



**INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDRE AMÉRICO:  
on the visualities of dance as temporal compositions**

ENTREVISTA COM ALEXANDRE AMÉRICO:  
sobre as visualidades da dança como composições no tempo

Heloísa Sousa

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1392-3870>

Alexandre Américo

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**Abstract:** In this interview, Brazilian artist from the state of Rio Grande do Norte Alexandre Américo discusses his creative processes in contemporary dance, addressing the composition of images through the relationship between the body and other scenic materialities, based on the works of his poetic project titled *Manifestações da Terra*. Américo's dance redefines certain concepts of scenic visualities with an emphasis on Afro-centered artistic and philosophical references, particularly regarding the development of costumes as matter on the body. Through a processual practice without hierarchy and grounded in attentive listening to things, landscapes, and their presences, the artist's work attests to the intrinsic relationship between time and rhythm in scenographic compositions, understanding these materials themselves as scenic events.

**Keywords:** Alexandre Américo; contemporary dance; visibility of scenes; costume design; temporality.

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**Resumo:** Nesta entrevista, o artista potiguar Alexandre Américo discorre sobre seus processos de criação em dança contemporânea, tratando das composições de imagens através da relação entre o corpo e as outras materialidades da cena, a partir das obras do seu projeto poético intitulado *Manifestações da Terra*. Com ênfase em referências artísticas e filosóficas afrocentradas, a dança de Américo redefine alguns conceitos das visualidades da cena, principalmente no que concerne à elaboração dos figurinos como matérias sobre o corpo, desenvolvendo uma prática processual, deshierarquizada e de uma escuta atenta às coisas, às paisagens e suas presenças. Desse modo, a prática do artista atesta a relação intrínseca entre o tempo e o ritmo nas composições cenográficas como essencial para elaborar essas matérias também como acontecimento cênico.

**Palavras-chave:** Alexandre Américo; dança contemporânea; visualidades da cena; figurino; afrorreferencialidade.



## 1 Introduction

Alexandre Américo<sup>1</sup> is a Black, *caixara*, neurodivergent, and LGBT+ dance artist and researcher whose work investigates contemporary art through the lens of “difference.” Drawing on performative research, improvisation, and counter-colonial dramaturgical developments, he adopts a racialized and accessible perspective. Since 2015, Américo has moved between solo dance and composing for community events. From 2018 to 2023 he served as artistic director of the Cia. GiraDança and his current work is linked to TORTA Plataforma de Arte Expandida, which he founded. His research and practice bring together psychoanalytic theory and studies in Cripistemology<sup>2</sup> (crip theory), alongside disabled artists from the outskirts of the city of Natal, state of Rio Grande do Norte (RN), Brazil. His choreographic works notably gather fabrics, weavings, oils, powders, garments, maskings, and other emerging materialities from the riverine and coastal landscapes of RN and reperform in his dance. Rather than mimesis or conventional representation, his artistic research asks what ethical and aesthetic procedures animate certain manifestations of art, to reactivate them and compose other images referring back to themselves.

During an interview on May 30, 2025, over coffee in Natal, the artist reflected on the intersections of creation, conceptualization, and research within his practice. The conversation centered on the resonance between Alexandre Américo’s choreography and the interviewer’s doctoral inquiry into a philosophy of costume—a framework that treats costume as a dynamic scenic element modulated by time, rhythm, and movement (Sousa, 2024). Within this scope, the visualities of the scene are radically reclaimed through movement and states of presence, effectively subverting their traditional roles. The artist thus spoke from the works *Bípede sem Pelo* (2022–2023), *Chão* (2023, with the Companhia de Dança do Teatro Alberto Maranhão), and *Zambé de Contra-Ataque* (2024, with the Grupo de Dança da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte). In these works, objects or things—following André Lepecki (2012)—become fundamental matters for articulating contemporary and traditional dance in a radical and implicated way, rather than serving as elements in a web of signs meant to identify their origins. Américo’s work marks a significant moment in the history of dance in RN, potentially reshaping other scenes that intersect the northeastern capital. Moreover, it confirms in practice the interviewer’s research hypotheses concerning the inseparability of rhythmic composition and other forms of notation in the creation of costumes for the contemporary stage.

The transcription of this dialogue preserves the informality of the café setting and orality, while maintaining the rigor and seriousness of the elaboration of thought in art and the articulation of references. Hence, we chose to signal the references that ground Américo’s thinking through

1 The artist’s online portfolio is available at: <https://www.alexandreamerico.com/>. Accessed in: 7 July 2025.

2 The epistemological field of Crip Theory (McRuer, 2024) operates as a counter-regime to the normativizing structures imposed upon bodies, relocating the experiences of people with disabilities—historically relegated to invisibility—toward a relation of self-affirmation and pride. It grants these embodied experiences the status of knowledge production.



footnotes. Such format follows the writing structure of other texts of the artist. Here it corresponds more to the interviewee's thought articulated orally and acknowledged by him during the review of this transcription, than to direct citations from the referenced works.

By presenting Américo's own concepts and procedures, the words gathered here point to other historical flows and spaces on the Brazilian contemporary stage. Hence, the interview highlights the relation between theory and practice as it emerges through the artist's trajectory

## 2 Interview

**Heloísa Sousa (HS):** Could you briefly speak about the works *Bípede sem Pelo*, *Chão*, and *Zambê de Contra-Ataque*?

**Alexandre Américo (AA):** First, these three works don't form a trilogy in any numerical sense. They belong rather to a poetic project<sup>3</sup>, which I call *Manifestações da Terra*. The project consists of elaborations emerging from a cultural weave of Blackness and *caboclagens*<sup>4</sup> that shape the cultures of the land. It is as if I were setting culture in motion. I feel I'm moving a culture that is interconnected and guided by eco-oriented principles<sup>5</sup>. There's an ethics oriented toward the earth and all these manifestations, as much as traditions such as the *Boi Bumbá* came into being. Just as each festivity gradually took shape, I feel committed to elaborating small other festivities, small other *sambas* – *samba* understood as a place of celebration. I have no intention of being religious with these works. I am more interested in deforming religion or, perhaps more precisely, citing it. I feel that I reference these cultures. So it is Afro-referential and also personal. Here I sense my body increasingly crossed by Black and Indigenous lineages, which recalls something that João Njyn once said: that Indigenous people are considered the Blacks of the land. So, this is a personal rescue that I've been undertaking intimately. It's the same project, with themes that keep emerging, always connected to personal elaborations and to a personal ethics. In *Bípede sem Pelo*, I began to understand this thing. I say that *Bípede* is the second solo movement of this research, which actually comes from *Cinzas ao Solo*—and I like to think of that as my preliminary work. About *Cinzas*, I don't know how to name it. I don't even dare say that I'm dealing with ancestry, so it's a sensation. But in *Bípede* I already feel that it's a deeper plunge. In fact, between the preview and the premiere of this work, I underwent my initiation in *Candomblé*. Personally, this is my way of approaching the orixá<sup>6</sup>. I dive in and begin to understand the world aesthetically through this other cosmivision, and that radically changes my pieces, you know? The way I choose them. *Bípede* ends up fabulating

3 SALLES, Cecília Almeida. *Gesto inacabado*: processo de criação artística. São Paulo: FAPESP, Annablume, 1998.

4 "Caboclagens" refers to cultural processes and identities associated with the caboclo, a term that designates people of indigenous and European descent living in rural and inland populations in Brazil.

5 MAFFESOLI, Michel. *Ecosofia*: uma ecologia para o nosso tempo. São Paulo: SESC Edições, 2021.

6 "Orixás" are deities of religions of African origin, such as Candomblé and Umbanda.



a rite of passage and recreating it. I use this notion of fabulation a lot because it works as an operator of falsity<sup>7</sup>. I falsify something, and that falsehood mobilizes an entire cognitive apparatus. *Bípede* is fabulary and referenced in Blackness, but it is also an autobiography—that is, it carries an autoreferential, autobiographical trace. But I have no intention of conveying any message; I'm more interested in sharing an aesthetic. What I do in my pieces is open an aesthetic circumstance. I think I'm a bit like a *macumbeiro*, a kind of sorcerer who mediates that situation, that circumstance<sup>8</sup>. 'So *Bípede* reflects on these nodules, which are the stages, the moments along this solitary path that at some point finds itself in the *terreiro* and fabulates with other mythologies. It's a long journey, from Egypt to Greece. I travel through the images I want to fabulate and profane. So I profane them one by one, mixing and deforming them. What I do is agglutinate images through nodules. Each image I propose is an imagetic nodule, always a confluence<sup>9</sup> because of many roots. When you watch they're almost a *caboclo*, but they're not, as another image contradicts them, making them much like a dream. There's a oneiric operation in my work. And that has to do with a mode of operation and aesthetic elaboration. They follow the same prerogatives as the elaboration of dreams, which is an elaboration of the unconscious<sup>10</sup>. So you can replace the dream with the unconscious—or the oneiric with the unconscious (or the unconscious). I've been working with that notion. *Bípede* is that place, whereas *Chão* is as if I were trying to continue the same research, but in a shared way. In *Bípede*, the image is of this solitary being. In my case, I am a son of *Omolú*, who is also that figure who dies and returns, who is reborn alone, who is abandoned. *Chão* is more a moment of *xirê*. It has to do with the aesthetic experience of the ritual circle, it's like a delirium of the ritual circle. It's deformed and profaned. Some people hate what I'm saying here because it's ethically questionable. But I'm making art. And it's not me who authorizes myself, oh no. Every *candomblé* is different, every *terreiro* is different, and I have my authorizations, right? Fine, you can contest it, but I'm doing this in the field of art—that's my interest. The world is a *terreiro* and the *terreiro* is the world. Everything is together, but I want to see how this manifestation of the *terreiro* expresses itself outside it. So I think it really has to undergo certain modifications; it needs to be profaned, and that is what I do. My choreography is like an *orixá* that takes hold of the body. It doesn't belong to the order of reasoning or rational thought. I need to train everyone to become sensitive to this, which is an agreement and which will take root from another, unconscious place—a place of non-thinking. Everyone involved in the creation process is with me, working every day, living this thing, and I'm betting that at some point it will settle in the body. My work is to settle it. It's like making a head. I settle the choreography in those people. There's an ethics governing this; it has nothing to do with stories being told or things like that. In *Chão*, for instance, I have the desire to do this

7 GREINER, Christine. *Fabulações do corpo japonês e seus microativismos*. São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2017.

8 ABEL, Thiago. Arriar o butô na encruzilhada: quando macumbeiros encontram Tatsumi Hijikata. In: GREINER, Christine; SOUZA, Marco; FARO, Paula (org.). *Novos orientalismos e micropolíticas anticoloniais*. São Paulo: Annablume, 2022.

9 SANTOS, Antônio Bispo dos. *A Terra Dá, A Terra Quer*. São Paulo: Ubu Editora/PISEAGRAMA, 2023.

10 FREUD, Sigmund. *A Interpretação dos Sonhos*. Obra Completa. v. 4. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019.



in opposition to the very history of those bodies [of the CDTAM], which is extremely technicist, colonized, as they are people who desire to dance ballet. And they have that desire because they exist within a certain context. So for me it wouldn't make sense to make *Chão* with just anyone. I had to make *Chão* within that opposition. I needed to implode the colony, right? It's with those bodies that I need to reveal some attempt, because what interests me is the attempt, not the success. *Chão* has that confrontation, and that's where this contracolonial notion begins to appear, as I move closer to Nego Bispo—which is also about approaching language in order to counterattack with it. That's why I like to think of myself as contracolonial. From the first movement, it's a way of counterattacking. Because I need to, because I want to. Because my ethics point me in that direction. Then in *Zambê de Contra-Ataque* I try to make a third movement and understand to what extent—or how—these bodies can gestate themselves as a community. And that had to do with the context they [the GDUFERN] were living through. When I arrived there, everyone was weakened, sad, disconnected. So we went on to gestate an experience of community. Always a wager, right? Because community is one of the ways we operate, from within this Black–Indigenous field, of those who are “married to the land”—a term from Frantz Fanon<sup>11</sup>. We have another relationship with nature; we symbolize it differently. So I try to reconnect and gestate a community. That's the subject. Later other images came, like that of the peasant community. Personally, an image my mother used to tell me about came back very strongly. My mother worked in the fields. My grandmother too. And for me... I dismembered my grandmother entirely there—sorry, my great-grandmother. I dismembered my Black great-grandmother working in the cotton fields and turned her into a multitude of images and dances. That is *Zambê*. To counterattack the structure, the superstructure.

**HS: You said *Chão* tries to create this shared place. And then *Zambê de Contra-Ataque* also comes as a collective dance. So what distinguishes the research in *Chão* from that in *Zambê*?**

AA: In *Chão*, the experience wasn't collective, but individual. It was a personal immersion, only multiplied. So it didn't have to be six [people]. *Zambê* has to do with a lateral inclination. In *Chão*, there's a personal plunge to recognize and undo colonial impulses. *Zambê*, in turn, leans toward the collective: a dance supported by the other, by alterity, where nothing exists alone—especially the costumes. It's about making this movement visible, giving form to this common ground, this connection, this force of alterity. There's also a plunge into oneself, a self-recognition, but it must be worked out together as a recognition of the other—of oneself and the other.

**HS: I'd like to reflect on something related to costume. When we move away from the idea of costume as a purely visual object, it inevitably starts to transmute into other scenic elements. This even begins to generate a certain conceptual instability. So I think the costume starts to become a device that turns into many things. For example, when you say *Bípede* was**

11 FANON, Frantz. *Pele Negra, Máscaras Brancas*. Translated by Sebastião Nascimento. São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2020.



also a rite of passage, that there is a solistic plunge there, the materiality you place on your body constructs much of the dramaturgy. It's the development of your relationship with it that makes the work unfold. And in *Chão*, I find it very interesting that the costume produces sound. That's very striking. I still don't know how to connect these things, but when you make that multiplied personal plunge, these costumes produce sound. Whereas, in *Zambê*, I think you produce space, which technically would be set design. So when you move toward that suggestion of community, what emerges is spatiality indeed. In other words, the transmutation of costume in your works is quite notable, depending on the focus of your performative research

AA: That's right. And it's not only sound. The work echoes through different matters. I even think *Bípede* creates time, an experience of time. I try to enter time in *Bípede*. In an idea of ancestry, really. It's very interesting to think that *Bípede* does this, and that in the other work I operate another layer, which is sound. I really spatialize sound. I compose thinking about the effect of these materials on the floor. And the effect, in that case, is truly sonic: dragged, whipped, struck. There's something there like a sonic tremor; it's not like string sounds. No, it really trembles, there's percussion. And also, sonically, when TINOC [the composer] comes in, the research is about gathering manifestations of the earth as well, to make transmutations, deformations, and to muffle them. So he muffles while these sounds are torn or released in a raw way. Raw sounds in the materialities. Striking the wood of the plane, the part that lifts it slightly off the floor. There's an action there. Or rather, it's not even really an action—it just happened as a consequence. We were composing with whatever kept emerging, and that sound started to draw our attention. We glimpsed it when I thought about the beads. But not only the beads—this is also quite deformed through the adornment work of João Marcelino. They're personal things from the artists who dance, it's subjective as well.

Image 01 - Scene of *Chão*



Source: JAN, 2023



**HS: It is notable how the presence of materialities on the body has become more marked in your works from this triad on. Do you perceive this? Could you comment on this emergence? Does it change the way you create or understand the scene today?**

**AA:** Well, in *Cinzas ao Solo* I look at the relationship with the environment and try to recreate it with clay, ashes, and maskings, along with this movement of transmutation of the skin. That was the first time I dealt with material. Before that I was concentrated on another logic of dance, with movement being the most important thing. But since *Cinzas* I began to understand that movement and the relationship with the environment are the most important things. Still, I couldn't elaborate much beyond this point, because that was what I had in 2016. My next step was *Goldfish*, which is in another register, another poetic project. The registers of *Goldfish* and *Myoclonus* are more similar. There is Blackness there, a social cut, a relation to movement—in other words, composition of image and text. So I feel I have at least two poetic projects: this one of the *Manifestações da Terra*, and another that I still cannot name, the one of Blackness. After *Cinzas*, I feel *Bípede* is a deepening of this relationship with the environment. In this case the environment began to become materiality, because it wasn't costume. At first I thought I would dance naked, because I couldn't find anything to wear at all. Then I started imagining and looking for the materialities that called to me. So I did a photokoreographic immersion with Brunno Martins, and it was the first time I covered myself with things in the studio of a friend, Jô Bonfim—Ana [Vieira] and I, at the time. I only needed to enter a state of trance. I was trying to investigate this notion of emersiological improvisation<sup>12</sup>. Something that wasn't programmed, but would come. I was interested in understanding the state I could only reach through improvisation. At that time I had not yet entered *Candomblé* and didn't understand that the path was similar. Then Jô brought me some material, some cloths, showed them to Ana, and they began composing me. And he brought me raffia, that dry straw, and I realized that it would stay. I didn't know how, I didn't understand anything, but it began there. A few months passed and there was an intervention by Elisabete [Finger] that was very important. She also works with this notion of listening to materialities, a certain alterity of materials. It is different from how I do it, but it also has similarities. She made me elaborate other paths to understand that dance was also less this immersive experience. So I felt I needed to reflect, discuss, and choose differently. Because when you are in the *terreiro* there is an ethic that conducts things—you have to place the raffia here, other thing there. It is a distinct aesthetic experience. But when I relate to art, I have to look at the state of the art. I have to look at the strategies that already existed. It is something different. So today I create by doing this. I am always looking at how things are done, including when I am a spectator. I learned that from Marcos Bragato, analyzing performances for four years in undergraduate research during my Dance Education degree at UFRN. That was when I began to understand that light was a material and that space was not prior, it was also a materiality. So much so that I don't step on the stage floor in an ordinary way. When I am inside a scenic frame, there is an integrated structure, psychic and spiritual. What I have been learning more and more with

12 ANDRIEU, Bernard. *No corpo de minha mãe: método imersivo*. Natal: IFRN, 2015.



maturity is to wait for what things may require of me. I am interested in dismantling the energy of things. So, ethically, I am always sniffing around to inaugurate small rearrangements. I will have to destroy ontologies to make it—the idea of costume, the idea of religion, the idea of... fuck it all. With all due respect. Or even having to disrespect it, because I have no modesty about it. I began to understand I needed to use a straw differently from what is expected or from how it is usually seen. To use light differently as well. To use light to hide and costume to undress. The truth is that before anything else, that is matter. It is not an object, nor a costume, nor a thing or a formed thought. All things are there to be thought. I believe the place of art is the production of sensitive thought, and that the consolidation of art, especially contemporary art, needs to promote displacements. So I will only promote displacements. And in some way I also consolidate things intellectually<sup>13</sup>, because art requires elaboration. For example, when I watch a sunset, it is aesthetic and beautiful. I enjoy it. And it remains in memory as a datum. But it is not art. For me art is work, it is a displaced and non-conformed culture. That's why I think having a training is not art. There may be practices that take all artistic techniques and use them very well, all the ways of doing. But for another purpose. I am here open to be shaken, and this proposition is not to please, it serves no purpose. I use the language of the world for it, and I place everything in vibration, all these compositional fields superimposed and inseparable. I think things are fields and also operators of thought. That is how I work. If you take my compositional plan<sup>14</sup>, I say: create a thought of costume, create a thought of light, create a thought that guides you, create a thought of dramaturgy so we can mobilize it in space-time. And each work demands specific things. Not every work will demand a thought of costume or light. So I have been working like this, placing things as zones. There is a less contoured image. And in this operation of zones there is a component of subjectivation, as if things had their own impulses. And as Donald Winnicott says: "the baby doesn't exist". We will have to relate to this alterity for the thing to happen. It is always thought the thing doesn't exist. It doesn't exist. There is something a bit phenomenological<sup>15</sup> in this, it's about the order of operation. It seems to me that the material is only named as costume if you touch it. Laura [Figueiredo, lighting designer] once said: "never show this costume without the light," that is, never show the object, the thing. Because the thing means nothing and even gets in the way. That is what I began to dwell on. But do you see that it is not only costume that I began to look at? I began to look at many things beyond the body. And I think it is really this thought. A thing doesn't exist a priori.

**HS: How do the ideas for these materialities emerge? The mantle [in *Bípede sem Pelo*], the heads [in *Chão*], the clothes [in *Zambê de Contra-Ataque*]. Could you describe the creative path that leads you to them? How do you choose them, experiment with them, and compose them?**

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13 DEWEY, John. *Arte como experiência*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2010.

14 LEPECKI, André. Planos de composição. In: GREINER, Christine; ESPÍRITO SANTO, Cristina; SOBRAL, Sônia (org). *Cartografia Rumos Itaú Cultural Dança: criações e conexões*. São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, p. 13-20, 2010.

15 MERLEAU-PONTY, Maurice. *Fenomenologia da percepção*. Translated by Carlos Alberto Ribeiro de Moura. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1999.



**AA:** First of all, I feel that everything I elaborate comes from desire—from a hole in me that devours everything and seeks satisfaction at any cost. Something I'm not conscious of, which keeps being elaborated while I sleep and while I'm awake. This thing never stops creating. It begins when a force field or a zone of creation is activated. What I mean is that anything can be. What do I need to do now with this emergence? I need to conceptualize it, name it—structure what I call the conceptual zone of the process. That is the hardest time. Until I name it, I keep devouring everything. And you know me—you know I read everything: phenomenology, Darwinism, psychoanalysis. Some things are antithetical. Some things don't belong to the same world, but I need to find some kind of coherence, a crossroads.<sup>16</sup> So in *Bípede* I only had a feeling, an altered state, but I didn't understand the orientation—whether I would choose the transit states of angels, of Saint Teresa, or whether I would choose a *rodante*<sup>17</sup>. Who would give me life? And I stayed like that, searching for relations with this invisible thing that surrounded us. I began to realize I also had a desire to deal with fabulations, with mythologies. So I bought books about mythologies from all over the world—China, Japan, Korea, Africa. Just imagine: archetypal images, enormous and guarded. I also began to feel a desire for masking. To understand the sky that understood us. I tried to feel things. Then I felt like testing one image or another related to those mythologies that inspired me, like Iansã and Omolú. And what came was a material. Coincidentally, that material appeared because Jô [Bonfim] came over and said, “I have some raffia here”, and put it on me. And I said, wow! Raffia is from one of the *Itãs*, right? When Omolú goes to the *xirê*<sup>18</sup>, he meets Iansã, who gives him the wind and everything flies. I was also interested in an image of masking that I saw around 2010 or 2012, the first time I encountered *Egungum*, a figure that is a manifestation of the earth—ancestors incarnated in the community. The first time I saw that, I connected it to the *papangús* and to a million other things. Then the cloths arrived, and I didn't know what to do with them, but I knew I wanted to test them. These were just any cloths, I found them at Jô's place. We didn't know what gesture to compose, so I did everything: I rolled over them, threw them in the sand, struck them, twisted them, put them on my head, fell on top of them. I did everything with those materials. Horrible materials. All recycled from old upholstery. Old plush, some *palha da costa*<sup>19</sup> I had saved—which was the most expensive and refined thing there, though it didn't look refined. And everything was very... earthy. Then I began to feel there was too much going on, and I was more interested in proposing dances of a single image—each dance either arriving at that image, leaving it, or passing through it. Every mobilization would organize itself around that. So I needed to place everything on my head. But how? What gestures did I have to do that? I needed principles, and I decided to follow Afro-referential principles—the ones that literally show what I'm doing, as I'm interested in

16 RUFINO, Luiz. *Pedagogia das encruzilhadas*. Rio de Janeiro: Morula Editorial, 2019.

17 “Rodante” in Candomblé is a medium or initiate (Yaô) who enters a trance state, allowing the manifestation of their Orixá. The term derives from the circular movement of the dance during possession.

18 “Xirê” is a Yoruba word that means to play or dance. In Candomblé, it is a sacred circle of songs, dances, and percussion rhythms in which the orixás are invoked and revered.

19 “Palha da costa” is a traditional plant fiber associated with Afro-Brazilian ritual practices, widely used in clothing and objects in Candomblé.



the literalness of things. I don't work with metaphors. As André Lepecki<sup>20</sup> says, I work with the matter of the thing. So I twisted. I didn't know why I did it. I was trying to discuss this idea of man and of rational thought—the hairless biped<sup>21</sup>, right? A term coined by Marcos Bragato in an academic article<sup>22</sup>. And I attack the title. For that I decided to twist things. But how do I twist the body? How do I twist something and place it on my head? Is that possible or not? I tried, tried, tried, and I managed. After almost half an hour twisting things, I did it. Almost ten kilos of materials. My practice is this: to think something, do it, test it, fail, evaluate, and do it again. That positions myself and gives me the time of things, their duration. Then I reach the top, and when I'm there I only want things to fall apart. Turning was another important gesture, but I didn't want to turn in that piece. I resisted that idea because I felt I had turned a lot in *Cinzas*, and it seemed to me I shouldn't turn in this one. That's why the piece stayed stuck for a long time. It was Bete [Elisabete Finger] who inspired me saying "Why don't you turn? You turn so much"; She was researching the history of gestures, and I had entered her film precisely through the gesture of turning. But strangely I refused to turn. I made the head and refused to turn. Later I assumed the turn and began to learn how to do it. I also felt I needed to become something else in that piece, because everything was very earthy. I needed some shine. One day I was driving after Carnival and saw a tree in Petrópolis<sup>23</sup>, that was deformed and wrapped with pompons. I thought, what madness! Something half organic, half synthetic. So I began to look for things from the earth that had shine and found them in popular manifestations—*caboclos de lança*, *caboclos de pena*. But that still seemed too little, so I went after colored feathers and put them in. Still not enough. I needed more shine. I needed to eat that shine. So I added sequins. That's how the materials arrived. All of this also relates to the foundations of Candomblé, which I deform, and to fabulations from Brazilian cinema about shiny skins, suggested by my dramaturgist and director Pedro Vitu. That was the path of *Bípede*. Then Ana stitched everything with *palha da costa*—not with ordinary thread—she made the stitching of a smaller mantle, and Jô made the larger one. I then began to add the pompons and things underneath. In *Chão...* I knew nothing. I thought it had to be something more elegant. But then I began to understand that I also wanted to cite images that had marked me deeply. I will never forget the boys jumping from one train to another in Fortaleza wearing shimmering blue shorts. At the same time Vitu and I would go to Ribeira<sup>24</sup> every day and see those shimmering shorts. These shorts also entered *Bípede*. We realized it's the same blue shorts worn by my *Baba* and by players inside prisons. So there is an ethical and political sense there. Everything is referenced. Then I turned to Candomblé and underwent my initiation, and there an image came to me that I drew. I realized I needed to cover everyone with beads. I called João Marcelino [costume designer, scenographer and prop

20 LEPECKI, André. *Exaurir a dança: performance e a política do movimento*. Translated by Pablo Assumpção Barros Costa. 1 ed. São Paulo: Annablume, 2017.

21 "The hairless biped" is the English translation for *Bípede sem pelo*, one of the author's works analyzed in this article.

22 BRAGATO, Marcos. *Bípedes sem pelo: o caso das emoções*. *Cadernos do LINCC*, [S. l.], v. 3, n. 3, p. 50–79, 2011. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.ufrn.br/clinncc/article/view/14845>. Acesso em: 10 mar. 2026.

23 Neighborhood in the city of Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil.

24 Neighborhood in the city of Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil.



maker] to work and said I needed to deform the manifestations of the earth with those heads. I said I wanted a mask. He uses elements from many different territorialities, spaces and manifestations to create a base. I would have liked the chest to be bare. But it's a battle. That was the path of *Chão*, and it was faster. Where did the choice of the head come from? Oh, from a dream I drew. It's a deformation between Omolú and the images of beads, the strings of beads. It's like an Omolú made of beads—only beads. No raffia. In the making, it became a mask, but it could have been the whole body. In *Zambê* I was dissatisfied with the garments, as I think it should have no garments at all. As Pedro Vitu's dramaturgy suggests, everything that happens with those cloths and fabrics must have a lot of movement and be like a passage. The fabrics come from labor, so they must work with their fabrics. There are also images from the countryside, bundles, my grandmother, my mother—the bundle of clothes that contains everything: transits, displacements, diasporas. I brought some triggers so people could make things vibrate and move as well, because things needed to exchange. This is a piece of exchanges; nothing stabilizes. *Zambê* itself is a perforated pole, somewhat static, somewhat rigid. I just want them to carry it from one side to the other, that we watch the whole piece from one side and then move to the other, this kind of migration happens. The fabrics go together as a materiality to make the movement visible. There's something a bit like the *Serpentine Dance* of Loïe Fuller. She makes the kinesics visible, for example. She doesn't want to show the cloth but the movement. That's what I will do. I want nothing still—they have to pop. It's popcorn. It's *axé*. It has to boil. So there are many tracings. Because the bodies and what they do isn't important, but their effects. And it seems the space is full, there's a lot happening, many people, each with a garment. But those garments exchange. There are also some improbable materialities. That's it: to work with the improbable and try to weave some minimal palette. I think this work can be done in many different places because *Zambê* is an invasion—it has to be a passage modifying the relation with space, create a memory. Whereas *Bípede* needs an “around,” a controlled space. And *Chão* should be inside teaching rooms.



Image 02 - Scene of *Bípede sem Pelo*



Source: Ewerton Rangel, 2023

**HS: Do you perceive a choreographic logic in these materials that operate as costumes? Do you also direct the movement of these materials?**

**AA:** I have been trying to wait for things to tell me what I should do. And I have been doing this in a very radical way. In *Bípede* I begin by lying down on the straw. This is a gesture, and there is a shift in consciousness when I do it. Then I get up and walk with this straw around my head and inside my mouth; this serves to provoke an altered state in me. After that, I observe what remains within what repeats in the improvisations. Even the pathways. This straw material has already run, jumped, been many things. But in the end the straw walks within a certain rhythm, a quaternary one, etc. No one notices this, but I walk to the sound of Omolú, of Opanijé; this makes some sense and I reference it because I need it referenced. I understood that this was the path... until things would fall, until I would collapse, grow tired, and all that would fall over the other mantles—because this had already happened once and I found it interesting; it was not that I had caused it to happen. These things just happened. The same when I did the wrapping around the head. I did not know how, nor the speed. We really keep testing and trying to feel the transmutation of things. And this transmutation is the great operator of my work. I have been doing this since *Cinzas*. Even if there are cuts, there will also be a strange order<sup>25</sup> that avoids this world from freezing, that sustains destabilization. Everything is moving all the time, intensely; there is no rest—the scene has no rest—so I won't cut, leave, go into the wings and return. I don't rest, I don't do that, and when I do, something is missing. In these three pieces there is no such space. They are radical experiences of transmutation and waiting, and I use a rhythm for that. Rhythm, this ancestral technology that

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25 DAMÁSIO, António. *A estranha ordem das coisas: as origens biológicas dos sentimentos e da cultura*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018.



repeats, returns, and remains, is what begins to ask me for the pathways<sup>26</sup>. The pathways are part of a grounding that is found through improvisation. It is not something given a priori. So the pathways and the things occur from this grounding, from what repeats, remains and gradually consolidate in order to satisfy an internal logic of the piece. Because these pathways and these repetitions end up gestating a concept. What gestates the concept is the process<sup>27</sup>, the methodology. The ideas of twisting, of the spiral, all of this was gradually found. For instance, in *Zambê* there are no such twists or spirals; there it goes from one side to the other, it is something else. In *Chão* there is no upright body as in *Bípede*; everything is curved, with heads hanging. In *Zambê* there is also no straight line; everything is curved. And these foundations interest me from the place of Afro-reference. I reference my pieces and their foundations from the Blackness that constitutes me. If we are beings of aesthetics, this is my aesthetic. Sometimes the elaboration distances itself from the original thing from which I came, because I want it to distance itself. Then many people will say that what I do is not Black art. These things happen. In *Chão* the pathways emerged in the same way—they kept happening; they were not something prior. At certain moments there is indeed manipulation, but one that was discovered and has to do with will. I don't know whether it's my will of the things, perhaps something between us. But it arises from a will. So, in *Zambê*, when the clothes are all in the hands, they need to run and catch the wind; afterward they condense and expand. These movements of expansion and condensation in *Zambê* were things that appeared as desires and wills, and then were tested and grounded. In *Chão* as well, we gradually found a path, since the heads are interconnected. In fact, before people watch, there is a rite of entering the heads; they are put in certain places chosen unconsciously. So all the drawings are without fixation in a point of space, because in this piece the feet are always moving, and when they fall it is the only moment of stability, which is where the head will be grounded, where they will remove the mask and leave it there. So the drawing is this: they depart from the ground, move with the head and through the whole world and settle somewhere else. Of course, after the grounding we obviously can make some alteration to the drawing, but these are choices of the order of choreographic intervention, which only occurs at the final moment that I call formatting, which is when I shape the piece. Until that point I don't care at all—I cannot infer choreographically; only later, in the future, will I do that. So first it is: raise material. Raise it, raise it, raise it; test, test, test; it doesn't stay, it doesn't stay; then, fine, it stayed. Now I begin to add other compositional fields such as light and so on, and I keep adding more and more to test other fields within this instability. Then things take shape; in the end the drawing show some choreographic interventions, to make it more visible and manage the piece better, which always occurs from a methodology of improvisation. Everything always comes from intense experimentation.

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26 MARTINS, Leda Maria. *Performances do tempo espiralar*: poéticas do corpo-tela. Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2021.

27 HÉRCOLES, Rosa. Corpo e dramaturgia. In: NORA, S. (org.) *Húmus 1*. Caxias do Sul: Editora Lorigraf, 2004.



Image 03 - Scene of *Zambê de Contra-Ataque*



Source: Luá Fernandes, 2024.

**HS: Do you think it is possible or necessary to create a specific notation or archival system for these costumes? In the same way that you develop a choreographic plan for the whole work, does it make sense to elaborate a choreographic plan only for the matter?**

**AA:** Yes, absolutely. When you reach a point where things are truly integrated, it becomes very important to account for their history, their narrative. The choreographic plan for *Bípede* is basically me describing what I do with the things<sup>28</sup>. But during the creative process, before the piece takes its final form, I make diagrams and show them to the artists working with me, mapping the entire trajectory of the materials without the person. I draw it frame by frame, indicating where the things would be, and then I share that so they have a sense of what they need to do with them. I care less and less about what the body does in isolation. Just as the costume doesn't exist on its own, the body doesn't exist on its own either. Things have a history, and that has to do with time, so they follow a path and I try to draw that itinerary. I did this a lot with *Zambê*, and it became very clear in the work; in *Bípede* it is also very clear, because it is very well organized, it doesn't escape control. That is basically what happens in *Bípede*: I separate everything, spread all the materials out, then gather them together, turn, knock everything down, and fall underneath the materials. I leave and abandon the things where they fall, which is more or less in the center. I slightly guide that fall

that is a more rational, choreographic action. Since *Bípede*, I have found it very important to start drawing these things. I think it helps us a lot in the process. It can work with other media as well. I have thought that people who work with photography or film can take screenshots or make sketches. People need to understand that the methodologies we develop are meant to help them create their own, based on an understanding of how we use them. So if you don't like drawing, there is no reason to do it. Recently I have started using color, for example, trying to sense the

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28 AMÉRICO, A. *Bípede sem pelo: plano coreográfico*. 4ª Parede. Territórios em Trânsito. Dossiê 20. 23 de dezembro de 2024. Disponível em: <https://4parede.com/20-territorios-em-transito-bipede-sem-pelo-plano-coreografico/> . Acesso em: 07 jul. 2025.



relationships between colors and their effect, beyond the materials themselves. I bought a large set of watercolor pencils. It is good for me to feel this, in case I also need to mix myself into the perception. I run tests at home and it has been helpful. I draw the frames with no intention of making a great drawing; it is simply a way to organize myself. We need to learn how to use these procedures—the important thing is to understand their logic, why we do them, so that we can then bend them. That is why I like these systems of notation for the figure. Not my specific way of doing it, but the reason why this kind of thing matters.

**HS: How do you think these matters, or costumes operate in time?**

**AA:** I've come to understand, and this a philosophical perception, that we are beings of time<sup>29</sup>, and matters are the way we deal with time, the way we move it, the way we instigate things within it. So we have to work through them and allow them to be seen in this act of witnessing<sup>30</sup>, in this complicity. For me, materialities operate in a spiraling time, because that's the time we're working with, and my process is based on recurrence. I keep what repeats, what begins to choose itself; with each rehearsal something remains, and I select it and make it visible according to my working methodology. I only feel time through materialities. In fact, the only way I have of sensing time is through the movement of things. That requires a great deal of attention, because it completely shifts what choreography is: the composition becomes far deeper and more complex than simply organizing or arranging, deciding whether to make a cut here or move forward there. For me, the commitment is to a very carefully grounded proposition. Thinking about time is extremely important, and I like to think that I truly work in time—that time itself is a kind of matter, an ancestral one. I imagine many forms of ancestry, and that is a major theme in my life. So materialities are what allow time to appear, and it is through movement that we compose this perception. Through the scene and through the way these elements are organized, we actually shape time—stretching it, killing it, altering its nature. We might work, for instance, with a chronological sense of time. The real question is: What kind of time are you working with? Is it a time of phases? Of transmutation? Of infinity? And how long does it last? How long does something take to happen or to dissolve? These questions the pieces themselves must answer, and things need to serve that. You have to carry those questions with you in order to support the creation—or the creature that is there—and keep tracking it, almost by scent. That's how I've come to experience time, beyond the simple idea of duration.

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29 LAPOUJADE, David. *Potências do tempo*. Translated by Hortência Santos Lencastre. São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2013.

30 LAPOUJADE, David. *As existências mínimas*. São Paulo: N-1 edições, 2017.



### 3 Final considerations

The verbal articulation through which Alexandre Américo reflects on his own artistic investigation—primarily in dance, but with significant extensions into other performing arts—emerges as a fundamental and complementary dimension of his thought. In this dialogue between an artist and an art critic, words do not function as a translation of artistic practice; rather, they point toward procedures tested in the rehearsal studio and reveal the reverse side of Américo's stage work. What becomes evident in his account is the intensity with which his practice emphasizes the temporal dimension of performance and how this emphasis structures the composition of visualities in his dance. These visualities, expressed through the movement of diverse materialities that compose what is defined as costume, no longer appear as inert, purely symbolic, or illustrative objects. Instead, they confer performativity upon matter itself and reorganize the concepts and processes through which this element is understood. In this sense, the dance itself emerges from matter. By employing improvisation and immersion as methodological approaches, Américo places himself before materialities that gradually become costumes and undergo transmutation throughout the performance. It is the encounter with matter—both in its physical and philosophical dimensions—that structures a concrete scenic dialogue with costume and suggests updated forms of notation, such as the possibility of creating choreographic plans for this element. In spectatorship, the biological body is often no longer observed as the central unit of the scene; instead, the movement of colors, forms, and textures appears as systems in constant ebullition. From this perspective, it becomes essential to associate visual composition with rhythmic composition, allowing the viewer to witness the object becoming costume, i.e., becoming a scenic event in itself.

Drawing on Américo's reflections, I emphasize how his artistic practice confirms my hypothesis that costumes, as a scenic element, are defined primarily by their articulation in time rather than by their condition as objects. Even amid the recurring debate surrounding terminology, this element possesses a historical trajectory, and its affirmation can reaffirm its conceptual and practical expansion. As I argue in my dissertation:

The complete scenic landscape that we can call costume design itself is the structured thought process for materializing these objects. However, this materialization is expressed in a scenic event, which is established in time and where movement is essential. This means that this costume-thought is a thought that generates movement and moves through time; that is, it is not defined by the inertia of the objects (Sousa, 2024, p. 94).

It is also important to note the experimental and investigative character of Américo's artistic practice, which unfolds across successive works over several years and at times assumes a serial form. This trajectory allows us to examine more clearly how these visualities have been developed and how their performativity is grounded in rhythmic and temporal dimensions. From this perspective, it becomes untenable to treat the visual elements of the stage merely as sculptural



or pictorial choices within a scenic frame. Instead, attention can be directed to artistic practices that construct the scene through visibility itself, employing procedures that act directly upon time in the composition of images. In their specifically scenic character, these images emerge as events that interrupt the spectator's reality within the aesthetic experience. It is in this field that scenic materialities reach their greatest complexity, radicality, and distinctiveness.



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**Academic Biography**

Heloísa Sousa - Universidade de São Paulo (USP)

PhD in Arts at Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil.

E-mail: [heloisa\\_pds@hotmail.com](mailto:heloisa_pds@hotmail.com)

Alexandre Américo - Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN)

PhD candidate in Education at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil.

E-mail: [alexandreamerico2010@gmail.com](mailto:alexandreamerico2010@gmail.com)

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Anderson Feliciano

Soraya Martins

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