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FINALISTS TAKEOVER 2020: RANDOLPHO LAMONIER

OCTOBER 23, 2020



“Diários em combustão” [Burning Diaries], 2013, 35mm photography, 60 x 40 cm

Do you want to know more works by Randolpho Lamonier, one of the four finalists of PIPA 2020? Are you curious to know what Randolpho produced this year? What are the artist’s future projects? Welcome to the **Finalist takeover 2020!** Each week, an artist opens its studio to the virtual audience of PIPA Prize, with videos, photos, and texts exclusively produced for the takeover.

The idea of creating an online show arose because of this period when the exhibition of the finalists of PIPA 2020 would be on display at Paço Imperial, in Rio. From October 19 to November 13, the artists will fill our platforms and website with original content. We do not aim to replace the postponed exhibition due to the pandemic but to create a possible exchange between the PIPA finalists and the virtual public.

From Monday to Saturday, Randolpho Lamonier occupies the website and PIPA Prize social networks with original content. Each day, new material will be made available, including videos, photos, and interviews. Keep an eye on and follow us on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook platforms.

Day 6: In the last day of the takeover, Randolpho shares “Wild heart”, critical text written by Júlia Rebouças. In the text, she writes about his formation and comments on some of his works.

Read the full text below:

Wild heart

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Randolpho Lamonier rushes. As an artistic exercise and a way of life, he lives what he presents. He walks around the city, collects discarded materials, photographs friends, cuts fabric, annotates some angry verses and some others about love, wanders between the suburbs of Contagem and the center of Belo Horizonte. He records the weather, the bare wire, the street of the windows, the trash at the end of the day, the train in the tunnel, the burning flame, the body that hasn't slept. One moment, everything is movement, the next, he feels paralyzed. He's only got two hands and one heart, and so much to do. It's not going to be possible. Fragments of time appear to last forever, but when you notice it's already past. After all, there's so much to do and it was never possible. He experiences the urgency of those who can no longer tolerate a structure that constrains, limits, and threatens you and your peers. A gun always pointed at your head, at your chest, and your legs. One day, it doesn't shoot you, but rather your young neighbor, in the back. A pool of blood in the driveway.

Sitting in front of his childhood TV, evening shows screamed colors, noise, dubbed films, and cartoons. At the weekend, he helped his uncles with their small production company that produced films of weddings and festive events. As a result, he became familiar with cameras and VHS tapes. The artistic world reaches him through an amateur theater troupe at a cultural center in Contagem, which he joined as an actor in 2006. In this context, he begins to photograph his class in scenes staged for the camera. He studies at the University Theater of UFMG, but abandons the course without completing it in 2008. Later that year, he briefly joins the *Grupo Oficina Multimídia*, where he is struck by the approach to acting, scenography and art direction, the research activities of the group and the director Ione de Medeiros. In his search to give meaning to the quotidian, he continues to document his geographical and emotional environment in images, objects and things which, little by little, he comes to understand as artistic work. Already working professionally as an actor, in an effort to make a living, he works as a bus conductor, a kindergarten teacher, a leafleteer, an extra, a roadie, a children's entertainer, an illustrator, an expedition assistant, a set designer, and a dog groomer in a pet shop. In 2012, he enrolls in the visual arts course at the Fine Arts School of UFMG and begins to devote himself exclusively to his studies and the visual arts.

In his work, Randolpho develops the verve of a chronicler. He observes issues acutely, but he does so with the intimacy of someone producing a diary. So, he adopts the title *Crônicas de retalho* (Patch Chronicles) for a series of works begun in 2016, where he embroiders and sews phrases synthesizing complex contexts onto ordinary floor rugs. "5 sealed coffins" is written in one of them with the words interspersed with five rectangular patches darned onto a small handmade rug. His time is today, even though he speculates about tomorrow or turns over the past to reveal the foundations of this present.

Narrative and historical elements are mixed with forecasts of the future, whether in the form of suggestions of struggle or utopias. In the works *Profecias* (Prophecies), a series that he began in 2018, he produces banners that announce events which, while representing wholly just civil rights victories, also appear as distant realities at a time when human rights are under so much threat. "Guerreirxs Guarani Kaiowá win the fight for their ancestral land. 2034", says one of the works, which mixes foliage, a snake, and a representation of the National Congress in flames. Another reads, "Queer Army sets fire to churches and inaugurates the secular state in Brazil. 2028". Here, he composes with leftover fabrics of various sizes and colors using a technique that recalls the works of the Paraguayan Feliciano Centurión (1962-1996) and the Chilean Violeta Parra (1917-1967), with his *Arpilleras*.

His work is marked by encounters with other artists, forming a generation that shares concerns and ideas. Many of them even come from the town of Contagem, where Randolph grew up. Dayane Tropicaos, Desali, Sara Não Tem Nome and Victor Galvão, are some of these partners and frequent collaborators. The film production company Filmes de Plástico, of Gabriel Martins and André Novais, is also from Contagem, as well as directors such as Affonso Uchôa. In the installation *Vigília* (2017), his contemporaries star in scenes that recall the best traditions of intimate photography, where bodies are fragmented by the night, sex, music and encounters. If in these images there is torpor and melancholy, there is also vigor.

In the project that he staged for the exhibition *Jovem Criação Internacional* [Jeune Création Internationale], part of the 15th Biennial of Contemporary Art in Lyon, the work *Brasil 2019 – Partitura para fogo e metais pesados* (Brazil

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2019 – Sheet music for fire and heavy metals) (2019), its field of observation opens out from the limits of rooms and buildings to public spaces. In the film that forms part of the installation, the images accompany his peers as they move through streets, subway stations and clearings. The text begins with the heaviness of the leftovers of a party but is soon addressing political and social contexts that suffocate those who do not enjoy death and destruction. “We choose life and we’re going to live. We choose and we’re going to live. We’re going to live”, one hears in the final sequence, while three artists dance in different scenes. In addition to the video, the installation consists of a vast group of sculptures and compositions made from everyday materials, plants, chairs, cushions and scrap, in rearrangements that make the environment familiar while simultaneously strange.

The materials intended for scrap are, by their nature, material and index of several other works by Randolpho Lamonier. The products of the excesses and planned obsolescence created by capitalism need to be removed from the halls of power. But they do not disappear, just as the people excluded from social welfare agreements do not disappear. From what is regarded as rubbish, the artist builds a shelter. The work *Entre máquinas e fogo fui criado* (I was created between machines and fire) (2019), commissioned for the 36th Panorama of Brazilian Art: *Sertão*, is built from a refrigerator carcass, attached to propellers with no function, old gas canisters, reused cans, and ironware that, despite the aridity and fragility of the elements, form a dwelling, with small plants, ornaments, symbols of faith and warmth. This structure is suspended, fastened by a line of scarves and textiles which, on the other side, encounter a mobile of household items, presenting a balance between different weights that defies the laws of physics. The installation, according to the artist, refers to his father’s house.

Nearby, in the same exhibition, there was also a tribute to his mother. *A casa de dois andares sonhada por minha mãe no início dos anos 90* (The two-story house dreamed of by my mother in the early 90s) (2019) is formed as a large fabric panel, using sewing and embroidery techniques that incorporate textiles and wool, and which represent a drawing of an almost childlike design. The much-desired house had two floors, several windows, a vegetable garden, a flower bed and fruit trees. A TV antenna emerged through the roof. D. Maria do Carmo C. Lamounier, his mother, is a seamstress and worked for over 20 years making car seats for the automotive assembly plant in the industrial center of Betim, a city near Contagem. It is she who assists the artist with his sewing technique and equipment, in the creation of part of the works in fabric. She certainly deserves the best house she can dream of.

From his work with fabric, photography, video, engraving, sculpture and installations, Randolpho Lamonier has developed a body of work that addresses experiences which are simultaneously biographical and collective, and which, due to their marginal nature, occupy the center of Brazilian life. Where pure violence is advocated, he offers affection; where mere resignation is desired, he fights back. Since his first exhibitions in Belo Horizonte in 2012, he has established himself as a restless artist. In a 2018 work, which formed part of a joint project with Thiago Martins de Mello, Randolpho writes in stencil on a canvas: “Let us be the fever”.

Júlia Rebouças

Version of 24 August, 2020

Day 5: Today, Randolpho presents ***‘Brazil 2019 — a dance score for fire and heavy metals’***, an installation with three-channel film, sound, sculptures, plants, found objects, and textiles. It was made in 2019 commissioned for 15e Lyon Biennale / Jeune Création Internationale, from the Institut d’Art Contemporain, in Villeurbanne, France.

‘In the project that he staged for the exhibition *Jovem Criação Internacional* [Jeune Création Internationale], part of the 15th Biennial of Contemporary Art in Lyon, the work *Brasil 2019 – Partitura para fogo e metais pesados* (Brazil 2019 – Sheet music for fire and heavy metals) (2019), its field of observation opens out from the limits of rooms and buildings to public spaces. In the film that forms part of the installation, the images accompany his peers as they move through streets, subway stations and clearings. The text begins with the heaviness of the leftovers of a party, but is soon addressing political and social contexts which suffocate those who do not enjoy death and destruction. “We choose life and we’re going to live. We choose and we’re going to live. We’re going to live”, one hears in the final sequence, while three artists dance in different scenes. In addition to the video, the installation consists of

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a vast group of sculptures and compositions made from everyday materials, plants, chairs, cushions and scrap, in rearrangements that make the environment familiar while simultaneously strange' – Júlia Rebouças.

See the images of the exhibition and watch the film, part of the installation. Photographs by Blaise Adillon and Victor Galvão.

Day 4: Today, the fourth day of the takeover, Randolpho shows us what his routine is like in Paris, where he is doing an artistic residency at Cité Internationale des Arts, in France. After his friend Rosa Maria Unda Souki invited him for the residency, Randolpho has been in Paris since March. Because of the pandemic, he decided to extend his stay in Europe until the end of this year.

In 2020 he has been working on old series and also on new works. Some pieces have been shown in Paris, and others will be part of exhibitions there before coming to Brazil next year. In the video, which Randolpho produced exclusively for the Finalists takeover 2020, he shows a common day of work in the atelier in Paris. The video title is "Monday / 10-12-2020", filmed on October 12th.

Day 3: In August, after the disclosure of the four finalists of PIPA 2020, the curator of the PIPA Institute Luiz Camillo Osorio interviewed the artists. The conversation with Randolpho will be available in the catalog of 2020, scheduled to be released in November. Below, you can read the complete interview, in which Camillo questions Randolpho about the artistic trajectory, the greatest influences, the aesthetic choices, besides the political dimension of his work.

Conversation between Camillo and Randolpho Lamonier

1 – What was your training as an artist like?

My training developed in a roundabout way, full of curves. I come from a working-class family – most of whom worked in industry, trade and civil construction – and I grew up in the low-income suburbs of Contagem, a city in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte. In my house, there was no cultural program. There weren't even public mechanisms for promoting or accessing art in our community. So my contact with culture was very limited to what appeared on the TV, cinema and radio. Despite the monstrosity that was the Brazilian television programming in the 1990s, I was able to apprehend some references that significantly influenced me, such as Castelo Rá-Tim-Bum of TV Cultura, the green Xuxa program, some trashy films from the *Sessão da Tarde* daytime schedule, and much of the programming of MTV, especially the programs devoted to showing music videos.

At the age of 15 I took a free course in visual arts with Fernando Perdigão and Henrique Dias at the Contagem Cultural Center (*Centro Cultural de Contagem*). At the age of 16, I was a member of the Roda Viva Group (*Grupo Roda Viva*), a research laboratory for the performing arts whose teacher and director was Marcelo Veronez, now an exponent of musical and theatrical stagecraft in Belo Horizonte. At Roda Viva we developed a body of work related to Physical Theater and created a show based on texts from certain authors from the Theatre of the Absurd like Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco and Fernando Arrabal. Shortly afterwards, in parallel with the Physical Theater, I started working with educational and corporate theater for companies in Contagem and BH. We did plays about everything: environmental conservation, oral hygiene, alcoholic clowns, worms and lice, adolescent sex, STDs, folklore, bullying, depression in old age haha, it was crazy. At that time, I began experimenting with photography, creating scenes, interventions in space and performance actions for the camera with the theater people. I consider this period to be seminal for the investigations I would immerse myself in years later at university. At the age of 18, I started studying at the University Theater of UFMG, but abandoned the course halfway through. Soon afterwards, I did a short stint with the *Grupo Oficina Multimídia*, directed by Ione de Medeiros, whose scenographic and visual research strongly influenced me. Throughout this first training period of mine, I had several conventional jobs that I was mixing with my artistic work. It was kind of absurd: sometimes I worked during the day as a bus collector and would then go off to perform at the theater at night. Or, I would present a show in the afternoon and at the theatre exit hand out leaflets for the shows of other colleagues. It was all very much based on tenacity, and done without knowing how to

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do it, I was there finding my issues, improvising with the absurd and seeking power in the most candid fragility. It was a very happy, intense period of discoveries, conflicts of identity, uncertainty and, above all, full of the vibrant presence of many friends who, like me, had thrown themselves, open-armed, into the experiment in courage which is living from (and for) art. At the age of 23, I joined the School of Fine Arts of UFMG and moved to Belo Horizonte. This represented a milestone for my work because, at university, I made other great friendships that influenced and supported my journey, and with whom I discovered resonances and a clearer notion of collective strength. From then on, I began to devote all my time to the visual arts and while I was studying, I gradually got involved in the cultural scene of Belo Horizonte. I believe that a crucial part of my training took place back there in Contagem, mixing Nirvana with the Xou da Xuxa and Samuel Beckett with Patati Patatá. There's an attraction for improbability that has always been part of me. I think I really like these complicated, messed-up equations. I really like to learn by taking risks.

2 – Your work has a direct relationship with the city, or rather, with the margins of the city. How did this appropriation and dialogue develop? What's it like circulating among this marginalized audience? Do you get this feedback?

The feedback is very immediate and direct since the marginalized audience I dialogue with in my work is almost always my mother, my father, my close friends and myself in the first, second or third person – “he” sometimes comes silently, sometimes noisily: “Randolpho Super Star of Victory”, “Randolpho the Collector”, “Randolpho the Faggot goes back to school to wreak revenge and terror”. There's no alterity. It's a very emotional conversation, without anthropological obsessions. I think I don't say much regarding difference, and even when I go there, I usually take a side and the conversation becomes kind of intimate, with an emotional tone or in the first person.

It was very important to me the few times my family were able to leave the suburbs for the Center to visit some of my exhibitions or watch me in the theater. But the dissemination of my work among the people of the city where I grew up, among people I don't know, is virtually zero. The situation of culture in Contagem underwent a great improvement between the first and second decades of the 2000s, but nowadays almost nothing is happening, there are no incentives for culture, there is no preservation of the city's historical/cultural heritage. The Cine Teatro de Contagem cinema, where I first performed, is close to being demolished. And the neighborhood of São Luiz, where I grew up, has no square to this day.

3 – Despite dealing with urban tensions and the imaginary of social movements, your artistic philosophy, because of the sewing, the embroidery, the weaving of the thread in the fabric, has a more dilated and slower temporality. It's as if your work had a strident content and a quieter form. Is this contrast intentional?

It wasn't intentional at first. I didn't spend a long time thinking before I started working with fabric. This relationship with the cloth and with sewing came from the family. My paternal grandfather was a tailor in the interior of Minas Gerais, my maternal grandmother always sewed at home and my mother was a seamstress in the automotive industry for over 20 years, until she retired. I had never thought about sewing. In fact I had a certain aversion for sewing, I think because since childhood I had observed the physical and emotional wear which my mother underwent working on a production line – it was an intellectually and emotionally limiting process, without room for any kind of autonomy. I don't remember when I started working with sewing, but it emerged little by little, first as scenography elements or costumes for my photos, and then some patches and embroidered words began to emerge. Soon I wanted to use the sewing machine and my mother taught me the basics, choosing the thread, the path the thread takes between the bobbin and needle, rewinding the reel, finishing off. And suddenly she was involved. We started sewing together and it was an important process for us; she was often disturbed by the subjects that the works presented, and thought others charming. My mother was impressed by the fact that we could sew the crooked lines, use the back of the cloth, show the corrections, patches, stains, flaps and scraps. There was no right or wrong way, the sewing would not be inspected or revised, and didn't have to perform any function, other than what we wanted. For a long time, I did the Belo Horizonte-Betim commute, bringing the fabric I needed to sew on my mother's machine. The route of the BR 381 road is full of landscapes that I love – the Industrial city of

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Contagem, the rotten viaducts between the Amazon neighborhood and Carrefour, and the surrounding mountains being sliced like a cake, every day. In these comings and goings, the subjects arose very spontaneously. I don't usually follow any kind of criteria regarding the issues which I'm going to work with, but in that first contact with sewing my main subject was undoubtedly my relationship with Contagem, a kind of measuring of the size of my body in relation to the city. I gradually found my own way of sewing. I immediately realized that I needed this sewing to be personal and passionate. I needed it to be an instrument of identity and individuality. But I also needed it to be porous, sensitive to its context, able to talk with its time. Thinking now about how sewing appropriated my life and the vocabulary of my work, I feel that I am to some extent avenging my mother's story – and perhaps my own, in advance.

In 2016, I started a series of embroideries on carpets called "Scrap Chronicles" [*Crônicas de Retalho*]. I think it was then that I definitely understood that I had a lot to address with sewing. Gradually I began to conceptualize my dilemmas and I've begun mixing subjects as they present themselves in my life – urgent, absurd, asking for everything of me. Today this contrast in the relationship between technique and language, media and content is no longer accidental. Sometimes it's a deliberate language exercise, sometimes it's pure piss-taking, but it always makes some sense to me.

4 – I perceive in your artistic philosophy a constant play between the word and its visuality; between the political effect and the lyrical affect. I think the more tensioned this relationship, the less explicit the effect, and the more powerful the work is. I prefer "The Prophecy" [A Profecia] to "The Promise" [A Promessa]; I like "Neighbouring Sounds" more than "Bacurau." How do you see this?

I like to play with the oppositions and polarities of the word, to risk unlikely balances, to feed strangeness. I've always had difficulty writing, to construct a logical line or to narrate linear, causative events, through writing. My concentration is bad and my attention is super diffuse, so the writing was not something that was always present in my work practice. But there was a time, perhaps in the first year of college, when I began to collect small texts on the back of notebooks, behind my paintings, a lot of fragmented things that on their own didn't make much sense even to me, but which acquired another form and another power when presented in relation to something else. So I understood that I communicate better by organizing fragments, building the lexicon with a lot of seemingly asymmetric, incongruent information, which is often almost nonsense. Having assimilated and incorporated a research method that was initially intended to compensate for a deficiency, ended up becoming a strategy and then a language. When a word emerges in my work, I'm interested in everything it has to give: meaning, form, rhythm, sound. Sometimes even the residue of the word can interest a work: its decomposition when diluted in the image x meaning game, its antithesis when tensioned in its context to the limit of its own meaning, its corruption when dispossessed of its semiotic reason as the result of another purely formalistic, compositional or aesthetic gesture. The word is very powerful. It can often, in the form of a title or caption, completely change the reading of a work on its own, in the same way a soundtrack can carry on its shoulders the entire direction of a scene. For a long time, the word has been gaining prominence in my work and this requires ever more attention from me. It's almost a paradox, a delicate equation where I seek to leverage the discursive power of the messages I'm transmitting, while I hope that they are open to other possibilities and other levels of interpretation. When I make a work, I always hope that it's bigger than me – I mean, I hope it can receive, through contact and the relationship with the audience, everything I cannot give. I'm happy when a work achieves autonomy and goes beyond my limitations, when it escapes me and reduces me before it.

5 – The fabulatory and allegorical dimension enters your work as a kind of political fiction, mixing delirium and struggle. Which artists do you regard as allies?

This subject is very important to me now. I think that actively exercising one's political imagination has never been so important, exercising our ability to invent stories and take other possible or impossible paths. Reality is crushing us with the rhetoric of there being no way out, with a nihilism that immobilizes us and dismembers us even in the face of the worst atrocities. Neoliberalism, with its agenda of extermination, wants to kill people from the inside out,

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it wants to destroy our desires and our subjectivities, which is why culture and art in Brazil are being combated with so much violence.

In this context of terror, I find courage and an appetite for life and work in the beloved people who surround me. There are many of them and it's not possible to name them all here, unfortunately, but there is a group of companions who have accompanied me since the first works from my time at college, friends who teach me and strengthen me our exchanges and coexistence – and also in a direct dialogue between our languages and narratives: Victor Galvão, Rosa Maria Unda Souki, Dayane Tropicacos, Sara Mosli, Sara Não Tem Nome, Lúcio Honorato, Dani Maura, Desali, Marta Neves, Julia Baumfeld, Paola Rodrigues, Pedro Saldanha, Bruno Rios, César Machado, Malu D'ângelo, Cristina Madeira, Hugo Honorato, Jonas Filho, Daniela Pedrosa, Ian Gavião, Daniel Pinho, Julia Rebouças, Raphael Fonseca, Patrícia Azevedo, Brígida Campbell, Bruno Vilela, Gui Cunha – and Violeta Parra.

6 – Your work has recently been circulated by international institutions. What has this reception been like?

It has been happening gradually. Since university I've been participating at international photography, cinema and video art festivals, mostly in Europe, but last year this process intensified a little more. I participated for the first time in four group exhibitions in the United States, and in September I came to France where I presented a work at the exhibition "Jeune Création Internationale" at the 15th Lyon Biennial. Now, living in Paris, I have access to a circuit that once seemed very distant and the response has been positive. At the moment I'm working on exhibitions scheduled for this year and next year, if the Covid-19 crisis allows.

7 – How do you imagine, and what do you wish for, your work in the future?

Honestly, I don't dream about any future for my work; I hope it remains unpredictable to the end.

Day 2: Randolpho Lamonier develops his visual research using many different media and processes to discuss urgent social issues. 'In his research, word and image are always in dialogue and tend to deal with micro and macro politics, urbanities, sentimental and chronic bullshit, diaries and multiple crossings between memory and fiction'.

The interweaving between intimacy and public matters articulates the micro and macro politics, a continuous state of reflection and insurgency. Even the tiniest gesture depicted in these works reveals a critical perception of the state of normality. In the series 'Profecies', from 2018, Randolpho uses embroidery and fabric to make predictions based on critical thoughts about the present.

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See the complete series ('Prophecies', 2018, sewing and embroidery on fabric, 155 x 185 cm) below:



'Prophecies', 2018, sewing and embroidery on fabric, 155 x 185 cm



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'Prophecies', 2018, sewing and embroidery on fabric, 155 x 185 cm



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'Prophecies', 2018, sewing and embroidery on fabric, 155 x 185 cm

Day 1: Randolpho Lamonier was born in Contagem, a city in the industrial suburb of Minas Gerais, Brazil, in 1988. He is a visual artist graduated from the School of Fine Arts at UFMG and transits between different media, with emphasis on textile art, drawing, photography, video, and installation. Currently, Randolpho lives between Paris and Contagem, Berlin, and Betim.