiva del trabajo de Mariana Mucci, María de los Ángeles Arce y Paulina Lapolla; 2 - Instalaciones a partir del trabajo en la formación inicial docente; y 3 - Reverberaciones de las instalaciones de juego en la investigación académica con niños. De este modo, se infirió cómo las diferentes posibilidades de trabajo con instalaciones pueden proporcionar contextos para el juego y la exploración, la producción de juegos y actuaciones por parte de los niños.

**Palabras-clave:** Educación Infantil. Arte Contemporáneo. Instalaciones.

## Initial Considerations

Contemporary art, in its variety of materialities, supports, spaces, meanings and aesthetics, provides interesting and potential references for the creation of proposals that go beyond the most common types involving arts (such as the use of white paper sheet, painting only using small brushes, painting drawings...), targeting early childhood education kids. We understand, in agreement with Abad Molina (2008), that, *just like contemporary artists, children identify with spaces as a stage to develop an act filled with aesthetic pleasure*. Therefore, we do not intend to compare children and artists but rather identify similarities regarding the open way in which children and artists interpret and appropriate spaces and objects. When thinking about contemporary arts and, for example, works *in situ*<sup>3</sup>, installations, performances and sculptures, for instance, there is a series of works that explore, provoke and modify the space where they are located, according to the artist's intention. Therefore, it is possible to be surprised with something not thought of or looking at something that is ordinary and known but is usually taken for granted in our daily routine. In this work, while reflecting on small children's routine, we highlight the context of playful activities created in different spaces (both public as squares, streets, or malls and private such as schools and their homes) which were not designed with this purpose, but from the children's perspective at that moment are ascribed new meanings. Thus, we understand that children and artists, with their differences, invite (and inspire) other ways of looking, being and feeling the spaces they go through.

We consider that, for the whole education community, arts can offer “extraordinary elements in the construction of affective structures that organize collective rhythms and aesthetic rituals” (Abad

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<sup>3</sup> Works of art *in situ* are those created specifically for a certain venue, considering the characteristics of such space.

Molina, 2008, p. 326, our translation) since, by means of spaces structured through arts, children have the possibility to ascribe new meanings to the place, materials and objects as well as build, by means of interactions and relationships, new ways of being there, ascribing new meanings to their daily lives. This conception dialogues with Cunha (2017), which points out that schools should be the *first space triggering multiple artistic and expressive languages* (gestural, plastic, verbal, dramatic, musical...) since children know the world by means of all their senses “[...] and experiences occur simultaneously, without the need to classify them as visual work, painting, sounds – by one or another” (Santos; Carvalho, 2019, p. 30, our translation). Therefore, we understand that “[...] children’s actions, their movement, their way of realizing are issues connected to contemporary art” (Nalini, 2015, p. 58, our translation). This occurs because the “[...] open, procedural, interactive character that is expressed by means of countless media [...] makes contemporary arts an invitation to children’s interactions, investigations and discoveries” (Santos; Carvalho, 2023, p. 7, our translation).

In this context, we argue that the work with arts developed with children in early childhood education might dialogue with what has been currently produced in arts: works using hybrid languages, the most diverse materials, whose purpose is not only to produce something beautiful or to present a limited representation. Thus, working with arts in early childhood education might value certain characteristics of contemporary works of art such as the opening of meanings and modes of interaction, the use of common objects and hybrid languages, characteristics that break a paradigm of admiration and reproduction of works and the perspective of separate languages/medias.

Considering that, we share our understanding of art. Contemporary art appears as “[...] a novel, complex and extremely diversified aesthetic territory” (Duarte, 2008, p. 45, our translation), when compared to classical and modern art, centered on the final production and a “realistic” representation of the world with well-segmented borders between languages/medias. Therefore, contemporary art inaugurates new possibilities of materials, new ways of interacting with exhibitions, and a new conception of what is considered arts. Thus, it is possible to observe, in contemporary artistic practices, the audience as support and/or participant in the artists’ proposal (Parente; Maciel, 2022), the opening for exhibitions in other social spaces out of museums and galleries (Bulhões, 2019), and the broadening of artistic categories<sup>4</sup>. “In fact, we believe that contemporary arts can be understood as the inauguration of the unexpected and something provoking questioning. In other

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<sup>4</sup>Regarding artistic categories, Bulhões (2019, p. 17) emphasizes that in modernity, they were broadened from the “incorporation of drawing, engraving and photography” to the classical set that included painting, sculpture and architecture in the classical period.

words, it appears as a vector of provocation, awe and enchantment” (Santos; Carvalho, 2021, p. 4, our translation).

Taking that into account, this article discusses *game installations* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2019) as a possibility of creating spaces based on contemporary arts to be explored by small children. As portrayed by Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2016; 2019), these proposals are characterized as *symbolic and game spaces, inspired by contemporary art manifestations through installations by different artists as reference, which children can transform by means of playing freely*. Therefore, game installations are open to transformations and meanings ascribed by children, by means of their individual and shared experiences.

Considering that, this article aims to analyze six works of art by Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina and discuss how the concept – *game installation* – reverberates in other practices (Lapolla; Arce; Mucci, 2017; Guizzo; Carvalho, 2018; Santos, 2021). Regarding the methodology, this article results from bibliographic research, developed using content analysis (Bardin, 2016), whose investigative materiality includes the following analysis corpus: 1 – the thesis *Iniciativas de Educación Artística a través del Arte Contemporáneo para la Escuela Infantil (3-6 años)* (Abad Molina, 2008); 2 – the article *El lenguaje corporal: simbología de las acciones en los espacios de juego* (Abad Molina, 2014); 3 – the first book *El juego simbólico* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2011); 4 – the book *El lugar del símbolo: El imaginario infantil en las instalaciones de juego* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2019); 5 – the article *Lugares del juego y el encuentro para la infancia* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2016); 6 – the book *Experiencias artísticas con Instalaciones: trabajos interdisciplinarios de simbolización y juego en la escuela infantil* (Lapolla; Arce; Mucci, 2017); 7 – the article *Architettura di gioco nell’ educazione infantile* (Guizzo; Carvalho, 2018); and 8 – the dissertation *Crianças, performances e arte contemporânea: instalações efêmeras de jogo na Educação Infantil* (Santos, 2021).

To achieve our objective, from the analysis of content of the materials listed, we defined the following analytical units: a) 1 – installations according to the perspective of work with artistic experiences by Mariana Mucci, María de los Ángeles Arce and Paulina Lapolla; b) installations from the work in teachers’ initial education; c) reverberations of game installations in academic research with children. After this introduction section, we present a theoretical review of the works selected by Javier Abad Molina and Ángeles Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez. Next, we analyze developments from the concept introduced by those authors, and finally, the article is concluded with final considerations.

## Contemporary arts and game installations in the work by Ángeles Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Javier Abad Molina

Proposals involving game installations have been the subject of discussion in our previous studies (Santos; Carvalho, 2023; Santos; Carvalho, 2021; Santos; Carvalho, 2019), which addressed how installations might appear as spaces that offer opportunities of creation of playful activities and performances by children. This section presents a selection of works produced by Javier Abad Molina and Ángeles Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez, aiming to analyze the materials presented in the timeline below:

FIGURE I – Works by Javier Abad Molina and Ángeles Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez<sup>5</sup>



Source: Santos (2021, p. 97).

By having contemporary art as a reference in the work with early childhood education, Abad Molina (2008) highlights that it refers to artistic and creative processes that were developed in the post-modern period, which sought to deny modernist principles. Contemporary art uses as “basic language its own symbology and is constituted when meanings are shared in a certain community” (Abad Molina, 2008, p. 300, our translation). Therefore, arts are ascribed new meanings from the interactions and meetings established between audience, work and space.

We understand that certain characteristics of contemporary works, such as opening, possibility of being in contact with certain works, approximation to life due to the inclusion of different spaces of exhibition, use of ordinary objects and the blend of languages/medias might favor the creation of proposals involving arts with children, because these characteristics break a more limited paradigm of observation/admiration of works and more limited languages/medias.

In this context, Abad Molina (2008) highlights his interest in contemporary arts due to the fact that the works are open to the audience’s interpretation and multiple senses. Therefore, we agree

<sup>5</sup> Figure: Thesis; Book with the author Ruiz de Velasco Galvez; Article; Book with the author Ruiz de Velasco Galvez, Book with the author Ruiz de Velasco Galvez

with that author that contemporary arts can provide the *creation of proposals that are based on the perspective “with” and “for” arts*, as opposed to the more traditional meaning in the perspective existing “to” achieve another purpose. In the perspective of preparation for certain objective, there is a devaluation of the process developed by the children involved, or as pointed out by Cunha (2019), its purpose is *motor training*, for the *essentially creative child*, or the creation of a “*well done work*”.

Therefore, contemporary art manifestations, with their plurality of organizations, meanings and aesthetics, according to Abad Molina (2008), might configure *spaces of games* by means of installations that situate children and adults in meaningful contexts, where playing is part of the creative process. Taking that into account, the new organizations, constituted in the installation of games by children, are characterized as a creative action that derives from their interactions and new meanings are ascribed to the space and materials in this process. These relationships with objects and space in installations, according to that author, are converted into such dynamics that enables access to the symbolic. Therefore, Abad Molina (2008) establishes a connection between the idea of installation and space of game as a *place to incorporate new experiences from the symbolic game*. In such conception of installation, as a *game territory*, children are placed inside the proposal, so that they can experience and interpret it as “the actor that moves on the stage created for the development of a specific action” (Abad Molina, 2008, p. 191, our translation). This means that “[...] game installations are characterized as spaces open to exploration and reorganization by means of the creation of plots open to shared creation” (Santos; Carvalho, 2023, p. 12, our translation).

Considering this perspective, Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2019, p. 206, our translation) explain that the objective is to introduce in schools “the idea that relates de concept of arts with game, the symbol or metaphorical languages shared by artists and children” not exactly contemporary art installations.

Thus, contemporary arts, as inspiration for the work with arts in early childhood education, can also contribute to the advancement of discussions about artistic work, in that phase of life, going beyond an instrument of representation of certain situation or theme. Its presence enables the consideration of dimensions such as body, relationships, transformations in space and ascribing new meanings to objects, rather than only working on the flat, the sheet, and paint. For this reason, Abad Molina (2008) propose the introduction of installations in education spaces in a context of beauty, relationship, ethics and aesthetics, which allow children to create their own relations and interactions by means of transformation of the space and objects initially made available in a specific way. Thus, we understand that “[...] interactions established in proposals with installations of games inaugurate and/or give new meanings to children’s actions with themselves, with their peers and with the materials used” (Santos; Carvalho, 2023, p. 12, our translation).

Taking that into consideration, the proposal is characterized as a “place” to live new experiences by means of interactions, games and playing. This place appears when the session starts, organized in a specific way by adults, aiming at seducing aesthetically those children and inviting them to come in. Therefore, as explained by Abad Molina (2008), it is a proposal that appears and transforms by children’s interactions, which modifies the initial order, and disappears at the end of the session. Installations in school contexts might change and transform it, ascribing new meanings to the same place, by means of individual and collective experiences that are shared and built up in a space seen as “new”. Furthermore, “the spontaneous choreography of the playful action generates a huge and surprising interpretive variety of space, objects and relationships that are created with adults and peers” (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2019, p. 217, our translation). In such perspective, Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2016, p. 45, our translation) describe game installation as a “place of transition between the real and symbolic where everything is possible”, characterizing it as a symbolic space, planned and organized according to the school’s and children’s contexts.

Based on Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2019, p. 261, our translation), we highlight that sessions with game installations are developed following dynamics that contain entrance and exit rituals, both in relation to each other, “there are no structured phases as in a program, but rather entrance and exit rituals that mark the difference or the limit between the external reality and the place of symbolic expression”. Therefore, after organizing the proposal, the session develops in dynamics such as entrance or welcoming ritual, with the possibility of an initial drawing and/or oral expression, time for free play inside the installation, and exit ritual with the possibility of creating a drawing/construction after it and oral expression. Those researchers also point out that the dynamics are based on the itinerary of a psychomotor practice session by Bernard Aucouturier.

In this way, the creation of game installations considers the characteristics of the relevant children’s group, materials and spaces, as presented in a system of order and aesthetics, to invite their entry and provoke the transformation of what has been proposed. As a consequence, a chaos dynamics is enabled, which refers to “an ordered or structured disorder which allows change and management of the possible options” (Abad Molina, 2014, p. 81, our translation), from this starting point, according to Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2019), it is possible to *destroy the order set by the adult* initially, as a way of *appropriation and interpretation of the space* by children. This means to transform “the order created by the adult to allow some ludic drift as space appropriation and interpretation, to make it one’s own in the physical and psychological sense” (Abad Molina, 2014, p. 81, our translation). These appropriations occur by means of several body actions performed by the children and the symbolic transformations found in the objects and space of that proposal.

Another important aspect, when proposing game installations, highlighted by Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2016, p. 47, our translation), is the presentation of a system of order among which “geometrical shapes or mandalas – circles, spirals, stars or squares”. Such organization must also consider, according to the authors, both the horizontal plane as an idea of extension, and the vertical plane as representation of growth, lifting, or balance. Following the same logic, those authors emphasize that they usually select three types of objects to take part in the game installation. These objects, according to Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2019), express the ideal of *triangulation* to constitute a creative association that might interfere, complement or create multiple relations between them. Thus, different objects/materials can be piled up, covered, embedded, open, closed, depending on each proposal. We reaffirm, in agreement with Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2011; 2016), that objects/materials used in game installations are organized with the intent of enabling the establishment of narratives based on their functionalities, sensorial expressions, and the symbolic meaning that might be ascribed by children.

Another issue, related to the choice of objects/materials to be used, consists in their characteristics, such as size, shape, texture, color, as well as their “function”, which should be less structured in order to allow for interpretative diversity since more commercial toys and objects with a defined purpose, end up “configuring and pre-defining the games that will occur in the symbolic activity” (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2011, p. 183, our translation). Summarizing, the idea is that objects and/or materials used to create a game installation should provoke diverse actions not limited to a restrict way of use and exploration. To do so, it is necessary to provide a sufficient number of each object, according to the number of children participating at the time. In other words, “it is necessary to consider the intentionality of materials, the combination between them and the composition of such elements in the space configuration” (Santos; Carvalho, 2021, p. 8, our translation) since the game installation configuration can contribute with the possibilities of creating games, interactions, and relationships among and by children.

Taking that into account, Abad Molina (2008) points out that children’s relationships with objects that gained new connotations become a creative act. We highlight that from the continuity of proposals, broadening objects and materials, and making them available in different settings, enable children to make their creative actions, hypotheses and repertoire more sophisticated. Therefore, the game installation configuration acts as a mediator in the “game of meanings and discovery situations” (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2011, p. 191, our translation). The interactions established by children in game installations should be able to *communicate and express ideas, narratives and hypotheses built up from the game* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2016) since it is not guided by adults regarding what must be done in the proposal, thus children “access these spaces to give them new



meanings by means of free playing and generating a spontaneous choreography of ludic action” (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2016, p. 39, our translation). Those authors explain that this spontaneous choreography promotes a variety of interpretations of spaces and objects and enables new ways of relating to others.

It seems relevant to highlight, according to Abad Molina (2008), that a habitable space, which is interesting and inviting, consists in a suggestive space, able to awaken the subjects’ poetry and aesthetic sensitivity. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the aesthetic issue thoroughly since it is still common to create a stereotyped aesthetic for children. Therefore, game installations must be configured from materials, objects and structural and aesthetic organizations that provide children with the chance to build up powerful mental images, so that they are open to exploration and resignification. In other words, the conception of such proposals does not have to be *excessively descriptive or thematic* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2019), the intention is to provide the possibility of creating as an open space.

For this reason, proposals with game installations enable diverse possibilities of imagination, situation, events, narratives, and relationships among children, with the space and objects/materials made available. Furthermore, by means of exploration, the proposal is transformed, changed in the meeting with other children attending it. Different situations of discovery are favored, which tend to occur due to the actions organized by the participant children, both individually and collectively, and they are also expressed as an *interpretation of the space and objects through each individual’s experience* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2011).

For this reason, we reaffirm that by means of proposals involving game installations, possibilities of access to art are created as well as the articulation with the most recent production in the field. Therefore, just like art installations provoke the audience to immerse in them, *game installations also enable being “inside” the proposal* (Abad Molina, 2008), completely with objects and materials, in such dynamics that allow for the construction of meanings, transformation of spaces, establishment of different interactions and relations between children and the proposal. This means that those authors propose a possibility of encounter between art, school spaces and children by means of *game installations* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2019) with contemporary arts as reference. As a result, each game installation proposal introduces a new scenario in institutions, creating, as portrayed by Abad Molina (2008), certain changes in the routines and types of relationships between children and adults, since the interactions established might raise new possibilities, meanings and imagination.

Considering the discussions about contemporary arts and early childhood education (Abad Molina, 2008; 2014; Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2011; 2016; 2019), we understand that the proposal with game installations sets theoretical arguments that support the work, by means of these

proposals' characteristics, their relevance, as pointed out by those authors, of considering the local context and thinking the aesthetics for the configuration of such spaces, and in their constitution as a possibility of bodily and symbolic expression by children for their exploration and appropriation.

### **Installations from the work perspective presented by Mariana Mucci, María de los Ángeles Arce and Paulina Lapolla**

From the reference presented, which demonstrates part of the theoretical construction by Abad Molina (2008; 2014) and Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2011; 2016; 2019), focusing on the concept of *game installation*, this section aims to analyze how this production has been interpreted by other researchers to characterize theoretical developments, that is, from other perspectives and contexts. Therefore, we gathered three discussions: the first is in the book by Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017), called *Experiências artísticas com instalações: trabalho interdisciplinar de simbolização e brincadeira na escola infantil* (Artistic experiences with installations: interdisciplinary work on symbolization and playing in early childhood school); the second proposal was found in an article of the Italian magazine *Infanzia*, by Guizzo and Carvalho (2018), *Arquiteturas de jogos na Educação Infantil* (Game architecture in early childhood education); while the third refers to the dissertation produced by the co-author<sup>6</sup> of this article, called *Crianças, performances e arte contemporânea: instalações efêmeras de jogo na Educação Infantil* (Children, performances and contemporary arts: ephemeral game installations in childhood education)(2021).

In their work, Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) describe a series of artistic experiences carried out with installations for children, where they report to have found a different work perspective, from teachers' practices, involving arts in articulation with other types of knowledge. Their work is supported by three references - Reggio Emilia, Abad Molina and education through arts. They highlight three principles of the Reggio Emilia schools (Italy) as inspiration: the first is the principle of the child as a being of potentialities, able to build up learning in their relationship with others; the second principle is the teacher as the element providing children with experience and listening, by means of all senses; while the third refers to the perspective of space as educator, which favors children's exploration, participation and sharing with others.

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<sup>6</sup> The research was developed by the author of this article, MA Nathalia Scheuermann dos Santos and advised by the author prof. Rodrigo Saballa de Carvalho, PhD in the Education Graduate Program of UFRGS, in the research line Childhood Studies and CLIQUE - Grupo de Pesquisa em Linguagens, Currículo e Cotidiano de Bebês e Crianças Pequenas (Research group focusing on languages, curriculum and the daily routine of babies and small children).

The second reference pointed out by those authors is the thesis by Abad Molina (2008) and the books by Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2011; 2019). Based on those studies, the work by Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) consider *installations as contexts of symbolization and playing in children schools* (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2011) where children can create, narrate, and manage their individual projects and those shared with their peers. The third reference, in turn, focuses on education through arts, Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) emphasize the *importance of living and experiencing as privileged ways of building knowledge that is meaningful for the subjects*. From such perspectives, those authors advocate that the introduction of installations as aesthetic experience in the school context enables the development of children's creativity, ludic skills, imagination and collaborative work.

Unlike Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2019), Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) propose in their work the creation of installations in partnership with children. Therefore, their proposal is built up from the different phases of the creation, which reveal a work continuity systematic. Inspired by works of art by Ernesto Neto, Virginia Fleck and Yayoi Kusama<sup>7</sup>, those authors present the work developed with children, highlighting the moments that were collectively experienced up to the installation assembly. We highlight the potential of thinking of a collective construction with children, considering installations by known artists, their work methods, the materials used and their organization. We also emphasize the steps developed with children in those authors' work proposal up to the installation assembly.

Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) explain that, initially, children sketched and from their drawing indicated the position of objects in space, aiming at the planning of the installation and seeking to promote collective agreements about its assembly. Among the several installations that were built and are presented in the book, in some situations, there were also visits to exhibitions of the reference artists and/or the artist's visit to the school, with the participation of the children's families. After those moments of observation and participation, Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) report that those children were given the chance to explore materials and objects related to the art – which, were next used to build up the installation.

Another interesting possibility, created by those authors, is that those children could choose objects in their classrooms that were related to the installation to be incorporated into the assembly.

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<sup>7</sup> Here is a short list of artists who inspired the authors: Ernesto Neto – Brazilian artist popularly known for his large works that explore space, with suspensions and tunnels and using materials such as tissues, seasoning and beads...; Virginia Fleck – plastic artist from Austin (Texas/EUA), known for her work with aluminum can lids and mandalas made of plastic bags; Yayoi Kusama – Japanese plastic artist and writer (Matsumoto, Nagano/Japan), her work is recognized by “small balls” and dots (for ex.: *Dots Obsession* from 2003), the artist mixes paint, collage, installations, among other languages/media in her work.

The installation was assembled considering the agreements made and the children's sketches. At the end, Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) highlight that the proposal was explored by the children. It seems relevant to emphasize that this work perspective explores collective aspects and privileges dialogue, agreement involving the participant children at all moments, even during the proposal exploration.

Another factor to be highlighted in the process developed and narrated is the relevance Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) grant to the moment of exploration of the installations created. Children are invited to observe and produce a drawing with the details that were appealing to them. Finally, after having explored it, another drawing is produced, including aspects observed in the relationship originated in interaction with the work. This development method regards the entrance and exit rituals pointed out by Abad Molina (2008) and Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2019) in their work.

By means of the narrative presented by the authors in each work, the work process is revealed, where children have the opportunity to get involved with materials and in their group build the installation collectively up to the conclusion of their project. In their work, Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017) reinforce the importance of monitoring the group in their creation process, giving opportunities for the children to manage their own art and game project. In this view, teachers become mediators, helping and guiding the planned organization by each group of children. It seems relevant to highlight that those authors point out the need for an ethical and aesthetic attitude by the teacher, that is, ethical in the sense of being available and listening to the children; and aesthetic in the way of thinking and contributing in the space composition, so that it becomes welcoming to the children. Teachers' work as developed and narrated by Lapolla, Arce Mucci (2017), reveals the possibility of relating art in the daily routine of children in a contextual and continuous way, in a type of dynamics that enables children participation in processes of research, creation, exploration, and interaction between them and with the materials used.

### **Installations from work in teachers' initial education**

The article *Arquiteturas de jogo na educação infantil* by Guizzo and Carvalho (2018) produced in the context of teachers' initial education in the Education course of the Federal University of Rio Grande Sul (FACED/UFRGS) describes the work developed with game installation sessions (Abad Molina, 2008; Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2011), involving two and three-year old children in childhood education in a municipal school by two teachers (FACED/UFRGS) advised by one of the authors. Four proposals were developed inspired in the *poética do não valor* (poetics of non-value) by the Brazilian poet Manoel de Barros.

To provide a better understanding of their work, Guizzo and Carvalho (2018) explain that it was the neologism created by Manuel de Barros, *inutensílios* (something like 'useless utensils', by joining inútil/useless and utensils/utensílios in Portuguese), which inspired the teachers to create those proposals. The perspective adopted is based on the idea that certain objects, which might seem useless to adults, might find other meanings in children's perceptions, for being reinvented in children's exploration and interaction processes. Considering that, Guizzo and Carvalho (2018) explain that the installations developed were founded on children's understanding as potentially curious and able to transform things they interact with, whenever they have the chance to.

Based on the studies by Abad Molina (2008), those researchers point out three aspects that guide their work. The first refers to the appropriation and transformation by children of what is presented to them by means of symbolic game; The second aspect is characterized by the relevance of the work with architectures in the sense of involving imagination and the use of space and materials in a different way; while the third aspect addresses the transformation of the architecture space from its appropriation by children. Considering this context, Guizzo and Carvalho (2018) highlight that the game architecture sessions, developed at work, used diverse objects and materials which are taken for granted by adults in their daily routine. At the same time, even if children already know the objects, they are characterized as outside their reach for the purpose of exploring and playing with them. Some examples include vinyl records, sponge, toothbrushes and cassette tapes. The installation below, presented by Guizzo and Carvalho (2018), provokes us to think about how these materials can gain new meanings as support or painting instruments by children.

FIGURE 2 – “INUTENSÍLIOS” (USELESS UTENSILS)



Source: Guizzo and Carvalho.

In the proposals developed, those authors highlight that spaces were intentionally organized with the chosen objects, aiming to make them *mediators of communication and carriers of meaning* (Abad Molina, 2008 *apud* Guizzo; Carvalho, 2018). Taking that into account, Guizzo and Carvalho (2018) present the way the sessions were organized and the choice of materials. The two initial sessions focused on *inutensílios* related to sounds, one including vinyl records, CDs and their covers, Velcro islands, zips, spoons, fabric and paper sheets, on the floor covered with bubble wrap, while the other, aiming at giving continuation to the exploration, included unconventional musical instruments (*kazoo*, *washboard*, PVC tubes).

From the children's interactions, the materials and objects made available gained new meanings for the production of different sounds and, according to Guizzo and Carvalho (2018), they were gradually transformed into *the base for the creation of shared narratives and role playing*. Therefore, the work described by Guizzo and Carvalho (2018, p. 294, our translation), developed by teachers with game installations reveals contexts of “freedom and free expression, where children have the opportunity to express themselves with their whole bodies”.

The third session enabled children's experiences with different textures, temperatures and shapes. To create this proposal, Guizzo and Carvalho (2018) report the use of *inutensílios* from different times, most not known by the children (such as VHS and cassette tapes and vinyl records), in addition to trays for experimentation and exploration of different textures. The next installation was organized with paint and another set of *inutensílios* (such as brushes, sponges, vinyl records and VHS tapes). On that occasion, Guizzo and Carvalho (2018, p. 294, our translation) emphasize that during the proposals, children in small groups "had the chance to explore the structures using their bodies to produce sounds, by means of movement and gesture, experimenting sensations and relating to diverse materials and objects". Based on the work by Guizzo and Carvalho (2018), we reinforce how the development of practices with arts beyond common sense (as for example only producing drawings on A4/A3 paper sheets) in teachers initial education in the Education course might result in the development of teaching practices that are able to broaden children's repertoire, regarding both playing and creating and in the possibilities of using materials/objects.

### **Reverberation of game installations in the academic research with children**

Regarding academic research on this topic, we highlight the dissertation *Crianças, performances e arte contemporânea: instalações efêmeras de jogo na Educação Infantil* (Santos, 2021), which developed game installations with children aged 3 to 5 inspired by the work of different contemporary artists. From those sessions, the participant children were free in their own interactions and explorations with materials, spaces and their peers. Those proposals provided those children with an open space for interpretations and transformations since they were characterized as spaces that "suggest the 'once upon a time' as an invitation (as well as provocation) to continue one and a thousand stories where the adult element proposes, but the children interpret the objects and spaces offered" (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2011, p. 23, our translation). Therefore, considering this characteristic of opening, game installations result in a sensitive context for the production of the children's performances from their own playing, explorations and interactions.

In the investigation context, Santos (2021) points out that it was possible to observe that children create make believe performances (Schechner, 2013) by means of their playing. Thus, while making believe, creating and interpreting a character, they use their full body in an imaginative way. While producing their performances, children carry out *modulations of corporeality* (Caon, 2017), exploring different voices, movements, gestures and expressive ways.

FIGURE 3 – “The ball”



Source: Santos (2021, p. 234-235).

In that study, a game installation context was created with fabric strips hanging vertically, which in the context of the visual narrative above was transformed into a forest where mother and daughter danced in a ball. Regarding such transformation, we emphasize how game installations, that is intentionally created proposals inspired in the work of contemporary artists, were important for the children to have the opportunity to interact, play, create with the materials and perform.

Therefore, as stated by Santos (2021), children's plays in installations were powerful for the *production of performative acts*. From the performance of make believe, those children ascribed new meanings to the game installations proposed, also giving new meanings to those spaces and materials. They interpreted monsters, princesses, cats, mothers, daughters and other characters reinvented by means of their actions and expressions. Thus, the research leads us to the understanding that children's performances are not only produced in contexts of playing that involve make believe.

As explained by Santos (2021), *make believe performances* are evidenced by the children's actions to modify current organizations. In other words, children “by means of creative actions sought to transform some episodes lived by them in their interactions into strategies to convince their peers” (Santos; Carvalho, 2023, p. 5, our translation). As a result, moments of exit of the proposed sessions, the conquer of some desired material or actions routinely seen as “transgressions” (for challenging the logic of a “docile” body) were observed in the research context as creative ways of expressing, being and positioning oneself before the other. This shows that “their [children's] agenda included



negotiations, arguments and persuasion strategies, always accompanied by gestures, changes in voice tone and body expressions” (Santos; Carvalho, 2023, p. 28, our translation).

Another important aspect related to the creation of *make believe performances* (Schechner, 2013) is the fact that they do not have a marked “limit” as when in the make believe it is possible to distinguish daily reality and performance. These performances were observed in situations of children’s interactions and exploration as possibilities of making believe about their desires. Furthermore, Santos (2021) highlights that the children taking part in the research were involved in *rebel creative and poetic actions* (Almeida, 2019) *to convince others within the contexts experienced*. Considering that, we understand that from the children’s smaller expressions to the most intense expressions of their bodies should be seen as performative actions (Machado, 2010). In this context, it is clear that “in their performances, children express themselves with their whole bodies and ascribe new meanings to the spaces and materials shared in game installations” (Santos; Carvalho, 2023, p. 28, our translation). Therefore, valuing the performances shared by children consists in giving relevance to their body, gesture and oral expressions (Caon, 2017). In the perspective of the power of their bodies and their expressiveness, we advocate for the recognition of children’s authorship in their performance processes.

The authors Lapolla, Arce and Mucci (2017), Guizzo and Carvalho (2018) and Santos (2021), considering the specificities and differences of each work, showed how game installations (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2019) and *installation* proposals from the construction of *artistic experiences with children* (Lapolla; Arce; Mucci, 2017) can provide spaces of approximation with arts, thus enabling the establishment of playing, symbolic narrative creation, performative actions and different types of interactions among children and with materials and space. We understand that such proposals confirm the perspective that “spaces create actions and actions create spaces” (Abad Molina, 2008, p. 217, our translation) as a result of a proposal feedback dynamics: initial organization – transformation by children – and creation of new organizations.

## Final Remarks

The proposal by Abad Molina (2008) and Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2019) is based on a perspective that aims to enrich and broaden, symbolic and aesthetically, game spaces that are made available to children, from the inspiration in contemporary artists. Such investigative effort revealed how, in different settings such as in the teaching practice with children, in the initial education of educators, and in the academic research with children, it is possible to develop proposals with game installations. At the same time, we highlight that from the works analyzed, the proposal of game

installations as a possibility to create opportunities of exploration and production of plays and performances by children in contexts of game and symbolism.

Therefore, playing, exploring and interacting in game installation proposals inaugurate new ways of relating, being and interacting with the other, with oneself and with those materials/objects in certain context. As a metaphor of reality, game installations might *allow participants to get lost and find themselves, provide protection and safety, as well as communication* (Abad Molina, 2008). Each game installation proposal, based on their reference, materials/objects and organization, might provide the composition of different interpretations and interactions in those playful activities. Therefore, from their introduction, the “once upon a time...” is started, and that is the beginning of varied narratives established by the children, considering their appropriation of the installation while developing the projects and modifying the initial order proposed.

According to Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez and Abad Molina (2019), the intention should not be the development of a teaching model or some guidance that generates dependence on how to do, what to do, and/or insecurities. Those researchers defend that each educator should develop their practices according to the specificities of their professional context. We complement this idea by observing that these practices should be related to other proposals developed with children so that it is not something episodic in a dynamic of “novelty”, which might end up not being meaningful for the children. Because if there is no continuity, the development of pedagogical work and the broadening and sophistication of children’s hypotheses and constructions might be hampered.

Taking that into account, we reinforce the idea of art as one of the children’s rights, but sometimes in their experiences in the school context, they end up having some contact with it but in a limited functionalist perspective. We defend the work with contemporary art as reference for being part of *our current time, aligned with contemporary issues and contexts* (Cunha, 2017) and, in this case, for the creation and proposition of game installations (Ruiz de Velasco Gálvez; Abad Molina, 2019) considering “teacher’s intention” for that specific moment (Santos; Carvalho, 2021). Therefore, we understand that the variety of materials, support and aesthetic of the works of art might be powerful reference for the creation of proposals with installations that invite and provoke children, thus enabling their participation, the production of plays, performances, and the establishment of other ways of relating with the school spaces.

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