

The Experience of the Psychiatric Hospital of Rio de Janeiro: From Asylum to Cultural Center

Gabriela Abraços¹, Lisbeth Rebollo²,

¹ (university professor, PhD/ Adventist University of São Paulo/ São Paulo / Brazil) e-mail: gabiabracos@gmail.com

² (university professor, PhD/ University of São Paulo/ São Paulo / Brazil) e-mail: lisbethrebollo@gmail.com

BACKGROUND

This paper discusses the relationship between Art and Psychiatry in Brazil, highlighting the work of Psychiatrist Nise da Silveira at the Pedro II Psychiatric Center in Rio de Janeiro. In the 1940s, the relationship between medicine and art had credibility in the academia, but in practice, hospitals still operated electric shocks, lobotomies and sedatives in order to neutralize the patient's reaction. The work environment was rude and hostile.

When taking over the Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation Section of the hospital, Dr. Nise organized painting and sculpture studios to put into practice the occupational and therapeutic process, which could lead to the psychic restoration or even the cure of patients. Nise also organized soirees with theater, poetry, music and parties, and all the employees in the department participated, in order to make the environment more affectionate and humanized. All this methodological innovation in dealing with patients brought the psychiatrist adversaries in the workplace: doctors and therapists at the hospital

valued traditional aggressive techniques, and saw Nise's work as nothing more than feminine amateurism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study conducted based on bibliographic research of secondary sources and primary testimonies from Dr. Nise da Silveira herself and employees of the sector. Qualitative and analytical research.

RESULTS

Even in the face of criticism and institutional resistance, the doctor expanded her contact with patients and nurses in order to guide them on more humanized care and procedures. Nise da Silveira remained firm in her conviction that artistic productions were not a childish pastime, but rather “clinical exams” that could be analyzed in the context of each patient's development, and she believed in the idea that the affection between the medical team and the patient catalyzed the process of psychiatric stabilization and cure. The artwork produced by patients was “read” and interpreted based on dialogue with the patient and his/her history. To “read” the artistic productions, Nise sought theoretical depth in Carl G. Yung's psychoanalysis, in order to equip herself for the analyses she needed to carry out. The psychiatrist was aware that she was faced with precious psychic material revealed by art, and that she would need to decipher it into psychic components.



Figure 1. Nise da Silveira with her artist-patients in the Psychiatric hospital Engenho de Dentro. Nise da Silveira Archive, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. - Origin: <https://riomemorias.com.br/memoria/o-atelie-do-engenho-de-dentro/>

DISCUSSION

Experts in art criticism such as Mário Pedrosa and Walter Zanini recognized the artistic value of these works and promoted exhibitions in art circuits. Nise organized a new space in the Hospital to house the patients' artistic productions chronologically, to interpret their clinical evolution. This collection gave rise to the later "Museum of Images of the Unconscious", created in 1952. This occupational work continues to this day, generating new productions that make up the collection of this museum.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrated that art has the potential to make human relationships more affectionate, as it is a channel of expression and knowledge of our common weaknesses. By engaging with patients' art, employees of the sector were able to work in a more humanized environment, enabling the mental health of employees and patients.

REFERENCES

Monograph

Abraços, G. B. (2019). The affective dimension of art: Mário Pedrosa and aesthetic perception (Thesis (Doctorate). University of São Paulo, São Paulo. In: <https://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/93/93131/tde-04032020-150830/>

PEDROSA, M. (1949). Art as a Vital Necessity. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Brazilian Student House.

Article in journal

SILVEIRA, N.(1966). Twenty years of occupational therapy in Engenho de Dentro (1946-1966). Brazilian Journal of Mental Health. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Vol. 5, XII in the edited edition, p. 18-159.

Documentary film

HIRSZMAN, L, 2014, Nise da Silveira - Posfácio: Imagens do Inconsciente.

Ps: I would like to thank UNASP-SP for their financial support.